

VIEWPOINTS

A time to celebrate

There's plenty to celebrate this week. The Vermillion 15-16 Teener team is competing in the state tournament in Harrisburg. The Clay County Fair kicked off its three-day run on Thursday. And, this is National Farmers Market Week. A decade or so ago, that special designation of this week likely would have gone unnoticed in the community. The thought of a regular farmers market in Vermillion was, at best back then, a dream.

That dream has come true, thanks to the hard work of a lot of local people. Since early spring, the Vermillion Area Farmers Market has met in a pleasant grassy area of the Clay County Fairgrounds, right at the corner of Cherry and High streets.

On Thursday afternoon, it seemed only fitting that as market vendors and customers celebrate National Farmers Market Week, they also had the opportunity to have their regular weekly market be part of the opening day of the county fair. Both kids and adults who were eager to check out all of the county fair exhibits also had a chance to visit with market vendors and view and purchase fresh apples, corn, squash, tomatoes, potatoes, baked goods, and more.

You hear a lot of talk lately about the attempts to set up "big ag" operations throughout the Midwest, including in South Dakota. Gov. Dennis Daugaard and the state Department of Agriculture hope to lure large dairy facilities to our state.

What one doesn't hear much about is how farmers markets are currently flourishing across the nation, and the Vermillion market is no exception.

According to the latest Census of Agriculture, direct sales of food products from farmers to individual consumers rose by nearly 50 percent between 2002 and 2007. Last year, local food sales grew to nearly \$7 billion, according to industry estimates.

Also, according to a news release from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), local food and direct marketing opportunities, including farmers markets, are one of the fastest growing segments of agriculture.

Sam Heikes is happy to be a part of that growth. He's not a vendor at the Vermillion Area Farmers Market; he has chosen instead to operate Heikes Family Farm, located on the northern outskirts of the community. He provides fresh produce from his own market at the farm, and to local consumers on a contract basis.

"This spring, USDA released a statistic that said the number of small producers that are selling their produce direct to consumers in the last three years has tripled nationwide," he said. "There is momentum behind 'buy fresh, buy local,' and what consumers want is to know who is growing their food and how it is being grown."

One thing that can't be overlooked is that, during a week designated to celebrate the marketing of locally grown fruits, vegetables, meats and other products, national news media have found time to devote attention to, of all things, test tube meat.

Yes, the world's first test-tube burger, made from lab-grown meat, was cooked and eaten in London earlier this week. It basically was what appeared to be a hamburger patty made not of hamburger, but of 20,000 strips of meat grown from cow stem cells.

I'll pass on that, thank you, and keep eating hamburger made the old-fashioned way – from a steer. Along with the "real" beef patty, throw in some fresh, locally grown lettuce, tomato and pickles, and I'm all set.

Such a meal is certainly worth celebrating.

PLAIN TALK POLL RESULTS

Should the S.D. Legislature provide extra funding to the Board of Regents to allow a tuition freeze at state universities for the 2014-15 school year?

Yes 37
No 14
Undecided 2

Total Votes 53

To participate in the Plain Talk's weekly poll, log on to plaintalk.net.

SD EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

Capital Journal, Pierre, Aug. 6, 2013

Culture of beef is the answer to 'Cultured Beef'

An Associated Press story from London that we carried in our Aug. 6 issue informs us that scientists there are to the point of taste-testing hamburger grown in a laboratory from cattle stem cells.

Our first thought about this is: Why? Just because we can do this sort of thing in a laboratory, does that mean we should? South Dakota ranked No. 5 in the USDA's January 2012 Cattle Inventory Report. Clearly we're a key state in supplying the animals that produce meat in the more traditional way, by converting forage and feed to beef.

What is interesting to us is the term used for this new product: a "Cultured Beef Burger." But let's be honest - in a culture that's uneasy about eating genetically modified foods, who would really want to eat hamburger produced in a laboratory?

It's wise for our producers to pay attention to the reasons proponents of cultured beef give for turning to the laboratory to produce meat. From climate change to animal welfare to the space needed to raise meat animals, those are issues the industry must take seriously because those are the issues proponents of laboratory meat give as the reasons for looking to such alternatives.

BETWEEN THE LINES



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6 good reasons to face the day

"When strangers start acting like neighbors, communities are reinvigorated." – Ralph Nader, environmentalist

I'd like you to meet a few of my new friends. Well, actually, they're really not friend friends. They're more like walking partners. Actually, they don't walk with me; but they do pass by on my morning jaunt.

The first one whose path I cross is the old guy on a bike. He rides a two-wheel standard bike with no gears – only a single chain and pedal power to get him to where he's going. Carefully gliding along, he tenuous keeps his balance. In reality, he's probably younger than he looks. It's that weathered skin and those tired eyes fixed on something far, far away that age him.

Most days, he's puffing on a cigarette, which makes him look like a slow-moving locomotive chug, chug, chugging down the tracks with spent fuel spewing from its smokestack. I've tried being neighborly by greeting him, but he drifts on by non-responsively as though I am invisible.

