

Students Step Up in Science Competition

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Vermillion and Yankton youth were extremely well represented at last Saturday's State Science Olympiad Tournament on the University of South Dakota campus.

The competition lasted from 8:30 a.m. and ended with an awards ceremony at 5 p.m.

Yankton Middle School dominated as it has done for the three decades since the competition has gone national, placing first overall in the middle-school division.

Members of the Yankton Middle School team placed first in 12 events, second in five events and third in two.

Second place overall went to Sacred Heart Middle School and third went to Dakota Valley Middle School.

Yankton High School also placed first overall in the high school division with second place going to Brookings High School and Spearfish High School earning third.

Vermillion Middle School didn't do too shabby either, earning fourth overall out of 18 teams and placing first in one event, second in five events and third in three events.

"This is my first year doing it," said Audrey Job, sixth-grade science teacher and coach of the Vermillion Middle School team. "In the past we've only ever taken eighth graders. Next year I think we'll open it up to grades six and seven as well. We've seen so many

six and seventh graders here today."

Job said she has learned quite a bit through this competition and has loved seeing the kids grow.

"I had these kids as sixth graders," she said. "It's fun to see how mature they have become and how knowledgeable they have become in the science field."

The members of the Vermillion Middle School team, all eighth-graders were happy to share their favorite aspects of the day.

Isabel Telleria said she appreciated the opportunity to bond with the group.

"By the end we better understand our peers and developed skills to work with others," she said. Telleria participated in the Picture This, and Meteorology events.

Several other students including Ben Fairholm and Brennan Stone also said the bonding and camaraderie was their favorite part.

"I really enjoyed working with Brennan on the gliders, gluing our hands together and to the wood," said Fairholm who participated in Elastic Launch and Crime Busters.

Fairholm and Stone's elastic glider flew for about ten seconds and earned them third-place in that event.

"I liked learning about the subjects," Macy Winslow said. "I did Crave the Wave and Fossils."

According to Winslow, Crave the Wave was more of a written events testing the contestant's knowledge of the properties and



Members of the Vermillion Middle School Science Olympiad team, which placed fourth overall in the state tournament Saturday, show off their well-earned medals.

SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK the Anatomy, Physiology and Picture This events. Besides competing in Science Olympiad, Hudson also participates in various piano competitions.

All in all, the Vermillion team was pleased with their performance. "I would say it was a great accomplishment," Job said. "I'm very proud of them."

Also proud were the coaches of the Yankton Middle School and Yankton High School teams, both champions in their divisions.

"The National Science Olympiad started 31 years ago," said Brooks Schild, coach for the middle school team. "South Dakota started 31 years ago with the middle school teams and the next year they started with the high school teams and that's when Bob Medeck and our high school team started. Since it's been a national event we've been involved in it every single year."

Dooley also participated in the Meteorology event. Maddie Powell said she enjoyed building and testing the bottle rockets before the competition. "We tried the bottle rockets at my house and I liked doing it there," she said. "It exploded on me the first time."

"I had two favorite things," said Luci Hudson. "First was the bonding. We would get mad sometimes but then got to be friends again. My second favorite thing was the competition because I like to compete."

Hudson participated in

County Commissioners Listen to Library Report

By Elyse Brightman
The Plain Talk

At Tuesday's Clay County Board of Commissioners meeting, the Vermillion Public Library presented its annual report that notified the cut of a state integrated library system.

"They kicked all the public libraries, all the school libraries off. We have to be off by the end of 2015," said Library Director Jane Larson. "They decided they don't want any libraries on their state system -- we've been on 29 years -- so they kicked 152 of us off."

There are only seven libraries that will still be able to use the state's system which is only inclusive of the universities.

Currently, the library has 70 total licensed databases, but once the cut goes into effect, it will drop to 31.

"The whole idea was to share the resources in the state," Larson said. "The local schools, they look at our site and borrow from us heavily."

According to Larson, this type of system only occurs in South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota and both of the other two states have found it very successful.

"We've written letters, we've petitioned to the regency, and they did give us 15 minutes to speak our cause," she said.

There is still no explanation as to why the cut has occurred. The decision

started with the Secretary of Education and gained support from the Board of Regency.

Look for future articles regarding this topic in upcoming issues of *The Plain Talk*.

- Discussions on the agenda included one residential driveway application, two proposals by Clay Union Electric for cable occupation of highways and one proposal for a pipeline intended for water cattle all of which were unanimously passed.

