FRIDAY
July 3, 2009
Partly sunny: showers. Low 70s. **Page A2**

PRESS-REPUBLICAN

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Cultural center planned

▶ Appleby Foundation, Rebecca Kelly Ballet buy AuSable Forks hall

By LOHR McKINSTRY
Staff Writer

AuSABLE FORKS — The historic Masonic Hall in AuSable Forks hamlet will be turned into a cultural and community hub called Tahawus Lodge Center.

The structure has been purchased by the Appleby Foundation and Rebecca Kelly Ballet.

RESTORATION EYED

Foundation representatives said the three-story building is in need of extensive repair, and the New York City-based group will undertake a capital campaign to raise funds for the $1.2 million renovation.

"The restoration and re-use of this building on Main Street in the business district of AuSable Forks is a clear signal that revitalization efforts are at work," said Craig Brashear, executive director of the Appleby Foundation and Rebecca Kelly Ballet.

The ballet company headed by Kelly has its summer home in Saranac.

Brashear said it will "create a home for a wide network of organizations, artisans, schools, museums and local businesses, services and entrepreneurs."

Retail and craft shops will be leased space in the building, which is expected to be ready in 2011.

FIRST ONLINE

We had this first online at 10 a.m. yesterday.

For breaking news, visit our Web site.

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LOCAL ARCHITECTS

The local architectural team Premises, headed by Bryan Burke and Beverly Eichenlaub, has been selected to design the building renovation. Premises, based in Essex, has a background in design for communities, cultural centers and green technology.

"The Tahawus Lodge Center project is a viable and welcome addition to AuSable Forks, to make it a better place to live and work," Essex County Empire Zone Coordinator Barbara Brassard said. "This project not only deserves, but demands total support."

She said the Essex County Empire Zone development plan includes the Town of Jay's downtown revitalization efforts.

"We totally support and encourage funding of the Tahawus Lodge Center project. This will be a benefit to the economy of the region."

As an approved community development project within the Essex County Empire Zone, a 25-percent tax credit against state income tax is available for contributions of $500 and up.

PROJECT PRAISED

Jay Town Supervisor Randy Douglas said he has read the project plans.

"Their overall plan for enhancing an anchor building in AuSable Forks will have a significant economic impact on our community," Douglas said.

See **LODGE** Page A5 ▶

Lodge: 'I will gladly assist them in obtaining their goals'

"I applaud Rebecca Kelly Ballet for their efforts. I will gladly assist them in obtaining their goals. Their sincere dedication to enhancing new opportunities for our youth is greatly appreciated."

He said the new cultural and multi-purpose center will serve the community and create jobs, adding to the revitalization movement already under way in the town.

Brassard said she hopes it will stimulate new enterprises throughout the North Country, as well.

When the building was a Masonic Hall, it was known as the Tahawus Lodge, so Brashear and Kelly said they decided to incorporate that into the name of the new center.

The purchase price of the building was not revealed.

E-mail Lohr McKinstry at:
lmckinstry@pressrepublican.com

Image Provided

The old Masonic Hall in Jay's AuSable Forks hamlet will be turned into a cultural and community center by the Appleby Foundation of New York City. The renovated building will be known as the Tahawus Lodge Center and will also serve Rebecca Kelly Ballet.

ADIRONDACK DAILY ENTERPRISE

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Location: SARANAC LAKE, NY
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Type (Frequency): Newspaper (D)
Page: A2
Keyword: Rebecca Kelly Dance Company

Tahawus Lodge Center building project kicks off fundraising phase

AuSABLE FORKS – On Saturday, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the Hollywood Theatre, there will be a night of movies and festivities benefiting the Tahawus Lodge Center (TLC) project – the Appleby Foundation's effort to convert the historic Masonic Lodge in downtown AuSable Forks into a multi-use complex for commerce, cultural events and community activities.

The event includes a double feature – "October Sky" and "Billy Elliott" – free popcorn during the movies, free refreshments at intermission, a 50/50 raffle and door prizes donated by area businesses.

