

One in a *Ver* Million

Meet Maxine Johnson



Mayor Jack Powell presents Maxine Johnson with the Mayor's Community Service Award at the Vermillion Area Chamber and Development Company (VADC) banquet March 14. (Photo by David Lias)

By David Lias
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It's nearly impossible to settle in Vermillion without, eventually, having some contact with

Maxine Johnson. Maxine and her husband, Allen, have lived in the community since 1964, and in that time period, she has never failed to step up and offer

to help a variety of Vermillion organizations.

Mayor Jack Powell recognized Maxine's tireless service by presenting her with Mayor's Community Service Award at the Vermillion Area Chamber and Development Company (VADC) banquet March 14.

"Over the years she has made many contributions to our community and the surrounding area," Powell said before presenting the award to Maxine. "Many individuals and organizations have benefitted from her talents, dedication and service."

Maxine, a native of Minnesota, worked as

high school English teacher before moving from Minneapolis to Vermillion in 1964, where she began 20 years of employment with the University of South Dakota. She has been married for 56 years to Allen Johnson, who was professor and chair of the Department of Biology at USD. They have four children, all who are graduates of Vermillion High School, and three of their children attended USD.

Various organizations have been the recipients of Maxine's various talents. She volunteered both as a Cub Scout and Girl Scout leader, and also served as the neighbor chair for the Sioux Trails Girl Scout Council.

"Volunteer service really is Maxine's middle name," Powell said, noting that she serves on the boards of several community organizations, including The Welcome Table, the W.H. Over Museum, the Main Street Center, the Clay County Historical Society, the BluffView Cemetery, Vermillion United Way, and the Vermillion Lions Club.

"She has served as president, vice president and secretary for many of these organizations," the mayor said, "and I think she's recycled through the leadership roles of those organizations many times."

"The American Association of Retired People (AARP) presented the city of Vermillion with an opportunity to receive a grant for a local project to aid our community," Powell said. "We needed to identify an individual who serve as the chief service officer.

When Maxine was asked if she would take on this task, she immediately accepted."

Maxine worked with middle school teachers and students to develop a program of awareness in the community regarding energy efficient light bulbs.

"When I think of community service, volunteerism and the desire to get involved and make a difference, I think of this lady. She is a friend to many, she has given so much of herself for the benefit of others, and she is truly an inspirational model for others to follow," Powell said. "As we look around our community, we can give credit to her involvement in many areas. Her efforts have made a significant and positive impact on the lives of many, and they will continue to do so for years to come. We are thankful for all she has done for our community."

"I have enjoyed all of the things that I've done, and I do consider it a real privilege to be able to do the things I do," Maxine said as she accepted the award, adding that she particularly favors her involvement with The Welcome Table.

"That's been one of the nicest things I've ever been involved with, and I just enjoy it," she said.

She also gave a plug to the W.H. Over Museum, which has benefited from years of involvement from Maxine.

"We talk a lot about Vermillion being a destination, and we truly are," she said. "The W.H. Over Museum has been named the visitor center for this town, and that's exciting."

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