



News From 'Up North'

FALL/WINTER 2005

Jeffrey... a welcomed addition to the family

The biggest change for us this year began back in June of 2004. We decided to become foster parents for Jeffrey, Kelly's 1-1/2 year-old cousin from Pennsylvania. He needed a more permanent placement, and family members were given first opportunity.

We made lots of phone calls, had interviews and inspections, more phone calls and lots of waiting to see if we were even going to be accepted.

Then things all came together at the same time, and we were told that he would be placed with us on May 11th, 2005, after the court hearing. This was pretty much the worst week of the whole year they could have picked... opening weekend. Both of us wanted to go to meet him and bring him home, but there was just no way. So it was decided... Kelly would go, Mike would stay.

We were told he was a difficult child, 2-1/2 now, and didn't know if we would be able to get him on a plane. Luckily, Kelly's mom, Linda, volunteered to come along and help.

Plane tickets were booked to New York, since that was the cheapest flight, and then a rental car to drive to Pennsylvania, and later home to Minnesota.

About a week before leaving we got a phone call from Jeffrey's social worker. She said, "The foster mother has invited you to stay at the house with them when you come." She was hesitant to even say it because "this just isn't done." We accepted, taking the opportunity to spend as much time with Jeffrey before taking him



Jeffrey enjoyed decorating the Christmas tree with ornaments.

home. It turns out, this was an answer to our prayers.

The morning of May 10th, our flights met in New York and we got in the rental car and headed to Sunbury, Pennsylvania. We were to meet Jeffrey for the first time with the social worker.

We found the place, finally, and were excited to meet him. Plans had changed, and we were to pick up Jenny, Jeffrey's mom (Kelly's aunt, Linda's sister), so she could get in another visit before Jeffrey left for Minnesota. After a teary hello, we all headed out to the foster home to see Jeffrey.

We all went in the house when we got there, and Jeffrey came out to see his mom, full of energy and smiling with those big blue eyes. We met Barb and Bobby, the foster parents,

and all had a nice visit, learning as much as we could about Jeffrey, and letting him get to know us too. We had a nice supper with the family and learned about his bedtime routine, so we could keep things similar when he came home with us.

The next morning it was time to go to court, and then Jeffrey would be free to go home with us after we signed some papers. We hoped all would go well, and it did.

On the way back to Minnesota, we had lots of one-on-one time in the car. We must have seen 1,000 trucks! The name "Mom" had been given by Jeffrey before we even left the state of Pennsylvania.

We've never corrected him. Mike has become Dad. Cara and Jessica are his sisters. Jeffrey has changed so much since he first came home. He was in many different homes in his few years, and we hope he gets to stay in ours. He has a sense of security with our family now, and it would be devastating to ever take that away from him.

Each day with Jeffrey is both a challenge and an adventure. Some things he has learned these past 7 months... Getting sand on your feet is ok - it'll wash off. How to push up a freezy. Floating in the lake with a life jacket. Crawdads will pinch your finger if you don't hold them right. Pedaling Jessica's bike. Saying "cheese". Locking doors. Being quiet in church. Tickling is fun! Jumping in leaves. That button in the truck rolls up the window, but you should take your fingers out of the

way first. Saying "I'm sorry". Helping make cookies. Sing songs, especially "EeeliEeeliOooo"! How to go potty - and get candy for it. Saying the alphabet and count fingers with Dad. Snow is cold, but Jessica says you can eat it!

In early November Jeffrey turned 3 and had a big birthday party. He really enjoyed all the people, cake and ice cream and opening all his presents - he got a lot of cars, trucks and tractors which he loves.

He's quite the little helper - loves to help with laundry, dishes, clearing the table and anything else he can get his hands on. His manners are coming along - says "thank you" for any little thing you give him (comes out "day doo", but it's nice to hear). Jeffrey's also found a new fun toy... Barbies! He especially likes putting the shoes on and off. Guess it's time for some legos - or a Boy Barbie!

Cabin Openings For 2006

May 12-19	#1, 13
May 12-25	#4, 8
May 18-25	#6
May 20-27	#1, 2, 3
May 27-June 3	#1, 2, 3, 13
June 3-10	#1, 2, 8, 12
Aug. 19-26	#6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13
Aug. 26-Sept. 2	#1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12
Sept. 2-9	#2, 3, 4, 5, 7
Sept. 9-16	#13
Sept. 16-23	#1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13
Sept. 23-30	#1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 13

If you would like a week that is not available, the best time to call is from January 16, after deposits are due, until around mid-February or March, in case we get some cancellations. We can also add your name to our waiting list for a particular week.

Walleye slot limit/stocking update

The Minnesota DNR is nearly one year into its five-year action plan for improving the walleye sport fishery on Leech Lake. Key elements of the plan include experimental angling regulations to protect walleye broodstock; stepped up cormorant population control measures; use of stocking marked by fry to evaluate walleye natural

reproduction; and increased focus on long-term habitat protection. Below is a summary of action plan progress made to date. **Experimental Fishing Regulations** - Beginning with this year's fishing opener, anglers are required to release all walleye from 18 inches to 26 inches. The possession limit was reduced to four (4) fish, only

one of which can exceed 26 inches. The objective of this regulation is to protect walleye brood stock until additional year classes reach maturity. Walleye within the slot limit are most likely mature and will be spawning this coming spring. They are the key to a return to good fishing on Leech Lake.

(Continued on back)

Jessica

Jessica is 4½ and has really grown up a lot this year, taking on her new role as big sister to Jeffrey. She is quite the little teacher and is very caring and concerned about him (when they're not arguing over toys).