The contribution for attending one or both screenings is $10 per person and $30 per family. Moviegoers who cannot make it to the 6:30 p.m. screening of "October Sky" will be welcomed to the screening of "Billy Elliott" – subject to the availability of seats for the later show – and are encouraged to get to the Hollywood at about 8 p.m.

Reservations for the evening are recommended by calling Stonebridge Associates at (518) 647-8266. Any remaining seats will be available at the door.

"Our aim is to have a fun-filled evening while introducing the community at large to our plans and vision for renovating the Masonic Lodge," said Rebecca Kelly, who, along with husband Craig Brashear and their nonprofit organizations – Rebecca Kelly Ballet (RKB) and the Appleby Foundation, Inc. – is spearheading the project. "We are grateful to Cory and Sierra Hanf of the Hollywood for making their historic theater available for this event. It's one more sign that the AuSable Forks community is really embracing this North Country development project."

Rebecca Kelly and her husband Craig Brashear spearheaded the Tahawus Lodge Center project, along with their nonprofit organizations, Rebecca Kelly Ballet and the Appleby Foundation.

(Photo provided)

LAKE PLACID NEWS

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Circulation (DMA): 4,500 (90)
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Au Sable Forks charts a new future

NAJ WIKOFF
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

AUSABLE FORKS – People are talking in Au Sable Forks. More than 70 of them gathered Saturday night at the American Legion Post 504 to hear and discuss a presentation on the possibility of creating a cultural center out of the old Mason Building on Main Street. The energy in the room was electric.

Decades, indeed a century ago, Au Sable Forks was a dynamic center of industry harnessing the power of the rivers to run tanneries, a foundry and iron works, the J.J. Rogers mill and numerous other manufacturing enterprises and, in the arts, most noteworthy for being home to the talented and controversial artist and illustrator Rockwell Kent. While some outstanding buildings remain from its halcyon days of yore, now the hamlet is much diminished in size and better known as the site of annual ice jams that attract the media and voyeurs waiting for the grand breakup.

It has experienced hardship, most recently the unexpected and dramatic closing of its Aubachon Hardware but also some signs of renewal such as the renovation and reopening of its movie theatre.

What has not been diminished is the spirit of the community that has a strong record of pulling together to support its own through tough times. That spirit was alive, well and boisterous on Saturday as members of the Au Sable Forks Revitalization Group discussed their vision for and the steps needed to create the Tahawus Lodge Center, which would become the home of the Rebecca Kelly Ballet Company.

"We are all aware that we are at the bottom of the barrel with financial resources, but we have come to realize that we have other resources that money can't buy and which, in the end, are much more valuable," said Sue Pulitzer on behalf of the Revitalization Group, an association of concerned citizens who gathered together five years ago to raise funds to hire a planning firm to help the community create a more vibrant future.

"Rebecca Kelly and her husband Craig Brashear have lived in Silver Lake for 20 years," she added. "Their entire professional lives have been committed to strengthening and enlivening communities through the arts."

"The Mason Building is a great old building that has stood virtually unchanged for all the 22 years we have been doing errands in Au Sable Forks," Kelly said. "We like its proximity to Route 87, Montreal, Plattsburgh, Keeseville and Burlington."

"In dance, we know timing is everything," Kelly added.

"We have determined a budget of $1.2 million," said Craig. "We estimate 20 percent will come from individuals, 20 percent from foundations and the balance from government grants and other economic development sources. We have already $80,000 in pledges."

"I think this would be a change – a new direction for Au Sable Forks," said Peter Allen.

"It would be a bright star for the area," said Bill Berkmann. "Just to have Rebecca Kelly Ballet establish its home base here would be a terrific thing. I think it is a great building. It would be wonderful to see it restored. There is a great turnout tonight. I think it could be the spark that gets the whole of Main Street going. It could be the first of many pieces."

"I'm a big fan of the arts," said Susan Richards, budget officer and clerk to the town supervisor. "I love to sing and dance. I've done a lot of shows with the Essex Theatre. It's been a great pleasure to work with Rebecca and Craig. This could be terrific for the community."

