

THE MUNICIPAL LIQUOR STORE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
MINNESOTA BEVERAGE ASSOCIATION
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MUNICIPAL LIQUOR STORE

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ON THE COVER

Allow me to introduce myself.

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For the rest of this article, go to page 14

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MMBA President's Message



Lara Smetana
President

New Products

We all know there is an influx of new products being presented to us weekly. Some are good and some are just not good for our business. It is our responsibility to research and try new products, know our customers tastes and what our community stands for when making purchases. Don't believe everything your salesperson tells you. Ask the tough questions. Where do you currently have this product and is it selling? Not how many cases he sold on the roll-out, but rather how many reorders? Does your store sell high end wines and liquors or is it a beer store? How does your community feel about all the new "kid friendly" products that are flooding the market? Cotton Candy, gummy, and S'mores vodka to name a few. Or the new tequilas out there that come in a skull looking bottle?

Competition

Are you competitive in your market? I was accused of not being competitive with the liquor stores in the bordering towns to the north and south of mine. Those stores are all privately owned and use liquor stores as an added sale to their c-store businesses. They target one or two beers and sell them as loss leaders to get people in the door and then market to get the additional sales of the more expensive liquors and groceries. They do not have a full selection of beer, wine or liquor. They do not have knowledgeable staff to hand sell a great bottle of wine or a new liquor product.

I decided to match their price for the first part of the summer on Busch suits.

I did not see an increase in my sales and when the 16 oz 18 can package came out with a great price I discontinued selling the 24 cans at the lower price and put the 18 cans at the matched price. I figured it is the same volume of beer and I would make full mark. Over the past two months I have not seen a decrease in the sales of the 24 can at the higher price and I have introduced a new package that is flying off the shelves and selling at full mark. Therefore, adding to the bottom line profits for my city.

When making purchases and setting pricing, do what makes sense. Products do not sell from the back room. No one needs enough back stock to fill a warehouse. Make investments in the products that will turn and make your business more profitable. Take advantage of free goods and ask for free product instead of dealer loaders. Remember, you cannot sell dealer loaders; therefore they do not help your bottom line.

A few years back, the MMBA promoted setting prices ending in .49 and .99. There is a price matrix that can show

you how much more you can add to your bottom line by doing so. It can really add up and your customers do not seem to notice. Set time to make those price changes and reap the benefits like the rest of us who already have.

Promotion/forward thinking

Whether you are a small or a large city, there is always room for improvement and updating. Some of us look at the same thing every day and it seems ok. I was recently on vacation and came back after being out for a week and was disgusted by the looks of the carpet when I returned. I am sure it did not get that dirty when I was gone. It most likely had been that way for some time. I immediately called and set up a time to get it cleaned!

As the manager of a city owned business, you will always be in the public eye. Remember being transparent is the only way to go and always manage the business in the best interest of the community and the tax payers, because ultimately they are the ones who own the business.

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Municipal Liquor Stores Benefit Central Minnesota Communities

Editor's Note: It is especially interesting this was published in the St. Cloud Times, a newspaper that has traditionally opposed municipal liquor operations.

By **Kari Petrie**, St. Cloud Times

While shoppers might see it as a convenient place to pick up beer and wine, cities rely on municipal liquor stores to fill the budgeting gap.

In 2010, 209 Minnesota cities operated 242 municipal liquor stores. In Central Minnesota, Sauk Rapids, Paynesville, Princeton, Holdingford and Gilman have their own stores.

Sauk Rapids recently purchased land for a possible second liquor store. Other cities have found that expanding their stores and updating their offerings has raised revenue.

The St. Cloud Times reviewed financial information from area municipal liquor stores and found that they are all making a profit — some just a few thousand dollars, others nearly \$200,000 a year. That money has gone to public improvement projects, paying off debt, and buying new squad cars, among other things.

But some think owning a liquor store serves other purposes. It can stimulate development and gives local governments more control over alcohol sales.

“We’re not in it just for the money,” Princeton City Administrator Mark Karnowski said. “There is a control component that, in my mind, is at least just as important.”