She talks about her upcoming birthday party (in March) every other day. "Do I get to keep all my presents?" she asks.

She attends pre-kindergarten this year, which means she gets to stay all day on Fridays and even take a lunch box. It's been hard learning which day is Friday, though.

Lately Jessica will walk up and start her sentences with, "I know, Mom, ..." and then ramble off these wonderful facts and descriptions.

She's also been concerned about growing up, asking, "Mom, will you still be my mom when I grow up?" and "Can I live with you when I grow up?" and "Can I have this house when I grow up?" She plans to have ten children so we will have some babies to take care of.



Jessica flashes a big smile after a swim she enjoyed this summer.



Cara (right) with her friend Megan skating together on Dad's ice rink.

include the Junie B. series, "If You Take a Mouse to the Movies" and books about horses.

Cara has also started a "school" in her room. One of the things she purchased with her cabin cleaning money this summer was a set of TV trays, which Darlene found at a garage sale for her. She makes up assignments on each tray for Jeffrey, Jessica and Ethan when he comes over. More of her friends have agreed to join the school, but she has asked them to be teachers with her because, "how can I possibly teach everyone myself?"

Cara has begun to take over the cooking. She makes excellent pancakes! She also has a new kids cookbook which we've started using.

Favorite passtime is TV - cartoons mostly, but the other day she said, "That was the most interesting news I've ever watched." (the story about the plane in Chicago). Now she wants to watch our stuff because, "they must know that kids are gonna watch the cartoon channels and miss all this good stuff. I'm usually in bed so I don't get to see it."

Walleye update... continued

Initial assessment of the 2005-year class is encouraging. Trawl catch rates in the main lake were nearly double the long-term average for young-of-the-year walleye. Fall electrofishing also documented high catch rates and fast growth, another important variable for survival. We continue to monitor the strength of this and all year classes through standard and expanded sampling.

Cormorant Management - The DNR, The Leech Lake Band, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Department of Agriculture are cooperating on a project to evaluate the appropriate level of population reduction and feasible measures for controlling cormorants on Leech Lake. Various lethal and non-lethal control measures are being evaluated. The number of cormorants on Leech Lake this summer was estimated to be 3,500, which is down considerably from 10,000 birds last summer. Culling methods removed nearly 3,000 birds throughout the spring, summer and fall of 2005. Habitat modification of Little Pelican Island also reduced nesting birds by more than 1,000. Staff from the Leech Lake Band and Leech Lake Association volunteers burned additional nesting material this fall and hope this action will further reduce resident bird numbers next year. In addition, two graduate students at the U of M (St. Paul) are working on Leech Lake cormorant /fish dynamics. Their work will be instrumental in helping manage cormorants on Leech Lake.

Natural Reproduction Evaluation by Stocking Marked Walleye Fry - The five-year action plan calls for stocking five million walleye fry each year for three years, beginning in 2005. This year, additional fry from a close genetic match to Leech Lake walleye were available, resulting in more than 7.5 million fry being stocked. All fry stocked in Leech Lake were marked with a chemical (oxytetracycline or OTC) that allows biologists to identify them as stocked fish. The objective of stocking marked walleye fry is to estimate the natural fry production in Leech Lake and determine the optimal level of mature female spawners needed to provide consistent natural repro-

duction in Leech Lake. More than 900 young-of-the-year were collected for this analysis. These fish will be examined for OTC marks later this fall to help estimate the level of natural reproduction in 2005.

Habitat Protection - Natural shoreline supports the fish, wildlife and water quality that make Leech Lake one of the most-visited lakes in the state. This shoreline and in-lake vegetation are key components to a healthy Leech Lake. This summer DNR and LLDRM staff completed a four-year aquatic vegetation survey of Leech Lake. The survey documented aquatic plant species' presence throughout Leech Lake. Knowing the relative abundance and distribution of aquatic plant species is one of the keys to protecting habitat.

Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) was discovered in Leech Lake in the summer of 2004 in five boat harbors between Stony Point and Rogers Point. Soon after the discovery, these harbors were treated with an herbicide to kill the invasive exotic plant. A June 2005 inspection found EWM in just one of the five treated harbors, as well as in a new harbor nearby. These two harbors were treated with an herbicide in July 2005. During a follow-up inspection in September of this year, only one EWM plant was found. DNR staff will continue to monitor for the presence of EWM in these and other harbors throughout the lake and treat areas found to have EWM.

DNR staff continue to work with Cass County to incorporate intra-lake zoning as part of the review/revision of shoreland rules, a change that would provide needed protection to sensitive areas on Leech Lake that are not developed. In conjunction with the Leech Lake Watershed Foundation, the DNR is working to ensure the state land at Ah-Gwah-Ching remains in state ownership as an aquatic management area. Other areas of Leech Lake that may benefit from a conservation easement are also being investigated.

This letter was received Oct. 24, 2005 from Area Fisheries Supervisor, Harlan Fierstine and Large Lake Specialist, Pat Rivers.

Cara

Cara turned 8 in October. This year's focus has been "friends" and "computers" and having parties - or trying to. She often comes home from school telling us the plans that were made during school or while riding the bus. She loves inviting people over, but forgets that these people (including herself) have parents.

She is in the 2nd grade this year, and very excited to learn how to write in cursive. Art is still a favorite at free time.

She reads almost every night and her favorite books

Wishing all our family and friends a
Merry Christmas!

Mike, Kelly, Cara, Jessica & Jeffrey