Rebecca Kelly

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If You Rebuild It, They Will Come

By Fred Balzac

Rebecca Kelly and Craig Brashear have been driving by the old Masonic Lodge building in Au Sable Forks, NY, for years—often on the way to Lake Placid, where their Manhattan-based dance troupe, Rebecca Kelly Ballet, has been performing and conducting workshops and summer kids' programs for the past two decades. In 2007, the idea came to them: wouldn't it be great to renovate the lodge and turn it into a working space for the ballet company and other arts activities?

Above: Through Rebecca Kelly Ballet and then RKB under the umbrella of the Appleby Foundation, Rebecca Kelly and Craig Brashear have been creating dynamic dance performances and youth outreach and enrichment programs for more than three decades. Photo: Rebecca Kelly Ballet. At left: An artists' concept of the revitalized downtown. Image courtesy of the Town of Jay/Hamlet of Au Sable Forks.

The more they thought about it, the more their initial idea expanded: what was needed in downtown Au Sable Forks was not just an arts space, but a multi-use building that the entire community could access and benefit from. Grandiose idea? Maybe. But when it comes to thinking creatively and dreaming big in Au Sable Forks, Rebecca Kelly and Craig Brashear are not alone.

On Saturday evening, June 27th, Ms. Kelly and Mr. Brashear (who are wife and husband) unveiled their vision for the Masonic Lodge, a project that combines culture and commerce with the need for a cohesive community. The couple's Appleby Foundation, Inc., a 501c3 not-for-profit organization founded in 1979, is in contract to purchase the historic building and has launched a campaign to raise $1.2 million to fund the renovation and seed the new community center. Saturday's get-together, hosted by the Au Sable Forks Revitalization Group, was the public's first opportunity to review and provide input on the initial plans for the Masonic Lodge—rechristened the Tahawus Lodge Center or "TLC" for short.

There is no doubt that it will take a lot of TLC—tender, loving care—from many in the community to make this vision a reality, says Ms. Kelly. "We live part of the year near Au Sable Forks and have been familiar with that building for a long time," she said in an interview with the *Lake Champlain Weekly*, explaining the genesis of the project. "In 20-plus years living and working in the area, we noticed no change to the building except possibly further decay.

"We thought it would be a challenge. Craig and I had long thought about having a place nearby for our company's activities, but we also see the building as having the potential to be a real hub for the community."

It turns out that the vision of Ms. Kelly and Mr. Brashear dovetails nicely with community efforts already underway. The Au Sable Forks Revitalization Group was formed about four years ago to assist the Town of Jay with downtown revitalization, and a plan engendered in 2005, with the aid of the engineering consulting firm Barton & Loguidice, identified the Masonic Lodge—constructed in 1911—as "historically and architecturally significant" and a structure that "should be of priority in any redevelopment plans to take place in the Forks' commercial downtown."

Strengthening Community Through a Commitment to the Arts

Transforming one thing into another—the essence of art—is nothing new for Ms. Kelly and Mr. Brashear. Through Rebecca Kelly Ballet and then RKB under the umbrella of the Appleby Foundation, the duo has been creating dynamic dance performances and youth outreach and enrichment programs for more than three decades. The Tahawus Lodge Center project, however, represents something of a departure.

"This is an exciting new transition—to stimulating the creative torch in a different way from the performances we've been doing over the years," Ms. Kelly said. "But we've always been about stimulating creativity wherever we lived, whether it was transforming our loft in New York City into a performance space or helping to turn an abandoned city lot into a playground. This latest project marks the evolution of our legacy, the next phase of what we're up to. It's another way of strengthening the community through the arts."

Contrary to its name, Au Sable Forks is where the East and West branches of the Ausable River *meet* and flow—in a northerly direction—into Lake Champlain. The Masonic Lodge is situated on the bank of the West branch, just below where the two streams are joined. The front door of the lodge opens onto Route 9N, while the basement door in the back opens onto the river level.

The two entrepreneurs behind the Tahawus Lodge project see that as an ideal set-up for bringing two or more businesses into the building—for example, a sporting goods and/or fishing guide service in the basement and an internet café/patisserie and/or general store (featuring locally made goods, of course) at street level. On the second floor, they envision a gallery and meeting space, complete with a working kitchen; and on the third and top floor, a

continued on page 22

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If You Rebuild It, They Will Come

By Fred Balzac

Tahawus...continued from page 21

dance studio/fitness center.