Filling gaps

In a time when city governments are seeing state aid cuts and declines in property tax revenue, income from a

liquor store can help pay for projects that might otherwise be left undone.

Sauk Rapids uses the profits from its store to buy equipment such as squad cars and backhoes for the public works department. In 2011 the city made about \$97,000.

Sauk Rapids City Administrator Ross Olson said the liquor store funds allow the city to make large purchases and keep the tax rate down.

Paynesville has used liquor store profits to pay for sidewalk projects and put money into the city’s general fund, City Administrator Renee Eckerly said. In 2011 the city made about \$7,000 but that number is skewed because of costs associated with moving into a new building. In 2010 it made about \$74,000.

While some of the money the Princeton store makes goes into the general fund, most of it goes to community projects. In 2011 Princeton made about \$184,000.

“We try to use the money for positive projects in the city that we otherwise wouldn’t have the money to do,” Karnowski said.

The city has used money to put in a splash pad and is looking to use liquor store funds to build a new public safety building.

But Karnowski said having a city liquor store is about more than having another revenue source.

“Having some control over the sale of alcohol is a good thing,” he said.

Cities that have private businesses sell alcohol don’t have as much control when laws are violated. If a business

sells alcohol to a minor, the city is limited in what sort of action it can take against the business.

But if a city employee working at a city liquor store sells alcohol to a minor, the city has more control over what can be done.

The Holdingford liquor store hasn’t been as financially successful as others. In 2011 it made just \$2,300. Its profits go into the general fund.

While some residents have talked about whether to keep it open, City Clerk Vicki Statz said others feel the store is an important part of the city.

“It’s been a staple in town,” she said.

Plans for expansion

As Sauk Rapids grows and anticipates new development, officials have begun discussions about whether to build a second liquor store.

Last month, the city purchased land at Golden Spike Road and Industrial Boulevard for \$375,000. For years Sauk Rapids has discussed putting a second store near that location.

Timing worked for the city. The developer offered to sell the land in a deal that officials hope will help spur new development.

“It doesn’t mean we’ll build a new store today,” Olson said. “It means we can secure the property today.”

As part of the purchase agreement, \$100,000 will be set aside to go toward the construction of a building on another vacant lot in the development.

The money can be used to build a retail, restaurant or office commercial building.

The \$100,000 will be available for two years.

A 2007 market analysis said a second liquor store would be successful in that area if there was a big-box retailer nearby. Olson said that study needs to be updated before they can move forward.

Officials hope that project will facilitate further economic development in the area.

Expansion success

While Sauk Rapids debates the future of its store, other cities have had success with expanding and updating their offerings.

In 2006, Princeton built a new liquor store and saw its profits go up. The income jumped from just over \$93,000 in 2006 to more than \$253,000 in 2007.

Before building, the city researched other cities that recently expanded to see if it was worth the cost. Princeton eventually decided to build a new store three times the size of the old building, which offers more storage and helps to meet customer demand.

The store was put into a location that was open for commercial development. Karnowski said there was concern about whether people would come to the new store since the old one was in the center of town.

“Currently if people want to buy from us, they have to go out of their way,” he said.

But the store has been successful. And in the fall a Walmart will open next door to the store.

“That additional traffic will help us out tremendously,” Karnowski said.

Last year Paynesville moved its store into a new space. A credit union wanted to buy the city’s old building so the city now leases space at a new location, Eckerly said.

Moving into a new location is one of several changes the city made in the past three years that has helped boost sales. Council members have discussed closing the store if they could not increase profits, she said.

In 2008 the store made \$15,600 while in 2010 it made nearly \$74,000.

Other changes included investing in a better records management system that made it easier to follow how business was going. That system led the city to change the store’s hours so they were

open only during profitable times.

The store also has created new promotions, such as a wine club and a beer camp. Each one attracts dozens of attendees, Eckerly said.

The tone of the store has changed. Instead of being a place to pick up a six-pack, it’s now a destination with a better shopping experience, she said.

“It’s a fun place to come into ... If it didn’t turn around, we wouldn’t have it anymore,” she said.

