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Jarett Bies of the South Dakota Canoe and Kayak Association demonstrates proper paddling techniques to participants in Saturday's training session in the DakotaDome swimming pool.

(Photo by David Lias)

'Taking the plunge' at kayak training

By David Lias

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Kayaks are streamlined and quiet, propelled only by a light stroke of a paddle or a current as they glide on the water's surface.

They can also be bit tough to get back into should you accidentally capsize and fall out of one.

That's why a training session held Saturday morning in the DakotaDome swimming pool had a bit of added importance on top of simply being a fun time for participants.

According to Jarett Bies of Vermillion, kayaking, like any other activity, must be done safely.

Saturday's pool session naturally touched on that. It also, however, helped drive home other important points to the morning's paddlers.

Bies, a member of the South Dakota Canoe and Kayak Association, and several other association members helped organize Saturday's event, which turned out to be so popular that an afternoon session had to be scheduled.

During the morning, approximately a dozen men, women and kids could be found paddling kayaks in the pool.

"It appears that most of the people we've had sign up have

either paddled once or twice before or have never done it at all. And, it really gives people a chance to try it in a situation where they don't face the elements, they don't face dirt, sand, paddlefish, anything of that nature," Bies said. "It's completely controlled, and it helps (the participants) gain a little bit more confidence and awareness of how the craft operates and what it takes to get out and kayak."

"Safety is paramount with any sport that involves the water; kayaking is no exception. There's a lot of serenity, a lot of peace, a lot of exploration that is the lure of the sport, but our priority is on

safety with the people that we have here today," he said. "For example, no one could go on the water without a personal floatation device."

That "serenity factor" helped lure Jessica Peterson to the sport. The Brookings woman serves as the association's vice president, and was on hand to help out in any way possible at the pool Saturday.

"One of the pillars of our club is education, and so this is one thing that fits well within that scope. We've done other things, such as family lake park kayaking events, that get people out in canoes and kayaks in Sioux Falls

and gives them a chance to try it out," Peterson said. "We had 75 people the first year and about 140 the second year. It was fantastic just watching how many people thought, 'Hey, let's give this a try and see what happens.'"

Besides getting tips on the best way to paddle and navigate the streamlined watercraft, some individuals decided to take the plunge and capsize their kayaks on purpose to experience what it is like to be "dumped."

They discovered that, no, you don't become stuck helplessly upside down, trapped in the kayak. And the best thing to do once you surface is to retrieve

your paddle and get back to the capsized kayak.

"This is a great opportunity in a controlled environment, a warm-water pool, to get in and out of a kayak and really dispel some myths about the sport," Bies said. "It's also a chance to become aware of how the boat feels, gain that balance, and to realize what would happen if you did tip over. The myth that you will be stuck under the boat if you do tip over is just that – a myth – and I think people learned that today."

Participants also learned that getting back into a capsized kayak

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Poetic performance punches ticket to D.C.



Samuel Pearson (right), Vermillion High School senior stands with his coach, Mary Begley, at the state Poetry Out Loud competition, in which won first place. Pearson will move on to the national competition, which is being held in Washington, DC, April 28-30.

(Courtesy photo)

By Travis Gulbrandson

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When people think of school-related competitions, poetry may not be the first thing that springs to mind.

However, it is poetry that has landed Vermillion High School senior Samuel Pearson a chance to compete in a national contest on April 28-30.

That's because Pearson won the state Poetry Out Loud competition last month in Sioux Falls.

"I'm very excited," Pearson said of his upcoming trip to the nation's capital. "It's going to be a great time."

In addition to the opportunity to compete at a national level, Pearson also won a \$200 cash award, and Vermillion High

School will receive \$500 to be used for poetry books.

Poetry Out Loud is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation, and on a state level by South Dakotans for the Arts, the South Dakota Arts Council and South Dakota Public Television.

"The whole program is meant to get poetry into as many kids' mouths and minds as possible," said Vermillion High School teacher and Poetry Out Loud coach Mary Begley. "They really encourage you to integrate it into the curriculum. The books and materials that we get every year give different ideas and lesson plans."

"I always have it as part of my speech class curriculum, so I do a little drama unit in which they have

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Irene teen dies in Sat. farm accident

By Randy Dockendorf

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An Irene teenager has been killed in a weekend accident in rural Yankton County.

Zavier Michael Larsen, 14, died in the late Saturday afternoon accident at 438th Avenue and 293rd Street, according to the Yankton County sheriff's office. The location is approximately three miles north of SD Highway 46, near the Yankton-Hutchinson county line.

The boy was riding in the bucket of a skidloader and ended up underneath the bucket, according to the sheriff's office. Authorities received a call to the accident between 5-6 p.m. Saturday.

More information on the accident could be released today (Monday), according to the sheriff's office

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