

Taking a swing at business

Pat and Jim Ahlfs give credit to the Ottertail community for their success

By Rose Linda Aune

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Pat and Jim Ahlfs are pillars of the Ottertail community, and probably putters too. For the past several years, they've worked diligently on a project to enhance the leisure time of Ottertail residents and area residents as well — The Thumper Pond Golf Course.

Opening July 1, 2001, the golf course is still a work in progress; but there's plenty of work already done, with 18 holes in use and a new pine log golf clubhouse, it's one of the finest clubhouses in the area.

"We had a better-than-expected season, with golfers on the course until Nov. 17; and we anticipate a good year next year," Jim said. The course employs 38 during the height of the season.

With 90,000 pine trees lining the fairways, the 300-acre site, a former tree farm, is owned by the Ahlfs and Verle Blaha of St. Paul. The name "Thumper Pond" comes from a pond on the property, named after Blaha's grandson, who caused quite a commotion in the womb and therefore, acquired the nickname.

As owner of Ahlfs Construction and Ottertail Aggregate, both operating in Ottertail since 1946; plus Otter Tail Ready Mix, Jim sold the Ready Mix company in 1998 to concentrate on Thumper Pond. Future plans include an executive nine-hole course, a driving range and water and sewer for 200 home sites.

Over the years, Jim and Pat, natives of Ottertail, have been involved in many of



Journal photo by Mary Mahoney

Pat and Jim Ahlfs have opened Thumper Pond in Ottertail in July of last year.

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the city's improvement projects and organizations.

"I guess we've belonged to everything that's been here," said Pat.

Jim was clerk for the city council for 17 years and is the last remaining charter member of the Lions Club. He was a member of the Rod and Gun Club and the Fire and Rescue Department from 1954 until he retired. He has helped develop many parks and worked on city improvements, including the new Fire Hall and Community Center.

"Any city project that needed equipment or help, he and his employees pitched in," said Pat.

"Everybody in Ottertail works together

to get things done," added Jim, which is one of the reasons the Ahlfs are proud of their city. "Ottertail is one of the fastest growing communities in Otter Tail County according to the last census."

Jim and Pat are also active members of the United Methodist Church in Ottertail, where Pat was baptized. She was the Ottertail Postmaster for 24 years, retiring in 1992; and is a member of the Lions and the Ottertail Firemen Auxiliary.

"It's a nice, small, friendly community," added Pat. "It has a good quality of life and is a great place to raise children."

The Ahlfs have three children and four grandchildren, all of whom live in Ottertail. Sons Tom and Mike work for their dad and are heavily involved in

Thumper Pond. Daughter Mary is soon marrying; and will hold her reception at the Thumper Pond Clubhouse on April 6.

The club house is enjoying a busy winter, with bookings for birthday and Christmas parties, receptions, dances and meetings keeping 10 employees busy, including club manager and golf pro, Tom Beaudry.

"We don't just fold up in the winter," said Beaudry, who overlooks operations in the club house.

Originally from Park Rapids, Beaudry spent some time as a golf pro in South Carolina before moving his family back to the area.

"It's been a pleasure working for the Ahlfs," he said. "They're honest, straightforward people."