One thing Ms. Kelly does not envision TLC being is a major performance venue; rather, she sees it complementing the year-and-a-half-old community center that can be found 6 miles along Route 9N, in the hamlet of Jay. "We don't need a performance space because we have the Ward Theatre, and we see the Tahawus Lodge Center as being more of a rehearsal space or place for workshops," she said, citing a new choreography workshop that she will be teaching in Plattsburgh. "I'd love to do that in Au Sable Forks as well."

Her hope is that, once the new center is up and running, there would be opportunities to collaborate with other arts institutions and organizations in the region. Ms. Kelly imagined that a piece "work-shopped" at the Tahawus could be performed at the space in Jay and then "run out" to other venues, such as the Strand Theatre in Plattsburgh—another regional arts center in development.

"The more you have going on, the more it will lead to," Ms. Kelly observed. "This project could stimulate other things—things we'd never dream of. Until you create it, how would you know it's calling for something else?"

A Cinderella-like Field of Dreams

Of course, making that dream come true will take more than TLC—it will take dollars. Ms. Kelly and Mr. Brashear estimate that as much as 60% of their $1.2 million target could come from government grants and another 20% from foundations, with the remaining 20% coming from individual donations and community efforts. Because Au Sable Forks is an Empire Zone, donors giving $500 and up are eligible for a New York State tax credit of 25% of their donation, on top of the standard deduction for supporting a 501c3 organization.

Rebecca Kelly and Craig Brashear. Photo courtesy of the Rebecca Kelly Ballet

Already the project has been embraced by organizations and office holders at the local, regional, and state levels—from the Au Sable Revitalization Group to the Arts Council of the Northern Adirondacks, from Town of Jay Supervisor Randy Douglas to Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward. United States Senator Charles Schumer is "getting there," according to Ms. Kelly. "We have to remind him not to overlook our mountains and valleys," she said, referring to initial contact with the Brooklyn-bred Senator. "Craig and I have the added advantage of being upstate and downstate residents."

And then there are the people. At the gathering on June 27th, which was the first of several informational meetings envisioned to take place as the project progresses, there were plenty of them: nearly 100, including town officials, local business and civic leaders, and artists from around the region. The excitement over the plans was palpable. "We welcome community input and ideas," Ms. Kelly said in the interview, a sentiment that she and Mr. Brashear echoed during the meeting.

The choreographer, who refers to dance as "the Cinderella of the arts world," admits that it is especially challenging to be launching this project in today's economy. "It's a strange time to be starting something like this," she said. "But as artists, it is always a strange time—in art, there is no 'good time.'"

In other words, only the need or the urge to create, at any given time. "Nothing is more rewarding than making something where nothing was before," Ms. Kelly said, acknowledging that the Masonic Lodge—one of the few "anchor" buildings of Au Sable Forks to survive the great fire of 1925—gives this project a lot more to work with than the proverbial "blank slate" that artists often start with. "It's a beginning."

Fred Balzac reports on the arts for the Lake Champlain Weekly. *For more information on the Tahawus Lodge Center project, please call Craig Brashear at (518) 293-7608 or (646) 734-7151 or visit www.applebyfoundation.org.*

Get ready for the annual Lewis Civil War Days, July 10-12.

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Keeseville native furthers Navy aid mission.

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July 4, 2009

Arts foundation helps transform downtown Au Sable Forks

Old Masonic Lodge to be converted to house retail, cultural outlet

By Matt Bosley
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The Masonic Tahawus Lodge on the banks of the Au Sable river in Au Sable Forks has fallen into disuse and disrepair for the past two decades, but was recently purchased by a nonprofit foundation that supports dance and other arts in the Adirondack region. Fundraising efforts are now ongoing to renovate the building with a retail storefront and community culture center.

AU SABLE FORKS — Efforts to invigorate business and activity in downtown Au Sable Forks are getting a huge boost as a renowned arts foundation now seeks to turn an abandoned building into a thriving cornerstone of the community.