We last longer if we compete against ourselves for the good of others instead of competing against others for the good of ourselves.

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Mariah Jacobson

I've come to know Mariah as a student and athlete; I've grown to respect her as a person. Mariah is a committed individual to herself and community.

Mariah comes from a small community in Southern Minnesota. She stands out as a young adult because of her involvement. Mariah has been a committed athlete in softball and bowling. Mariah is not just involved in athletics; she has also been a large part of the United South Central Band and Marching Band. As an honor student throughout high school, Mariah adds to her list of activities with National Honor Society, Solo and Ensemble and teacher assistant in a third grade classroom. In all of these activities Mariah has taken on a leadership role.

Academically, Mariah is a leader in a number of areas. She works hard to achieve her best in daily assignments and even opted to take college credit classes as a senior in high school. This is a big commitment and I'm proud that she was able and willing to take that step considering the responsibility needed in order to achieve success. Mariah has a history of making the right choices for her future. She represented her community as the Girls State Representative at the Best Prep Minnesota Business Venture Camp in the summer of 2011.

These are experiences away from school, but will still have an impact on her education. Volunteering and applying for these opportunities is important for a young leader.

In her community, Mariah has exceeded expectations for service. She has a long resume of helping at fundraisers and church groups for all ages. Mariah was part of her community clean up after a tornado devastated parts of Faribault County. It's difficult to find young people who are willing to give up their time in order to help others. At the same time, Mariah was able to learn important skills and characteristics that will make her a better person. These are the young people that we should invest in for our future.

I've known Mariah for four years and have watched her grow into a respected young woman. I have no doubt that her commitment and leadership will lead her to great places.

Sincerely,
Amber Prange
Social Studies Teacher
*Mariah's Mother is Kiester Liquor
Manager*



Brittany Johnson

I am so happy to have this opportunity to share my high school career with you. During the 4 years of my high school career, I have been

involved in many different organizations and classes. I have always been on either the A or B honor roll because I care about school and getting good grades. I've taken many classes from English, math, science, reading, art, American history, choir and also health careers. One opportunity I've had is to be in an organization called "Close Up." We experienced a trip to Washington D.C. to learn more about our country and how it runs. We also were able to see some memorials while visiting this amazing city. It was an experience I will never forget.

I have been very active in sports, such as figure skating, golf, and volleyball for many years, but even more so in high school. Balancing full time school and homework, a part time job, as well as sports everyday has made me become a very responsible young adult. Being in our school choir with rehearsals every week, has made me improve on getting the important things done on time. In June of 2012 our choir will be traveling to New York City to sing at an event called; "Jazz at Lincoln Center."

My post high school courses will be in nursing which I will attend at the Northland Community & Technical College here in Thief River Falls. After I complete the nursing program, I plan to transfer to a 4 year college for nurse anesthetist studies. The reason for my choice of career is to help others who need medical attention. I have always been one to care for others, and I know that I will be a great nurse to those who truly need the help.

*Brittany's father Larry works at Falls
Liquor in Thief River Falls*

*Success takes more than
the desire to win.
It also takes the
acceptance that we may fail.*



Ahna Larson

I have participated in many school activities and sports throughout my high school years, such as student council, volleyball and softball. I was the captain on my freshman and junior varsity volleyball teams and earned “Most Improved Player” my senior year of varsity volleyball. As a student council member, I assisted with organizing events and activities for the high school. I have been selected as “Student of the Month” three times during my high school years.

My senior year of student council I focused on challenges occurring within the student body. I am one of four seniors that represent the student council during important meetings with the Principal of our school. I also have attended leadership council meetings, designed to bring issues and challenges of the student body to the attention of school administrators so as to help improve communication. These council meetings have helped me with both my leadership skills and working with others to solve issues. My school activities and sports have helped me to now be selected as a representative on the schools very first Leadership Council.

I was also a member of the prom committee my junior year of school. I really enjoyed this experience as I was able to exercise my art and design skills. I was also the Chair for the school proms first fund raising event. One of the tools we used for this fundraiser was to create school cookbooks with recipes from students, staff and

parents. Our cookbook was even placed in the City of St. Anthony’s Historical Society.

