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Relocation Guide

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Lots of Jobs

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AND *play***



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You Otter Live Here!

Here are some of the perks of living in Otter Tail Lakes Country:

-  Friendly small town living
-  Excellent local schools
-  Child-friendly atmosphere
-  Lower cost of housing
-  State-of-the-art healthcare
-  High-quality job openings
-  Art and cultural opportunities
-  Lakes, woods, parks and trails

Cover Photo: Central Lakes Bike Trail, © Explore Minnesota Tourism



Spotlights

We encourage you to live and work here. Why? There are good jobs, in a variety of occupations. Our 22 unique towns have a rural setting but are just a couple of hours from the Twin Cities. It's a safe place to live, work, play, raise kids, and retire. Extensive culture, art, and music opportunities are complemented by an eclectic blend of restaurants, boutiques, and entertainment. Quality healthcare, good schools, outdoor recreation, high quality of life, and the stable economy all creates a thriving environment for business. Most importantly, the people here share a special community spirit. We think that Otter Tail Lakes Country is the very best place to live, work and play, but you don't have to just take our word for it...

Read the **Live & Work Spotlights** and let five of our residents, each from different walks of life, share their insights about living and working in Otter Tail Lakes Country.



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Flip Cover

Turn the front cover 180 degrees to page through our Destination Guide and learn why a vacation in Otter Tail Lakes Country could be just what your Inner Otter is looking for.



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Feeling *Otter* Place?

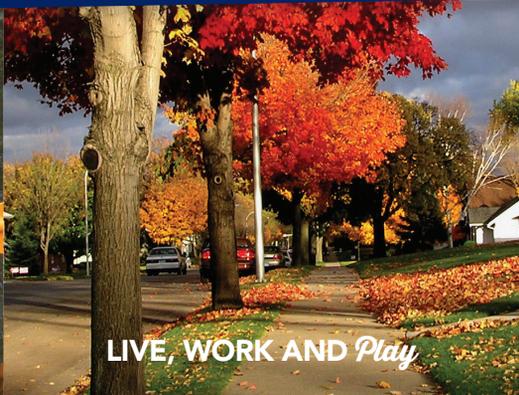


Concrete Jungle got you down?

Are you getting tired of the rat race in the big city? Maybe it's time you made Otter Tail Lakes Country your home. The lakes aren't just a great place to visit, they also are a great place to live, work, raise a family, grow a business and retire. With friendly home town living, a lower cost of living, excellent schools and nature just out your front door, a move to Otter Tail Lakes Country might be just what your Inner Otter needs.

To learn more about relocation information and opportunities visit: www.OtterTailLakesCountry.com/Live

Photos by Jeanne Shetnan, Lake Region Healthcare, Five Lakes Resort, Battle Lake Review, The Daily Journal Media, Rebekah Ekelund, Visit Fergus Falls, Nick & Betsy Roder, Arianna Zavala, Nancy Valentine, Jeffrey Krosch and Mike Henkenius





Raise Your Family

Come back home for community and quality of life.

Often, a high school graduate's first impulse is to leave home to experience the world. Some attend college, a few join the armed forces, and others get a job in the city. Those who eventually find a partner and decide to start a family are faced with the question of where to best raise their children.

Quality of life means different things to different people. Sometimes people from a rural or small town atmosphere are attracted to the idea of raising their kids in the same environment in which they were raised. The closeness of family and friends, connections for work, smaller schools, lower crime rates, and their familiarity with the region can be factors in their decision to move back home. Our interview with Nick and Betsy Roder is a good example of a young family that returned to Otter Tail Lakes Country, based on what they thought was best for their children.

"... we appreciate that we know the people of our community and they're all watching out for our kids so we feel safer and the kids get more freedom."

– Nick





Focus on
Nick & Betsy Roder

Live: New York Mills
Work: (Betsy) Executive Director Regional Cultural Center (Nick) Bank Vice President
From: (Betsy) New York Mills (Nick) Green Bay, WI
Inner: (Betsy) Eclectic
Otter: (Nick) Outdoorsy

Where are you guys from?

Betsy: I grew up in New York Mills and Nick is originally from Green Bay, Wisconsin.

