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"Preserving Our Past While Working On Our Future"

# Rothsay Regional Report

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## Rothsay Feels Like Coming Home To Ramy Ragheb

By: Karen Carpenter

Often one wonders what impact or imprint they are making on others or the world.

Rothsay community isn't large, it doesn't offer a huge amount of amenities. What the people individually and corporately do offer to visitors is huge, and at times, life changing.

That is the case for Ramy Ragheb who first came to Rothsay as a foreign exchange student. Ramy is from Cairo Egypt.

He graduated from Rothsay High School in 1994. Ramy lived at the Rothsay Learning Institute (RLI) which was a dormitory located in the building that the Rothsay Motel occupies now.

RLI operated in conjunction with the Rothsay School and housed several foreign exchange students during the school year. The facility was open from 1992 to 1998.

School and activities are a little different here as compared to Egypt. Sports, for example, aren't part of the school setting in Cairo as in the US. Soccer is the sport of choice in Egypt. While at Rothsay High School, Ramy was introduced to basketball and football. "I only played for fun, not on the team," laughed Ramy. "Although I did break a finger playing football and had to wear a splint on it for a while."

"I received so much from this community that I hope some how to give something back," said Ramy.

Ramy's father, who is a senator in Cairo, felt that the experience of being a foreign exchange student would broaden him.

Besides his parents, Ramy's family consists of one sister and one brother. The family still resides in Cairo.

Small but mighty, Rothsay, Minnesota left such an impression on young Ramy that two decades later he still felt the pull to return to the peace and warmth of this small community.

"Coming to a community like Rothsay in my formative years has left a deep and permanent impression on my personality," said Ramy.

"At the time I had to make a



Ramy Ragheb, center, is a former Rothsay foreign exchange student graduating in 1994. Ramy has visited Rothsay several times in the last few years. He thinks of Rothsay as home and Darrell "Tolly" and Connie Tollefson, pictured with Ramy, as parents. Whenever Ramy, who is a commercial pilot living in Egypt, can he returns to Rothsay where he finds peace of mind.

monumental adjustment from a metropolitan, global capital city to a small, close-knit community where each person's action affects everyone else. At first it was difficult to adjust to a completely different culture, but now it feels like coming home every time I visit."

Ramy made his first return visit

to Rothsay in 2015, his friend and American brother, Eric Larson. Eric introduced Ramy to ice fishing, which he enjoys.

"Eric Larson is like a brother to me and he is contributing very positively in Rothsay such as he was the former Mayor, works in the fire department and takes care of Rothsay water," said Ramy.

Brian Rafttevoid, a friend of Ramy and step-son of Connie Tollefson, brought him to visit Connie and her husband, Darrell "Tolly". From there a strong and lasting friendship developed between Ramy and the Tollefson's.

"Ramy feels just like a son to me," said Tolly. "We have a bedroom in the basement ready for Ramy whenever he visits."

Usually Ramy has returned at Christmas time to visit but this year because of the pandemic his visit was delayed by a month. Ramy left on February 9 after spending 12 days with the Tollefson's and visiting many friends in Rothsay.

"The friendships I formed in high school are long lasting," said Ramy. "The educational foundation laid down then has led to the pursuit of higher education and a love for on-going learning for which I profoundly thank Rothsay."

Ramy has become a very learned man since leaving Rothsay as a teenager. He went on to become an airline pilot for Air Cairo a sister company of Egypt Air. He flies an airbus between Egypt and Europe.

"Working as a commercial Airline Captain, I travel to many areas half a world away from Rothsay, and everywhere I go, I carry a bit of your

city with me," commented Ramy.

"It is that which allows me to accept people of different cultures and see value in that which is different."

Ramy's passion is safety culture, he holds a master's degree in that field from University École nationale de l'aviation civile (ENAC) as well as a diploma in negotiations mastery

from Harvard University, diploma in Leadership Foundation from Harvard University and a diploma in Safety Management System (SMS) from International Air Transport Association (IATA).