I was fortunate to be selected by the student body, as a Homecoming Court candidate during the exciting week of our school Homecoming. Although I was not selected as the Homecoming Queen, it was a great experience being part of the Court and I learned about the event.

I dedicated my freshman and sophomore mornings before school, to work with special needs students who attended St. Anthony Village Middle School. Another classmate and I assisted the students with improving their motor skills and classroom behavior. I have found this work very enjoyable and rewarding. These new friendships and experiences mean a lot to me.

I am currently employed at Chandler Place, which is a local assisted living home. I enjoy working with the elderly and helping them with their various needs. I enjoy their wisdom, sense of humor and the great stories of their younger years. During the summer months I volunteered at a nursing home in Mendota Heights. While my Mom cut the residents hair, I took others out for walks and we played cards together.

I have been accepted to the University of Wisconsin-Stout this fall 2012. My studies will be in fashion design and merchandising. A goal I have is to one day live in a big city working for a designer and eventually design my own fashion line.

Ahna’s father Mike is St. Anthony Village Wine & Spirits manager



Angela Lysfjord

My high school career has been somewhat uneventful however; I participated in volleyball my freshman year. During my sophomore and junior years I was a part of the drama department and acted in “one act” plays. Out of these activities I enjoyed drama the most. In my freshman, sophomore and junior years, I was also a member of the school choir. I was not involved with choir or other extracurricular activities during my senior year, because I wanted to focus on my studies. I have always found school to be an important part of my life so I strive to do well in my academic career.

During the first semester of my senior year of high school, in addition to the regular senior classes, I took full time college classes, equal to that of a college freshman load. I decided to take all the general college classes needed first, then the second semester I went to Bemidji State University as a post-secondary student. College classes proved to be a little harder, so even though I got good grades, they were not the straight A’s I was used to in my high school classes.

Since my junior year of high school, I knew where I wanted to go to college and what I wanted to study. It was the illness and sudden death of my grandma that helped me to realize I wanted to be a nurse. I have always wanted to help other people and it makes me proud to ask for nothing in return. After I acquire a bachelor’s degree in nursing, I am considering graduate school to further my education and obtain a master’s degree as a family nurse practitioner.

Angela’s mother Jennifer is Millerville Liquor manager

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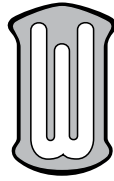
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Katie Marnich

College is a big step in life that some of us must take. It is thought about frequently during our last two years of high school as we plan for our future. Whether we decide to go to a technical school locally or a large university out of state, it's a time in our lives when we begin to grow up and need to make decisions that will impact the rest of our lives.

I have decided to attend Bemidji State University in the fall of 2012. I plan to study to become a licensed English teacher with a minor in writing. I chose this field because throughout high school, I both enjoyed English and creative writing classes and found that I did well. By choosing to attend college, I will be furthering my education and am hopeful to obtain a good job after graduating. However, along with attending college there are many expenses. I am grateful that my parents advised me early on to save money for my college in the future. With all the jobs I had growing up; I put most of it away in a savings account. Now I will use that money for college expenses however, I have found that it will not be enough, so I am applying for financial aid. I learned about this option from my sister who needed to do the same. I am also applying for every scholarship that is available. The impact a scholarship will have on my goals and career plans will be of great value no matter what the amount is. This summer I plan to get a job which will also help pay for some college fees.

My community and school have both impacted me greatly throughout the years. Even though they are both small, I am very grateful. My community has taught me an important lesson about working together to accomplish things and solve problems. From my school I have learned that even though some things seem difficult, with ambition, a heart to do your best and hard work you can overcome any obstacle. So college is the next chapter in my life, and I am excited to take it.

I want to thank you for taking time to read this letter and I hope that you consider me for your scholarship.