What community do you live in?

BR: We live in New York Mills with our four kids: Finn (9), Bergen (7), Trygg (5) and Kaia (2).

What are your occupations?

NR: I am the Vice President of F & M State Bank and Betsy is the Executive Director of the Cultural Center in New York Mills.

What are your educational backgrounds?

BR: We both went to college at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. I studied Finance and Nick studied History and Geography. We actually met while we were both studying abroad in two different countries in Europe – Reutlingen, Germany and Cambridge, England (we met in Cambridge).

What did you pursue after graduation?

NR: We got married in New York Mills and moved to Minneapolis. I worked a few different sales positions before working at two different banks in the cities and Betsy worked for Target’s corporate office. We lived there for about 10 years and started our family, but after we had our first two children, we moved to New York Mills.

How often did you visit Otter Tail County while you were living in the Twin Cities area?

BR: All the time. My family is still in the area and we have some lake property, so we would make the trip from the cities for holidays and practically every weekend in the summer. We used to get home from work on Fridays and scramble to get the kids ready so we could beat the traffic, get to the lake, have a wonderful weekend, then Sunday would roll around and we would all just drag our feet thinking about the commute back to the cities.

Why did you choose to live in New York Mills?

BR: Well, we actually made our decision after a visit to New York Mills for a birthday party in the summer of 2010. It was one of those days where everything seemed to go wrong and at the end of the day when I was about at my wits end, my dad came in the room while I was changing our youngest at the time and said “I think it’s time you guys consider moving to New York Mills.” There was a job opening at Farmers and Merchants State Bank, and after discussing it, we decided the time was right to make the move.

What do you love about living in Otter Tail County?

NR: You know how they say “it takes a village to raise a child?” Well, we appreciate that we know the people of our community, and they’re all watching out for our kids so we feel safer and the kids get more freedom. There are also many options for people to get connected and involved in the community.

BR: Life has slowed down in a good way. We felt like we were constantly rushing from one place to the other when we lived in the Twin Cities and now we’re able to be present and take advantage of the things around us. We feel like we live a more peaceful life and have the time to enjoy the natural resources around us.

What advice do you have for other families like yours considering moving to Otter Tail County?

BR: I would say go with your heart. This is an area where your kids are going to thrive. You’re going to enjoy the time spent with them instead of commuting to daycare to pick them up and then putting them straight to bed when you finally get home. I’m always hearing about job opportunities in the area and there are so many ways to get involved, so the transition to small town life is easier than you think.

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Rural Living Comes with a Catch.

(Hopefully, it's a walleye.)



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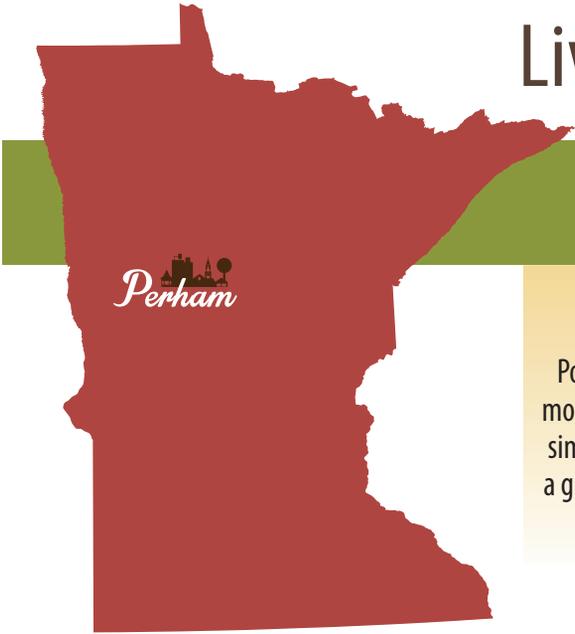
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Pursue Your Dreams

Set goals, work hard and enjoy the journey.

The United States of America is a nation of Immigrants who have rightfully aspired to lives of freedom and happiness. For over 500 years, immigrants have come to America to escape war and drought, to practice their religion, to own land, and to work, prosper, and live the American Dream. There is little argument about how important immigrants have been to our country's history. The immigration of diverse peoples from all over the world has resulted in a blend of cultures and traditions that makes the United States unique.