The Appleby Foundation, the nonprofit umbrella of Rebecca Kelly Ballet, has recently purchased the Tahawus Lodge, a historic Masons' building in Au Sable Forks with the intention to renovate and reopen it as a cultural, community, and commercial center.

The building, built in 1911, was one of few to survive a 1925 fire that tore through the village and has stood up to recent floods and earthquakes, but has been out of use for over 20 years and is in need of extensive repair.

With the support of the Au Sable Forks Main Street Revitalization committee and the Essex County Empire Zone, the arts foundation will now seek to raise $1.2 million for the renovation of the three-story building.

Based in New York City and the Adirondacks, Rebecca Kelly Ballet has brought public dance performances and youth programs to towns throughout the North Country for more than 22 years, including choreography workshops and dance classes in Plattsburgh, Saranac Lake, Tupper Lake, Jay, Essex, Lake Placid, Potsdam, and North Creek.

Rebecca Kelly and her husband, Craig Brashear, who heads the Appleby Foundation, have also lived seasonally in the area for the past 22 years at their home in Silver Lake. Dozens of local residents joined them at a June 27 reception hosted by American Legion Post 504 as they presented their plan for the new Tahawus Lodge Center.

"In our 35 years as practicing artists and through our not-for-profit organization, the Appleby foundation... we have created programs which strengthen communities through the arts," said Kelly.

Kelly said they chose the Tahawus Lodge because of its prominent location in the center of Au Sable Forks and its proximity to I-87, Burlington, Plattsburgh, Lake Placid, and Montreal. Also, the presence of a revitalization committee showed a strong commitment to reviving the community.

"We gradually came to think as we established a more permanent presence in this region that the Tahawus Lodge Center could be its anchor," said Kelly.

Plans for the building include restoring the picture-window storefront and renovating the ground floor as a retail space. The second floor would be turned into an open art studio and meeting space and the third floor converted into a dance and wellness center.

"We're thrilled," said Au Sable Forks Revitalization committee chair Susan Pulitzer, noting how synergistic the Appleby Foundation's plans for the building are with the committee's goals for Main Street. "It's a nice marriage."

In less than a month, $80,000 has already been pledged toward the project, which is being designed by Essex architectural team Premises.

Brashear said they expect to fund 40 percent of the project through contributions from businesses and individuals. The rest will come from state grants and assistance.

"The Tahawus Lodge Center project is a viable and welcome addition to Au Sable Forks to make it a better place to live and work," said Barbara Brassard, Essex County Empire Zone Coordinator. "This project not only deserves, but demands total support."

Brassard said since the Tahawus Lodge Center is an approved Community Development Project within Essex County Empire Zone, contributions of $500 or more to the project are eligible for a 25 percent tax credit against state income tax.

"The revitalization process doesn't happen overnight, but in steps," Brassard added, "and the renovation of the Tahawus Lodge is one of those steps."

Because the project is beginning in 2009, it is also eligible for funds from a $200,000 main street revitalization grant awarded to the town of Jay from New York State.

"I have read their project overview, and their overall plan for enhancing an anchor building in Au Sable Forks will have a significant economic impact on our community," said Jay Supervisor Randy Douglas in a press release. "Their sincere dedication to enhancing new opportunities for our youth is greatly appreciated."

