

One in a *Ver* Million

Meet the Lavins of Davis Pharmacy

By David Lias
david.lias@plaintalk.net

The Prairie Family Business Association has recognized Davis Pharmacy in Vermillion for its rich history and its vibrant presence in the community.

The association presented Sandy and Tom Lavin, and their son, Matt Lavin, with the Vermillion Area Family Business of the Year Award. The presentation was made at the Vermillion Chamber of Commerce and Development Company's Awards Banquet, held March 14 in Vermillion.

Finding the history for Davis Pharmacy involved going back through the history of South Dakota, said Beth Adamson, director of the Prairie Family Business Association.

"The first drug store in the state of South Dakota was established in Vermillion. While the owner's family did not continue in the business, the legacy of its beginning continues today. Roy Davis came to Vermillion from

Beresford in 1902 to attend USD," she said. "He worked part-time for Alfred Halverson, the first drug store owner in the state."

Roy purchased the store from Alfred in 1907, and when Roy died in 1931, his son, Marshall, assumed ownership of the store.

"While Marshall served in the U.S. Army during World War II, dedicated pharmacists kept the store going," Adamson said. "When Marshall's son, Brook, graduated from pharmacy school in 1960, he chose to join his father in the business."

Adamson noted that in 1964, a family competition developed when Marshall declined an offer to run a pharmacy in a new local clinic related to the hospital in Vermillion.

"Instead, Brook took the offer and became a friendly competitor to his father. Marshall's daughter, Sandy, and her husband, Tom Lavin, joined Marshall at the store upon Tom's graduation from pharmacy school," she said, "and Tom eventually purchased the business and ran the pharmacy at Dakota

Hospital. "Tom and Sandy's children, the fourth generation, grew up in the store, learning how to make change in the cash register, stocking shelves, and taking inventory," Adamson said. "Matt and Megan graduated from pharmacy school, and Matt and his wife, Carol, live in Vermillion."



Alan Fritch of CorTrust Bank in Vermillion (at left) watches as Sandy and Tom Lavin, and their son, Matt, accept the Vermillion Area Family Business of the Year Award. CorTrust Bank is a sponsor of the award. (Photo by David Lias)

Hospital.

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Matt currently runs the Sanford Vermillion Hospital pharmacy and helps with the family store on nights and weekends, she said.

"Matt and Carol's kids, Madison and Hunter, the fifth generation, frequently take their place behind the cash register on some of the evenings when their dad is working," Adamson said.

"This is a business that would not operate without the people of Vermillion who love us and come in and see us," said Tom Lavin, upon accepting the award for his family.

"Those people, our friends, are the part that makes being part of a small business in a small town in

a small state a very, very special thing."

Family businesses like Davis Pharmacy are robust, successful, ambitious, and deliver profits, even during tough economic times, Adamson said.

"Nationwide, these businesses are making a substantial but often undervalued contribution to the stability and growth of our economy. They're certainly not undervalued in Vermillion," she said.

"Family businesses are more agile and flexible than their competitors."

"They tend to be more entrepreneurial than other sectors of the economy, often reinventing themselves with each new generation," Adamson said. "They invest for the long term. They feel a stronger sense of responsibility to create jobs, and will make strenuous efforts to keep their staff, even during tough times."

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