



Staff photo by Jeff Thompson

Humorist Garrison Keillor tells a story during his performance Wednesday evening at the Mabel Tainter Theater in Menomonie. The performance was a benefit for the re-election bid of state Sen. Alice Clausing.

## Cheese leaguer

Keillor goes public as (gasp) Wisconsinite, praises Clausing for fighting Cities airport

By Pamela Powers  
Menomonie News Bureau

MENOMONIE — Author and humorist Garrison Keillor looked up from his St. Croix County woods one day and realized a proposed new St. Paul-Minneapolis airport near Hastings, Minn., could become his neighbor.

"(The) New Hastings International Airport was proposed by visionaries over in Minnesota," Keillor quipped. "Perhaps they were impressed by the Denver airport and decided we needed one like it."

"Had the airport been built, my house over in the woods on the St. Croix River would have been about two miles off the north-south runway," Keillor said. "I walked around those woods and realized that someday I may have to move back to New York for some peace and quiet."

Keillor credited Sen. Alice Clausing, D-Menomonie, with helping to dissuade Minnesota officials from building the airport near Hastings.

Keillor entertained at the Mabel Tainter Memorial Theater Wednesday as part of a political fund-raiser for Clausing. Clausing faces Republican Jay Griggs of Hudson in the Nov. 5 general election for the 10th Senate District seat.

"I am very thankful for the peace and quiet of the 'very eastern part of Minnesota,'" said Keillor, host of "A Prairie Home Companion" heard on public radio stations across the nation.

Keillor said Wednesday was his "coming out" as a citizen of Wisconsin as he deals with the shock of living in a state where people wear chunks of cheese on their heads.

Lanna Laird of Menomonie said she came to hear Keillor because she always has been a fan of "A Prairie Home Companion."

**"If you get a child's attention and awaken something in that child, all the other battles are easy."**

—Humorist Garrison Keillor, on education

"So many things Keillor talks about are northern Wisconsin and familiar stories," Laird said. "You understand them and identify with them."

Mary Rasmussen of Boyceville agreed. "It's the celebration of real community values we all know in our hearts," she said.

Keillor sang a song or two during the show, tapping his red-socked toes.

He pointed out the importance of good schools.

"If you get a child's attention and awaken something in that child, all the other battles are easy," Keillor said of education.

To lose the battle means the fight continues the rest of the child's life, he said.

Keillor brought up the magic of the season as he told tales from Lake Wobegon, his mythical childhood home — tales of moving privies as Halloween pranks.

He glorified the coming of winter's cold.

"Winter is the time of year when our characters are made," the radio personality said. "We realize life is serious, and nature has it in for us. Nature will make several attempts to kill us."

"We're northern people," he added. "We're happier when we have something to be gloomy about."