LAKE PLACID NEWS

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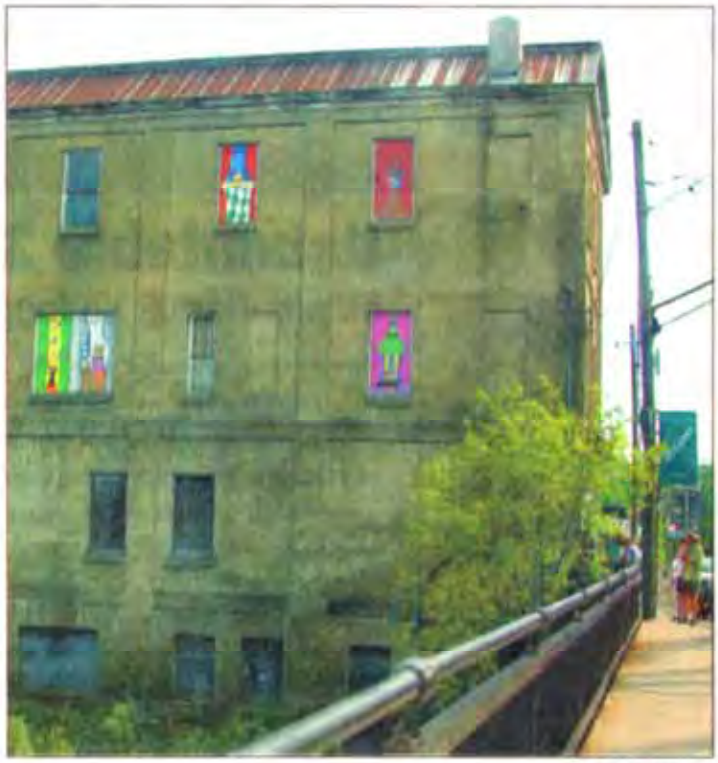

PHOTO PROVIDED

The historic Mason's building on Main Street in Au Sable Forks will be transformed into a new center for culture, community and commerce.

Big plans ahead for Au Sable Forks building

HEATHER SACKETT
NEWS STAFF WRITER

AU SABLE FORKS – An ambitious Lake Placid performance artist has committed to a project that will help revitalize downtown Au Sable Forks. Last week, the Appleby Foundation, parent company of the Rebecca Kelly Ballet, announced plans for a new center for culture, community and commerce. They are calling it the Tahawus Lodge Center Project (TLC).

The Rebecca Kelly Ballet, based in SoHo in Manhattan, has been coming to Lake Placid for a summer residency each year for more than two decades. This will be the ballet's first foray into a project of this size and scope.

"After talking to lots of people, we think we can have a new project that is good for the town and the region," Kelly said. "The idea is to combine culture with community programs and commercial enterprise."

The Appleby Foundation will be taking over the historic Mason's building on Main Street in Au Sable Forks. The building, just across the bridge on the Jay side of town, has had many uses, including housing a newspaper, a shoe store and a laundromat, but has stood vacant and largely unused for the past several years. The town of Jay has authorized a $50,000 matching grant from one the town received to help restore the building. It is not heated and contains asbestos, which will need to be removed.

Kelly is married to Craig Brashear, executive director of the Appleby Foundation. They live part time in New York City, but also have a house near Silver Lake.

See AU SABLE BUILDING, Page 8

AU SABLE BUILDING: CENTER PLANNED

"Au Sable Forks is our little town," Kelly said. "There was this great big, empty, derelict building and we made inquiries to buy it."

The foundation signed a contract to purchase the building from the Masons last week.

According to Brashear, the project has a $1.2 million budget, most of which will be raised through a capital campaign. In addition to asbestos removal, the building will be getting new windows, a new heating system, an elevator and a sprinkler system, in addition to external facade work.

Kelly said she envisions multiple uses for each floor of the building. She would like to have a dance and creativity center on the top floor of the building. The second floor would have meeting space, a gallery exhibiting local artisan's work and maybe a town history visitors center. The ground floor would contain a general store or other retail shop and, for the basement level next to the river, Kelly said she would like to see a water sports or fishing-related store, or light manufacturing. But she added that the foundation will work closely with the town to see what people in Au Sable Forks want and need.

"We don't want to tread on other enterprises," she said. "We are hoping to find people to make this into reality."

The TLC is slated to open in 2011, but the foundation must first come up with the funds for the renovations. Despite

the ailing economy, Kelly said she isn't worried about being able to raise enough money for the project.

"You don't wait for the funds, you wait for the idea to create," she said. "You might think it's naive, but it's been what has driven the creation of many an artistic project over the years."

Town of Jay Supervisor Randy Douglas said he is excited about the Tahawus Lodge Center project.

"It is part of our overall revitalization effort," he said. "I think it will bring people into town. It's a step in the right direction."

A community information session will be held at 7 p.m. on Saturday, June 27 at the American Legion Post 504 in Au Sable Forks. Complimentary desserts, cheese and coffee will be served. For more information, contact Sue Pulitzer at 647-8194.