

# One in a Ver Million

## Meet Jessica Kennedy



JESSICA KENNEDY

**By David Lias**  
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Jessica Kennedy admits she has no green thumb. It could be safely said, however, that she simply “grew” into her current role as parks assistant supervisor for the city of Vermillion.

During the winter months, one of Jessica’s main jobs is to clear snow from city property, including city hall, and from the sidewalks at the city’s numerous parks and bike paths.

This time of year, a whole new set of duties blossoms for her as winter is slowly replaced by spring.

“In the spring, we’re busy with everything from mowing to getting the flower beds ready, planting the flowers, spring trimming, trimming trees, picking up trash, cleaning bathrooms – it’s a long list,” she said.

Jessica’s knowledge of grounds keeping and helping plants of all sizes grow and thrive comes naturally. Her father is the owner of a lawn service. “He started doing that the year before I was born, and so I basically grew up doing this,” she said. “My mom would plant flowers ...

but I did not have a green thumb, just because I really didn’t want to – when you have to do something you sort of eventually don’t want to do it.

“But, it turns out I sort of have a knack for it, and it did work out in the end,” Jessica said.

Jessica has received Master Gardening training through the South Dakota Extension Service. “I have learned through that, too. It kind of helps when you know what they are talking about already, but there were a few things that I didn’t know. Plus, the training helped to clarify other things,” she said.

Her background and hard work benefits Vermillion’s significant park system, and all of the people who enjoy them each year. The city is home to four major parks – Prentis, Cotton, Lion’s and Barstow – and several smaller public green areas, including Hyde Park, which is located below the bluff near the golf course, Jaycee Park, which is on Broadway Street and Sertoma Park.

“Some of the smaller areas are more like

neighborhood parks,” Jessica said, adding that the four main city parks include playground areas and picnic shelters. Prentis is home to the city’s swimming pool, a disc golf course, and will host the first annual Shakespeare festival early this summer.

Some public areas are quite small – including a space on West Main that features a couple benches where people can sit and enjoy the view from the top of the bluff.

Jessica and her co-workers at the parks department will soon be busy with planting new trees and removing or trimming damaged trees.

“We’ll be doing our usual Arbor Day tree planting, and there are a couple of trees in Prentis that we are hoping to remove this year,” she said. “The street department and the light department help us take out trees that are either diseased or dangerous, that are no longer safe to be in a park. If one big tree branch falls on a windy day while people are around –

fortunately, that’s never happened – but we want to make sure the public is safe.”

Had Jessica followed another career path, she could have found herself cooped up all day inside of an office.

“I did go to school in Brookings for a couple years at SDSU, and I was studying journalism, mass communications and psychology,” she said.

Jessica decided to follow a different career path, and

finds her current role in Vermillion fulfilling.

“I liked it (the classes at SDSU) but I don’t think I would have been happy. I like being outside, and I like making stuff pretty,” she said.

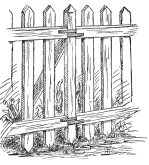
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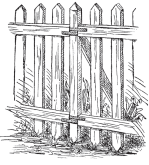
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