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THREE SECTIONS

Making the community GLOW

MMACF seeks support for new initiative

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MARINETTE

Municipalities and organizations throughout the twin cities area are being paid visits this summer by the M&M Area Community Foundation's incoming Vice President John Lee and Executive Director Paula Gruszynski, who are spreading the news about an opportunity that could make all the difference to the shoreline communities.

The two leaders have been speaking locally about the Great Lakes One Water (GLOW) partnership, a multi-year, basin-wide initiative focused on engaging shoreline community foundations, such as the M&M Area Community Foundation, to help advance a new era of water management. GLOW aims to benefit people and businesses in the Great Lakes basin, build the capacity of community foundations for progress on pressing water challenges, generate community support at all levels, and deploy best practices for streamlining and assembling part-



EagleHerald/Rick Gebhard

Jesse Rudolph, left, goes kayaking with his girlfriend Ashley Bardowski, Menominee, toward the North Pier Lighthouse July 28 in Menominee. A new initiative to strengthen shoreline communities is gaining traction in the local area.

ners for technology and risk management and for public-private-nonprofit partnerships.

Gruszynski explained earlier this week that GLOW was funded through a grant to the Council of Michigan Foundations, "a leader of philanthropy in the country."

"We (the M&M Area Community Foundation) were contacted about two years ago about joining the

partnership," she said. "Our board immediately said yes. It's another example of leadership and how our board is moving toward that — we think that we can make our communities stronger and better."

The M&M Area Community Foundation is part of the Lake Superior/U.P. regional GLOW team, which also includes

See GLOW, A3

GLOW:

the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, the Community Foundation of the Upper Peninsula, the Community Foundation of Marquette County and the Keweenaw Community Foundation. For the past two years, Gruszynski said, the team has been seeking to educate its members on opportunities for the communities.

"Each regional group has the capability of coming up with the topic they want to address," Lee explained. "Protecting the Great Lakes water is the key for the over-arching goal."

Together, the Lake Superior/U.P. regional team identified resiliency as an opportunity for the involved communities, and is working to define the area based on its resiliency. This involves:

- Organizing a team of multi-disciplinary, community-based leaders around the emerging issue of storm and flood resiliency.

- Conducting a common process to establish a baseline of each community's current state of vulnerability to extreme weather and understanding of resiliency related to extreme weather.

- Delivering education to increase understanding about the reality of extreme weather and the impact on water quality, public and private property and infrastructure, human health, safety and welfare, and the importance of and opportunities to prepare for such events.

- Accelerating innovative green and gray water infrastructure actions and adaptations needed to create resilient communities.

- Increasing capacity of communities to limit the negative impact of severe storm events on the health and well-being of people and their communities.

"The easiest definition of our goal would be that we can eventually withstand virtually any weather event or natural disaster

and we can protect the watershed and the Great Lakes," Lee said.

"People talk about the 100-year event," Gruszynski added. "It's not a 100-year event anymore, we have floods and storms of that caliber every couple of years."

Overall, the Lake Superior/U.P. regional team hopes to create higher levels of civic engagement, resiliency awareness and innovation capabilities in both the public and private sector. The team put together a plan to this effect, and were the first to submit theirs and get it approved by the Council of Michigan Foundations. Now, the M&M Area Community Foundation is hoping to spread this plan and its message across the local community and draw other local leaders in to get on board with it.

"We're taking a public approach," Gruszynski said. "We have a concept that we want people to sign onto, how we can have a coordinated plan for resiliency in these two counties around water."

The foundation will host an educational session at UW-Green Bay, Marinette Campus, on Sept. 25 by formal invitation. Additionally, local municipalities are being asked to collect plans, policies, ordinances and past actions related to resilience to submit to the foundation and determine a baseline assessment of risk and readiness by Aug. 15, as well as assign an individual to the local GLOW committee to participate in and report back on its actions.

"The first thing we want to do is set benchmarks for where everyone is," said Lee. "We're trying to find out what plans they have, what they currently have in place... the first step is really all about data-gathering."

Lee added that the data gathered would be taken to a GLOW expert panel for assessment and comparison, "and see if we can draw best practices."

"We're looking forward to this, and I think that there are opportunities out there," he said.