Our interview with Arianna Zavala is yet another illustration of how immigrants add to the fabric of our communities. Immigrants help position Otter Tail County for growth and cultural vitality, bringing with them ingenuity and a variety of languages. This makes Otter Tail County a more prosperous, connected and successful place to live.

"... we came here when I was six years old, so this is all I know. I love the small community feel. Everybody is so friendly and it has been that way since I can remember."

– Arianna





Focus on
Arianna Zavala

Live: Pelican Rapids
Work: Realtor
From: Guanajuato, Mexico
Inner Otter: About Town

Where are you from?

Arianna: I am not originally from the area. My family and I emigrated from Guanajuato, Mexico in 1994, and I have been here in the Otter Tail area for over 20 years.

What influenced the move?

AZ: My father - we had some relatives in the area, so when we moved, we were amongst the first families of Hispanic origin to reside in the area.

What community do you live in?

AZ: I live on Crystal Lake on the outskirts of Pelican Rapids. I've lived there for a little over two years with my husband and our two dogs.

What is your occupation?

AZ: I am a Realtor at Coldwell Banker and have been in this profession for over nine years.

What influenced you to want to pursue a career in this field?

AZ: My mother wanted to move to different homes every two years all within the Pelican Rapids area. I was very involved in the purchasing process as an elementary school child, translating many of the transaction details and principles between my parents and the realtors. I pursued this right after high school when I was 18 going on 19. (I actually work with many of those realtors and brokers now.) It feels very natural, so I believe this is a profession I will continue to pursue.

What do you enjoy about being a Realtor in Otter Tail County?

AZ: I absolutely love helping families find the perfect home and the sellers make the change they desire in

order to move on with their lives. Finding the perfect match is always a struggle, but I love it. I get even more excited than they do.

Why did you choose to pursue this career in Pelican Rapids?

AZ: This is my home. I've been here for so long. We came here when I was six years old, so this is all I know. I love the small community feel, everybody is so friendly and it has been that way since I can remember.

Is there anything specific that you think draws your clientele to Otter Tail County?

AZ: We've got the lakes living not only in Pelican, but in the surrounding communities, and people like to take advantage of the outdoor amenities. We also have educational resources and jobs. If you want to go to a big city, it's not that far of a drive.

What do you love about living in Otter Tail County?

AZ: My husband and I love entertaining out at our home for friends and family. We love to take people out on our boat [on Crystal Lake] and spend time relaxing. We also enjoy hiking in Maplewood State Park.

What are your future goals or aspirations as a Realtor in Pelican Rapids?

AZ: My goal is to obtain my brokers license before I turn 30. I will stick around and continue as a realtor for Coldwell Banker in Pelican Rapids, but I believe it wouldn't hurt for me to get this. There will be more responsibility and continuing education I will have to do every year, but I just have to keep on pushing myself.

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Shooting Star Casino & White Earth Nation

Shooting Star Casino, Hotel and Entertainment is proudly owned and operated by the White Earth Nation, the largest and most populous reservation in the State of Minnesota.

The White Earth Nation was created on March 19, 1867, during a treaty signing in Washington D.C. between the United States and the Chippewa Indians. Soon after President Andrew Johnson signed the treaty, Chief White Cloud and Chief Fine Day were among the first to move to the northwest Minnesota land known for its layer of white clay, aptly named the White Earth Reservation.

150 years later, it is one of the largest Indian tribes in the U.S., and the largest of the seven Chippewa reservations in Minnesota, with about 23,000 enrolled tribe members, 8,000 of whom live on the White Earth Reservation.

In September 2015, the White Earth Nation announced plans to build a third resort and casino located on Star Lake, in the heart of Otter Tail Lakes Country. Designed by Minneapolis-based Cunningham Group, construction will begin in 2017 and the project is slated for 2018. The new Shooting Star Casino project on Star Lake will offer slots, tables, a bar and grill, ballroom and a buffet. The casino property will also house a gift shop, deli, hotel and RV park. This endeavor will present new financial benefits for Otter Tail Country and for the White Earth Nation.