And then there's the lady with a yippy wired-haired Jack Russell Terrier. She's a sweetie with kind eyes that are always eager to engage others and a natural smile ever ready to partake in small talk.

"Shush, shush," she gently reprimands her little female fur-child, who pays no mind. "She's all bark and not bite," reassures the woman, whom I imagine was a child of the 1950s. Turning back time on her bent posture, the tamped down waves in

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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her pearl white hair and her pale complexion, I can almost imagine her youthful self, wearing a black and pink felt poodle skirt with a matching three-quarter-length sleeve blouse, Bobbie socks and black and white leather saddle shoes.

I could keep time by the jogger who passes me. She's the most religious of the bunch. Her lean long-legged stride paces effortlessly. Every morning, we mouth "Hi" to one another, as she can't hear a thing with those ear buds at full blast.

The one "God" on my route is a fitness nut I've nicknamed "Doc," even though I have no idea if he really is a doctor. A fast-pedaling speed biker, Doc flies by with a chipper "Good morning!" I haven't gotten a good look at his eyes behind those tinted yellow glasses, but his salt and pepper hair peeking out from under his helmet and matching goatee give him a distinguished look. I can tell he's serious about his workout with those mirrors extending from both sides of his head gear, that blood-pressure cuff wrapped around his upper right arm, his athletic braces on both knees and a handy water bottle dangling from his handle bars.

Then there's the guy who lives about a half mile out. He, too, has

graying hair, which he used to keep neatly trimmed around his ears and neck. Although of late, he's wearing it shoulder-length – a new look that goes better with that Harley-Davidson motorcycle and Spitfire convertible tucked away in his garage.

This guy is one of the most social strangers on my daily trek around the neighborhood, second only to the lady with the wire-haired Jack Russell Terrier. Whether he's futzing around in the garage, mowing or checking on his mega-sized RV that takes up his entire side yard, he usually asks how I'm doing, comments on what a beautiful day it is or how he should be out exercising like me, instead of shuffling around his place.

And, I'd be remiss if I did not introduce you to another friend on my way. If I were to guess, I'd say he's approaching 80. He cruises around the neighborhood at about 10 miles per hour in his four-door Buick LaSabe. Windows all down and a cigar hanging limp from his mug, he slows nearly to a stop to deliver a cheerful wave to everyone he passes. It's the same happy-to-see-you and even-happier-I'm-alive-for-one-more-day salute he offers when scooting around the block on his motorized wheelchair.

So there you have it – these are my regular passersby I see most morning on my walk. I can't tell you their names or their stories. I can say the mere thought of these strangers coaxes me out of bed most morning and the fluency of their presence in my life gives me reason to smile and face each new day.

Guest commentary:

A walk down the aisle

By Sen. John Thune

August marks a season of change and an important milestone in the life of our family. This month our youngest daughter Larissa will marry Scott Hargens in Sioux Falls. I always knew this day would come; it just seems to have come sooner than I expected. It's not them, it's me. They're of age, Larissa is 23 and Scott is 27, and they've been engaged for almost a year so I know they are ready. It's just that when it's your little girl walking down the aisle, I'm not sure that as a dad you're ever really ready. In fact, I'd be willing to bet few dads can say it's not a little bittersweet.

You see, I was there in the delivery room when my wife Kimberley gave birth to Larissa in January of 1990. And ever since that little blond-haired, blue-eyed baby entered the world, she's been my little girl.

I was the guy there for the hoops games and soccer matches, for the track meets and piano recitals, for the joy of victory and the pain of disappointment. I helped her learn how to swim, how to ride a bike, and how to shoot straight. I listened to her memorize Bible verses and say her bedtime prayers. I saw her love for all things living, including frogs

and snakes, and I laughed at her quick wit.

She, of course, helped carry me through seven campaigns, sat patiently through countless Lincoln Day dinners, picnics, fairs, and bus rides, not to mention appearing in numerous campaign ads despite her eternal shyness. And I know how hard it was on her when my job required me to miss some of her special moments. But for 23-plus years, through thick and thin, she's been my little L.T.

This August, she officially becomes Scott's girl. And despite the customary fatherly apprehension, I'm okay with that. Scott is a solid young man from good stock, he'll take good care of her, and she'll be a good wife. After all, she learned from her mom. There will be hard times ahead, it's part of life, but they're built on a strong foundation.

As for me, I don't think I would have it any other way. It's the normal order of things, God's plan for our lives. Still, as I share that final dance with my daughter, before I hand her off to her new husband, I will think about how blessed my life has been because of her and how grateful I am that even as she begins her new life, she will always be my little L.T.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Plain Talk encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the Plain Talk will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted.

Please mail to: Letters to the Editor, 201 W. Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069, drop off at 201 W. Cherry in Vermillion, fax to 624-4696 or e-mail to david.lias@plaintalk.net.