"Experiencing other cultures changes ones attitude," according to Ramy. "Safety culture is one language that speaks to anyone, like one central language and is essential for a pilot."

Safety culture is defined as the collection of the beliefs, perceptions and values that employees share in relation to risks within an organization, such as a workplace or community.

The diploma in SMS allows Ramy to lecture at the National Academy of Egypt.

"When I see my students in front of me and see the eagerness for a successful future in their eyes, I hope that many of them will have the same opportunity Rothsay gave me to experience a different culture up close and therefore see the world through different eyes," said Ramy.

Describing his feelings for Rothsay, Ramy said, "I find peace of mind in Rothsay. People keep material stuff in it's place. I have found acceptance here and the pure essence of friendship."

Tolly and Connie have not yet made a trip to visit Ramy in his home in Cairo, although he keeps encouraging them to do so. While it was -10 below in Rothsay, the temperature in Cairo was a sunny 75 degrees.

"Winter would be the best time to visit," said Ramy. "It is very hot

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## BRRWD Welcomes New Office Administrator

By Michael Stein

The Buffalo-Red River Watershed District (BRRWD) has a new administrator. Kristine Altrichter accepted the position in late November, succeeding long-time administrator Bruce Albright, who retired last summer.

Originally from Pine Island, Minn., Altrichter came to Barnesville from Mankato, where she had been a wetland specialist for Blue Earth County since February 2018.

Before her college days, Altrichter said she planned to go into the health care field. But also while growing up she and her family spent a lot of time outdoors.

"My dad is from the central Minnesota area, and my family owns property there," she said. "Growing up my family did things like plant trees and hunt on that land. And with that land there was always maintenance that needed to be done to improve the habitat potential."

By the time she started her first four years of undergraduate studies in Omaha, health care was no longer an active interest.

"Instead, I pursued subjects like botany and environmental sciences."

After receiving her bachelor's degree in biology from Creighton University in Omaha, Altrichter moved north and earned her master's in natural resource management from NDSU in late 2017.

"As an undergrad I was really interested in botany and did quite a bit of research studying aquatic plants. So I felt that's the direction I was going to take. But my master's project had a wetlands focus, so I ended up having more experience with soils."

While working as a wetland specialist in Mankato, Altrichter said she became more interested in water and water resource and quality issues, such as stormwater retention.

"The position with the watershed district interested me as there are a lot of large, multi-faceted projects that involve components like water quality and habitats. I was impressed with the BRRWD's ability to address multiple environmental goals in a single project."

Since taking on her new position in Barnesville, Altrichter said, "I've



New BRRWD Administrator Kristine Altrichter.

been doing a lot of reading and looking back at prior projects and meeting minutes, going meetings and getting to know those people connected with the watershed district. There's a lot to know with this position. The board provided some expectations, but they know

it's a long learning process and I'm still getting acclimated to the job."

The youngest of three daughters, Altrichter said she enjoys spending time with friends and getting together with family at their cabin in central Minnesota.

## BRRWD's Concerns Over Diversion Impact Settled

A major ongoing issue taken on by the Buffalo-Red River Watershed District has been the FM Diversion project.

In 2019, acting on behalf of landowners in the Comstock and Wolverton area who were concerned over floodwaters being released on their property, the BRRWD refused to grant a local permit for the food control project.

Last week, the BRRWD's concerns over the diversion project were apparently settled. On February 10, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources granted a dam permit to the Diversion Authority under the provision that it obtain property rights for land impacted by the project in the event of a flood event and subsequent release of water onto those properties.

The \$2.75 billion metro area flood control project is expected to be completed by 2027.



When Ramy Ragheb visits Rothsay, one of the things he likes to do is to ice fish. His friend, Eric Larson, introduced Ramy to the sport.



Whenever Ramy Ragheb returns to Rothsay for a visit, he gets together with friends. He is pictured in the center with, left to right, Eric Larson, Isaac Dent, Shane Balken, BreAnn Rosenthal, Amber (Balken) Schatz, Jeremy Carlsrud and Heather (Ouse) Nelson.