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SHOOTING STAR



STAR LAKE COMING SOON!

In September 2015, the White Earth Nation announced plans to build a third resort and casino located on Star Lake, in the heart of Otter Tail Lakes Country. Designed by Minneapolis-based Cunningham Group, construction will begin in 2017 and the project is slated for 2018.

The New Shooting Star location will include:

- ✦ Slots
- ✦ Table Games
- ✦ Hotel
- ✦ Buffet
- ✦ Bar
- ✦ Restaurants
- ✦ Gift Shop
- ✦ RV Park

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Grow Your Talents

Have fun, make money and make a difference.

Folks in Otter Tail Lakes Country view young people as a great investment for the future. There is the largest, most educated, and tech-savvy generation in history. Most young adults care about important issues and feel the importance of having a strong sense of community. Many have an entrepreneurial spirit, and they will be starting and running the new businesses that create the jobs of the future.

We suggest that young people consider working here, attending college closer to home and friends, or enjoying a fun summer job at the lake. After all, this is home to friends and family, great shopping, indoor and outdoor activities, low crime, nice people, and many job opportunities. A person can also make a difference in the world by making a difference in their home community. Our interview with Nancy Valentine features a young person who is a great example of that ideal.

“... nothing will ever feel like “home” as much as Otter Tail County. I have family, friends, a fun job and vast amounts of nature here. What more could I ask for?”

– Nancy





Focus on **Nancy Valentine**

Live: Fergus Falls
Work: Marketing
 Coordinator
From: Fergus Falls
Inner Otter: Eclectic

What community do you live in?

Nancy: I live in the Kaddatz Artist Lofts in downtown Fergus Falls.

What is your occupation?

NV: I work for Otter Tail Lakes Country Association as their Membership and Marketing Coordinator.

How did you get into this line of work?

NV: I studied Communication and Professional Writing at the University of Minnesota Duluth. During my college years I pursued internships and experiences with non-profits. I sort of naturally fell into the marketing-focused positions they had available.

If you went to school in Duluth, what brought you back to Otter Tail County?

NV: I grew up in Fergus Falls and my immediate family is still around. I'll be honest, when I left for college, I had the mindset that I was moving away for good; however, that changed shortly after I graduated. My grandparents were very influential in my older brother's and my upbringing after my father passed away in 1996. About a year after I graduated from UMD I started to realize that my grandparents were getting older and I wanted to spend as much time with them as possible before they moved on.

Was it difficult transitioning back into the community?

NV: It's never easy for a kid to move back in with their parents after graduating from college, but I still had quite a few friends in the area that I give credit to for making the transition pretty smooth. I feel like once I

approached my hometown and surrounding communities with an open mind I began to discover many businesses and activities in the area that aligned with my interests.

Can you elaborate on some of those businesses and activities?

A: Well, to start off, coffee was a vital part of my college years and there's quite a few shops and even a coffee roaster in the area. I've found a very vibrant rural arts community in not only my town, but all throughout the county. It's been fun to see things like galleries and resources for individual artists pop up in the past few years. Oh, and I also go to trivia every week at a local panini and wine bar.

Are you happy living in OTC?

NV: Yes! I have a bit of a "travel-bug" in me, so I tend to go on trips outside of OTC quite a bit, but nothing will ever feel like "home" as much as OTC. I have family, friends, a fun job and vast amounts of nature here, what more could I ask for?

What advice would you give to another "millennial" considering moving to OTC?

NV: Oh, man! I would tell them to seek out their interests because there's something here for everyone and it's one of the easiest ways to meet new friends. There are many other millennials in the area, and it's not that hard to find them if you make the effort to attend local events! I would also tell them to make a point of exploring the county - we have so many cool towns to enjoy and unique attractions to see!