Katie's father John is a Finlayson Liquor Bartender



Jenna Niles

I am writing on behalf of Jenna Niles, one of my students. I have known Jenna since her junior year of high school, and even then I was impressed by this young woman. Her drive for success is what stood out to me the most. From the start Jenna was never afraid to go the extra mile when it came to hard work. She has achieved respect from her fellow team mates as she has moved up the ranks in her extra circulars. Jenna has a good heart, she is determined, she is a mentor to the younger students, and many times I had to remind myself that I am talking to a teenager, and not an adult.

As Jenna has grown, so have her curiosities and her responsibilities. It is easy to see why so many teachers and coaches want her in their programs. Volleyball, Theater, Speech, Choir,

and Band are just some of the extra circulars she is involved in; as well as maintaining impressive grades, college courses, a job, a social and a family life. Many times I wonder, as I see Jenna running from one activity or classroom to another, how is she able to maintain it all? It would seem that Jenna has learned one of the biggest lessons a person can learn: that in order to achieve great things, it requires hard work and sacrifice.

I realize that you receive many outstanding applicants, and that after some time they all start to sound alike. It's true that there are many fine young men and women that deserve your attention and support; however I would argue that Jenna Niles would still stand out when compared to that elite group. Jenna embodies all the traits that we as educators hope to see in young people today and she does so not for the glory, but for the challenge and the satisfaction of a job well done.

Sincerely,

Matthew J. Pursi

Jenna's father Jim is a manager at Liquor Hutch in Hutchinson



Benjamin Pletta

My high school years have been busy with academics, sports, civic activities and work.

In school I have always pushed myself to do well academically. I have taken several college level classes. I really enjoy foreign languages and learning about other cultures. I enjoy

being challenged by my school work. I have also participated in baseball, football and track while in high school. I was captain of the football team and captain of the track team for two years.

I have earned the rank of Eagle Scout from the Boy Scouts of America. My project involved planting trees and restoring a shelter belt owned by the local chapter of Pheasants Forever. I have also volunteered with Relay for Life and at our local Care & Share Auction. I am a "Link Crew" leader at our high school, helping to mentor incoming freshman students. I also work part time at our local grocery store in the meat department and in customer service.

After high school graduation I will attend Carleton College in Northfield, MN. I hope to study International Relations and Economics. I will plan to play football at Carleton as well. Post college my hope is to serve my country as an officer in the United States Navy.

Benjamin's mother Cathy is Kasson Liquor manager



Danielle Schwieger

My family has always been a great support system for me. Anything I wanted to do they would help me decide based on what they thought, but ultimately the decisions were mine to make. They really wanted to make sure I knew how to be a responsible person before sending me out on my own. The summer after tenth grade I decided I wanted to take a class to become a C.N.A. (Certified Nursing Assistant). I made this decision to give me a head

start on my nursing career and even drove to Roseau each day for a month where the class was located. Once I completed that class, I was able to get a job at Lakewood Care Center. Currently I am still working there and am planning to continue through the school year and summer months even though I will only be able to come home one weekend per month. It is important to me that I continue working at this job.

I plan on starting my nursing education at Northland Community & Technical College in East Grand Forks

this fall of 2012. Once I complete college and become a nurse, I would like to specialize in the labor & delivery area because I have always had a love for children. I think this is partly due to the fact that I grew up with my mom doing daycare out of our home. During that time, I was able to help out and be like a big sister to the children which I enjoyed because I did not have any younger siblings. I know that in order to be in the labor & delivery field you need to have the love of children, which there is no lack of for me.

I am a customer

I am the person that makes the economic engine turn. I am the reason you take home a paycheck. I am the reason you are able to feed your family, pay your mortgage, go on vacation, buy a car, and contribute to your church or synagogue. Because of me, gigantic corporations and small businesses alike have risen and flourished. Because of my absence, they have faded from existence.

The roads you drive on, the police and fireman that protect your community, the teachers that teach your children all exist because of me. Politicians and postal workers, sanitation workers and soldiers all owe their jobs to me. Without me, no taxes would be paid and any and all societal advances would come to a halt.

The wise come to know, respect, and love me. The foolish disregard my importance and suffer accordingly.

By the way, you'll notice that I didn't introduce myself as your customer. That's because I don't belong to you. Even if I make a purchase from you, that doesn't mean that I will do it again in the future. You are always on trial and I am always evaluating, measuring, and testing your product and service.