- The board signed a letter of intent to continue a Joint Powers Agreement with various counties to "provide for necessary juvenile detention and shelter care services." The current agreement expires on June 30.

- The board also agreed that Director of Equalization Gene Lunn will use \$5,000 of his budget towards a 2015 Ford Explorer to add to Sheriff Any Howe's taskforce.

In return, Lunn will receive the 2007 Explorer to add to his fleet based on the used cars good conditions.

- States attorney's Teddi Gertsma and Philip Terwillinger were both approved respective travel requests.

- The next Clay County Board of Commissioners' meeting is set for Tuesday, April 7.

A new agenda was not available at press time.

GOOD, From Page 1A

ride their bikes, or get a ride with someone else.

"The people that are here come because they like to socialize. I have some that come in (having lost a spouse) or couples that will tell you that this is better than doing dishes and cooking at home. For those on wheels -- or disabled in some way -- for them this is a necessity."

She also says that a program like this is vital for many of Clay County's elderly.

"This is very important because this is where for some people that come here this is their main meal of the day," Birgholtz said. "I have several people that will take home a small dish of whatever and say that's their dinner for the night. Some complain that the servings are too small and some people say it's way too much."

"You can't go anywhere and get a \$4, four-course meal, because it costs too much."

If a diner is at least 60 years of age, the program receives \$3.40 from the state government for every meal and Birgholtz said Dakota Senior Meals asked for a \$4 donation from those who eat a lunch.

"The average cost is about \$7.50 per person," Birgholtz said noting that the price includes incidentals. "But if someone does not have \$4 then they don't have to give it to us. They give whatever they can. No one is turned away. We also accept food stamps."

Being regulated by the state, the meals are monitored for having proper nutritional value.

"A lot of times when you eat at home you aren't eating nutritionally," Birgholtz said. "So we are serving your vegetables, fruits, meats, and some carbohydrate to go with it."

To function, Dakota Senior Meals, has potential visitors fill out an application for both a chance to eat at the center or partake in a lunch that is delivered out.

"There just needs to be some kind of need or some kind of issue for them not to be able to get here," Birgholtz said.

Two volunteers will also go out during the week to deliver the outbound lunches.

After a lunch at the center is complete, visitors can stick around and take part in a number of activities the Main Street Center offers between 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. during those same, aforementioned days according to Crystal McGuire.

There is a \$35 membership fee for those interested in becoming a part of the scene and those interested can call 624-8072 or email 320seniors@vyn.midco.net.

(Membership) entitles them to use the computer room, the library, they can come read the newspaper, they can exercise," McGuire said. "You don't have to be a member to visit the gift shop."

Why the Meals? Betty Lynn, 79, participates with Dakota Senior Meals/Meals on Wheels by getting lunch there and partaking in the activities.

Lynn admits that as her household has thinned -- it's just her and husband Raymond -- it's more practical to head out for a meal than to slave in the kitchen.

"When you have only two people in the house and the kids are all gone you buy all the things to make meals and it costs more to buy all of that then going down to the center," Lynn said. "I also like to play the games down there like dominoes. It's fun."

Evelyn Hermanson, 84, lives alone in Vermillion and finds time to go to the center for lunch and also has had meals delivered to her.

"I would say it is very important and it has the kind of meal you should have for five days and that's a good thing," Hermanson said. "Sometimes you get a meal you don't like, but that's understandable."

Karen Gibbs is a volunteer for Dakota Senior Meals/Meals on Wheels after years of working at the University of South Dakota in the clerical field of various departments.

Gibbs, 73, now gets to share with people who, like her, consist of the Baby Boomers who are now making up the nation's elderly populace.

"I probably got interested when I became a senior citizen and had retired from the university," Gibbs said of the reasons why she is now a volunteer with the meals program. "I had more time to go into something like this. I had more time to get into it and help others understand it."

How Big a Connection? Gibbs delivers lunches and works for the program which is similar to some work she has done for her church.

"They all seem so welcoming and so thankful," Gibbs says of her time delivering meals. "They cooperate with the program by returning the containers we leave them for the food. Most of the people I deliver food in 'Meals on Wheels' are very conversational."

"I think it's one contact in a day they wouldn't have otherwise and some don't have much contact and that's why they are in the program and why we deliver food to them."

Lynn acknowledges that the lunches at the center are both about getting a good meal, but mostly about just being able to socialize.

"Absolutely it's wonderful," Lynn said. "Certainly it's wonderful that the fact you see people that are in your same age bracket and it's nice visiting with people and finding out what's going on. We talk about

family, our kids, grandkids, great-grandkids.