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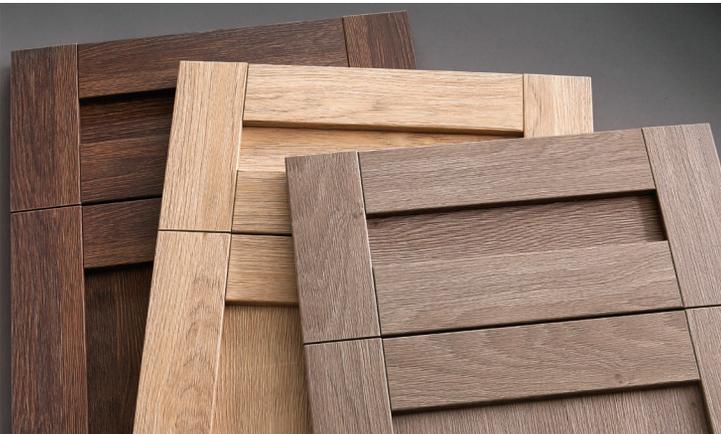
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Enjoy Your Work

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Young families have basic needs. Jobs with good wages and benefits are what help parents address those needs. Otter Tail Lakes Country offers a wide range of job opportunities. The most common jobs are in business administration, retail, construction, manufacturing, custodial, teaching, food, transportation, mechanics, nursing, health care services, farming, fishing, and forestry.

In 2016, the unemployment rate here was 3.1 percent, as opposed to 4.9 percent in the United States. Most people value great working conditions, fair wages, on-the-job training, great co-workers, and job security, but having a good job also allows more freedom to get involved with the community and to properly enjoy one's leisure time. Our interview with Jeff Krosch is a glimpse at a man who enjoys juggling a steady job, a growing family, civic service, the arts, and his love of the outdoors.

"... the big driving force for me was the need for something for "now" as well as the "future."

...and things like insurance benefits and retirement were things I needed."

– Jeff





Focus on **Jeffery Krosch**

Live: New York Mills
Work: Production Shift
 Assistant Supervisor
From: Alexandria Area
Inner Otter: Active

Were you raised in Otter Tail County?

Jeffery: I was born in Alexandria and lived in the small town of Garfield, but I've spent the majority of my time in Otter Tail County. Some of my family lives in this area and is from this area. The other side of my family is in the Eagle Bend area from Blue Earth on the Iowa border. My wife spent her whole life in New York Mills.

What community do you live in?

JK: I live right outside of New York Mills with my wife, Lorilee, and our three kids: Andrew (10), Aidan (7) and Aurora (2).

What is your occupation?

JK: I am a third shift (2pm – 11pm) Production Shift Assistant Supervisor [for Shearer's Snack Foods] and have been for roughly nine years, but am approaching 14 years with the company. I climbed pretty quickly from being a Line Packager to a Machine/Fryer Operator up to an Assistant Shift Supervisor in less than five years, and I have a second class boiler license.

Do you work in a specific region of Shearer's Snack Foods?

JK: I work in the potato chip production region of our plant. Having this license gives me the flexibility as part of the supervising staff to go back and forth from the snack and chip departments as needed because we have three boilers that we run that require this licensing.

What inspired you to pursue a career with Shearer's Snacks?

JK: I had never worked in factory before, so I thought I'd try something new. I had worked in customer service, food service and sales, and even a technologies firm at one point, but the big driving force for me was the need for something for "now" as well as the "future." I had just gotten married two months before getting hired at

Shearer's Snacks and things like insurance benefits and retirement were things I needed.

How is the commute to Perham?

JK: I don't dread the drive. It's only about 15 miles from my home so depending on weather (the great state of Minnesota likes to throw curve balls), it's usually about a 12 ½ minute drive one way. I've never really paid attention to the miles.

What activities do you enjoy outside of work?

JK: I'm one of the local scout leaders, so part of what I do outside of work is scouting and my two oldest are Cub Scouts. The scouts are very active in helping maintain local trails, so I've been recently exposing my kids to hiking in this area - the North Country Trail, a very amazing trail, and Maplewood State Park. I have done a fair amount of fishing and hunting in this area; there is a lot of good land for hunting.

What do you enjoy most about living in Otter Tail County?

JK: I'm big into the arts and it's been a wonderful experience to see the things that weren't here when I was younger to be here now. There are new experiences to have and things to see and lots of historical entities throughout the county.

What advice would you give to new residents of Otter Tail County?