So pay attention to me. Get to know me. Learn my habits. My likes. My dislikes. My desires. My dreams. My values. Learn my language. Learn to recognize my moods.

Above all, treat me with respect. I will

not be ill-treated, and why should I be? There are too many businesses vying for my attention. Every time you turn on the television, open a newspaper, or listen to the radio, you see and hear multitudes of companies competing for my attention. There are too many people who are willing to treat me right in exchange for my business.

And know this, I am not easily fooled. Businesses treat me right or suffer the consequences. Sooner or later I always discover dishonesty, disrespect, or disinterest. Most of the time, I don't announce my displeasure. I simply take my business elsewhere.

Occasionally, we will have disagreements. I don't like mistakes but I understand that you sometimes make them. The manner in which you handle my complaint determines any future interaction I have with you. And, in my mind, it also determines the character of your business. I rarely ever give you a second chance to make the same mistake twice.

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Rich DeSchepper Retires in Luverne



Lori Ehde, Rock County StarHerold

Blue Mound Liquor Store manager Rich DeSchepper is retired this summer, but he said he has mixed feelings about leaving the job.

“I’m thoroughly enjoyed it,” he said about his work.

He said one of his favorite quotes is by Confucius, “Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.”

DeSchepper said this was the case for nearly every day he worked at the liquor store. “It’s really true.”

He came to the liquor store by way of the city’s solid waste department, where he hauled garbage from 3:30 to 11:30 a.m.

“I loved that job,” he said. “I’m a morning person, and then my afternoons were free.”

But, he said, he missed the daily contact with people that he had enjoyed at the Sears Catalog Company that he and his wife, Colleen, had operated from 1977 to 1992.

He said Sears’ decision to close the store in Luverne was hard on them at the time, but it opened doors to new opportunities.

After DeSchepper had worked a few

years hauling garbage, the city’s municipal liquor store manager position opened up and he was hired for the job.

“I knew nothing about liquor, and I didn’t drink,” he recalled.

But he knew a few things about running a business and what he looks for in other businesses.

“Are they personable? Is it bright? Is it clean? These are things I look for,” he said, “and I don’t think I’m that different from everyone else.”

It wasn’t long before DeSchepper installed more light bulbs, applied fresh paint and gave the place a good scrubbing. And people noticed.

“People stop in here from hockey tournaments or from the state park, and they comment on how bright and clean it is,” DeSchepper said. “And it’s nice to hear.”

He also get comments on the wine selection, which now includes 350 different labels.

“That’s really unheard of for a municipal liquor store,” he said, crediting 10 years of wine tasting events for generating a regional interest in Luverne’s wine.

He declined to share the numbers, but he said wine sales in the past decade have increased 10-fold since the wine tasting events started.

“It’s been fun to see it grow from what it was to what it is now,” DeSchepper said. “It’s been amazing to see that happen.”

But he emphasized he didn’t do it alone.

“I’ve was very fortunate; I had very

assistant manager,” he said, referring particularly to Christy Hess, who has been at Blue Mound Liquor for nearly 16 years.

“The good Lord shined upon us the day she came through the door and applied for a job,” DeSchepper said about Hess. “She is top-notch; she has done a very good job for us.”

He said one of the most important physical changes to the store was in 2005 when the beer cave was put in. The walk-in cooler stores 1,500 cases of beer that customers can access on their own.

DeSchepper said it eliminated the need for one employee and has already half paid for itself in the last five years.

He said the previous coolers could only display six cases of beer, so an employee had to constantly restock the shelves.

The beer cave has allowed the liquor store to carry more varieties of beer — up to 200 now, ranging from domestics to imports to microbrews.

His only advice to a new manager is to remember the purpose of a municipal liquor store: to keep liquor out of the hands of minors and to make a profit for the city of Luverne, “to keep taxes low for all residents.”

He said he enjoyed the past 17 years at Blue Mound Liquor, but at 68 years old, DeSchepper said it’s time to start enjoying retirement.