"Our church has dinner on occasion but no, it's not a regular thing."

Hermanson says that it's important for people to get out and visit with others.

"If you stay at home you don't get to see people," Hermanson said. "Besides church and what we might do there, my other social things are connected to the senior center. I play cards, stitch, and I have played dominoes. You can play Bingo one day a week and you can watch a movie twice a month. Then of course, you get to talk to the people."

When she had knee surgery, Lynn needed the meal program to bring some meals over to her home.

"They are wonderful and all volunteers and they do a good job," Lynn said of the service she received while laid up. "They go right to the door and hand it to them or go in and hand it to the person. There are a lot of people that can't get out so it's wonderful to have meal delivered right to you."

The Motivation behind the Program

With the arrival of Birgholtz, Gibbs sees the subtle changes the new head cook has brought to the Dakota Senior Meals/Meals on Wheels program.

"Sharon just became our cook about a year ago and has been really having to buck some old ideas and habits, but she is especially compassionate about the older people in the community and we are trying to get more people the word and to get them involved and get more nourishment," Gibbs said. "She is really interested and concerned that we reach out more."

Lynn and Hermanson are very impressed with the level of professionalism and care the workers show when serving lunches. "They are fantastic,

especially Sharon. She does a wonderful job and she has some good people back there now," Lynn said. "It's a wonderful service because she cares what the people think -- what they like, don't like and so forth."

Gibbs said that it's key to keep an eye out on who might be eligible for the program.

"We are to be alert around our churches and other events," Gibbs said. "People may have a father and a mother they are caring for and they could even come to the center to get a meal at (almost) no cost."

It's a pretty common thing to see a senior citizen view joining a program like this as being a sign of weakness.

"There is a stigma of people not wanting to admit that they need help and it's not that kind of program," Gibbs said. "It's just about some fellowship or maybe playing some games or get some new skills. It's about getting acquainted, getting invited into new circles and get to do more things."

"I just talked to a 66-year-old who said he was too young," Birgholtz said. "The problem is, for us, is that people are so independent for so much longer. But it's not about being disabled, it's about making sure you get the proper nutrition and it's an inexpensive meal as well."

Birgholtz says she does this type of work because of her appreciation for the elderly.

"I love working with the elderly and have been doing it awhile," she said, showing some emotion about the subject. "I miss my grandparents and I have them here. I have two

ladies who every day, when they come here, they give us a hug. It's fun to be a part of their lives."

"You can't keep them all happy, but you listen to what they have to say."

It does make that transition easier when the people at Dakota Senior Meals make sure those seeking a nice bite to eat are treated with respect.

"They are very friendly and we just got a new helper in the kitchen and made an effort to learn my name," Hermanson said. "They are always nice and like to talk to us. I think they take the job seriously."

When told that it appears Birgholtz holds a lot of love for those involved in the meals program, Lynn was quick to respond.

"We share the same feelings for her."

NOTES: The Dakota Senior Meals will run an 'April Showers' event for the entire month to collect cleaning items and office supplies to help the program and keep costs down.

"We collect coffee, bleach, reams of paper, black ink cartridges, paper towels, laundry soap, black permanent marker, scotch tape, and things like that," Birgholtz said.

People interested in bringing items to the center need to drop them off at the kitchen at 320 West Main in Vermillion and can call 624-7868 if they want to find out more information.

Birgholtz said that the program could use more volunteers and people who could be used as "back-ups" for deliveries and other types of works.

She said that those interested should call 624-7868.

Retiring soon? Let's talk.



Curt Robinson
Financial Advisor
23 Market Street
Vermillion, SD 57069
605-624-2028

Edward Jones
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING Member SIPC

POLLMAN
EXCAVATION, INC.

Mike Pollman
PO Box 424 • Wakanda, SD 57073
Phone/Fax: 605-267-2768
Cell: 605-661-1063
xkv8tor@yahoo.com

- Water & Sewer
- Basement Excavation
- Demolition
- Site Preparation
- Ditching
- Grading

Licensed • Bonded
Insured

Rock • Sand • Gravel
Quartzite • Fill Material

SAVE NOW \$1950
with manufacture & utility Rebates up to

Cool Cash

Home Comfort...more than just Heating and Cooling

- Experienced Technicians
- Mobile Dispatching
- 24 Hour Emergency Service
- Planned Maintenance Agreement
- Financing Available

Larry's HEATING & COOLING
920 Broadway, Yankton • 665-9461 • www.larrysheatingandcooling.com