JK: Don't hesitate to get out there. There are so many things that you would find that you would enjoy. Whether it's going to a local coffee house, or enjoying history, finding great places to eat, or great spots for fishing, we've got something for everyone. And Otter Tail County is a hub for everything around us as well. We've got access to so much in our surrounding communities as well.

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Live Your Retirement

Stay active and get involved with the community.

We appreciate senior citizens, second-acts, and retirees in Otter Tail Lakes Country, so why not consider it a place to retire? The wooded, hilly landscape is dotted by over 1000 lakes, which makes it great for boating, fishing, and finding an affordable lake home. The variety of shopping in the county's 24 friendly small towns, the great health care, and the safer environment are just some of many reasons to locate or retire in the area.

There are an increasing number of people in their 60s, 70s and 80s who want to continue working. Many people retire from a successful occupation and then pick up a second career. The trend is to successfully repurpose one's skills, hobbies, and interests into a more lifestyle-friendly option. Our interview with Mike Henkenius features a man who had a successful career elsewhere, and who moved here to discover that semi-retirement can be even more fulfilling.

"... a great place for people to transition to. There are many "transplants" in the area like us. It's easy to become a part of the community and get involved."

– Mike





Focus on
Mike Henkenius

Live: Battle Lake
Work: Management
Consultant (retired)
From: Mooreton, ND
Inner Otter: Easy Going

What community do you live in?

Mike: My wife, Chris, and I are a part of the Battle Lake community. We live on West Battle Lake.

Are you originally from the area?

MH: I'm originally from Mooreton, ND – I've been hanging around this area since I was a small kid; we would come to visit relatives who had lake homes in the area. Coming from North Dakota it was a special treat to be able to 'go to the lakes.'

What's your connection to Otter Tail County?

MH: I met Chris on Otter Tail Lake, where her family had a home in 1966. She lived here during her high school years. We met right before I went into the Marines and over to Vietnam. We were married in Battle Lake in 1969 after I was out of the service and a student at NDSU. Chris still has family in the Battle Lake area.

Did you stay in the area after you got married?

MH: No. After I graduated in Engineering from NDSU, we lived and worked in the Twin Cities for 33 years except for a year in Philadelphia. The last 10 years of my career I was a management consultant working all over the United States, Europe and Latin America. When we became empty nesters, we sold our home in Eden Prairie and moved here. We bought our lake lot in 1993 and built our garage as a seasonal residence. Then, in 2006 we built our home and I worked out from here for about five or so years before I retired.

Did you always have it in mind to come back?

MH: Not necessarily – As the kids left home we started to think about where we wanted to live. I always wanted to get out of the Twin Cities and never saw it a place to retire. We had a lake home for about 12 years near Mille Lacs Lake, but we never saw that as a place to retire. I've traveled and worked all over the world and the United States, and this is the place we chose to retire.

What drew you to Battle Lake as a place to retire?

MH: Family was part of it, but we've also spent a lot of time here hunting and fishing over the years. This place just seems like home. It's a great community, a great place for people to transition to. There are many "transplants" in the area like us. We're almost in the majority, so it's easy to become a part of the community and get involved.

Now that you're retired, in what ways are you involved in your community?

MH: I found out retirement is when you quit getting paid, not when you quit working! After I retired I got involved in Network Battle Lake, which got me involved in the rest of the community. I founded Battle Lake Youth Center Inc., a 501c3 non-profit, which is in the process of building a Child Care Center to address the child care need in the area. Prior to that, I spent a couple of years working as the Director of Economic Development for the area. Chris is very involved with the church and other volunteer organizations and social groups.

What benefits could you share with those considering retirement in Otter Tail County?

MH: The ability to get involved here is a really big factor for moving to the area. You're not going to be shut out; there's a lot to do here or you can just enjoy our great quality of life. We have five children and nine grandchildren who love to visit us here on the lake. When they come for the weekend or vacations there are always events or activities to keep active. There's so much to do in the community whether you like any outdoor activities or to hunt, fish, golf, be a part of social groups or enjoy restaurants. And we're a really active community. I admire that there are so many people who are over 80 in the area who are still very active – they're great role models for someone who just turned 70!