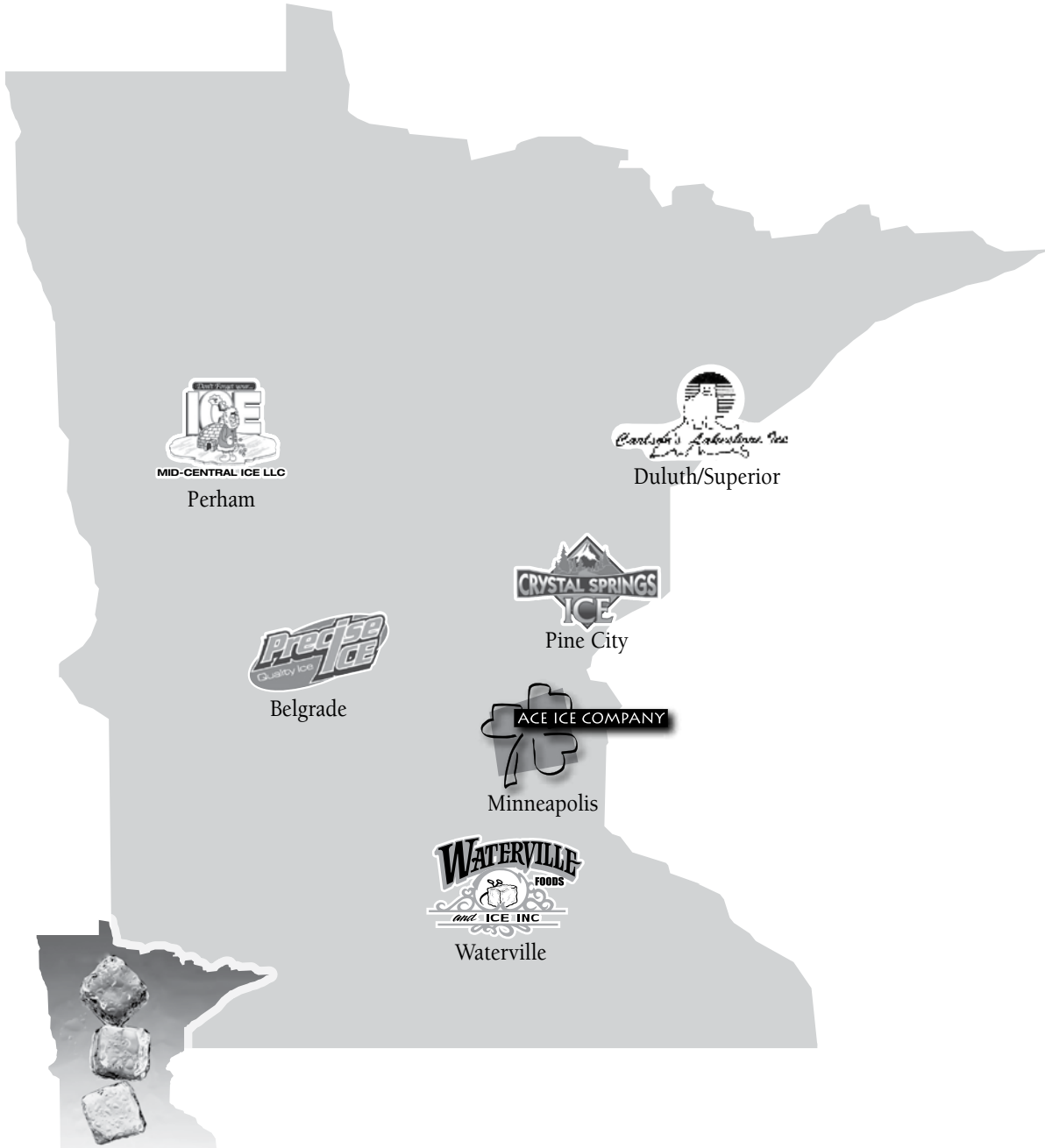
“I will definitely miss the work and I will miss the people,” he said.

His immediate plans include spending time with his family (children Tahmi and Todd and two grandchildren) and traveling.

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