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Ground-breaking sets Vermillion's future course



A crew from Puetz Construction, Mitchell, works quietly in the background as University of South Dakota President James Abbott addresses local citizens who gathered Tuesday to witness a groundbreaking ceremony for the new building.

(Photo by David Lias)

By Travis Gulbrandson

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Vermillion took a step into the future Tuesday morning.

That's what multiple city and business officials said during a ground-breaking ceremony for Eagle Creek Software Services, which took place at the southwest corner of Princeton and Bower streets, north of the old Pamida building.

"It's a beautiful day here, and it's going to be a bright future," said Dr. Mel Ustad, director of commercialization at the South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development.

Eagle Creek's president Ken Behrendt agreed, saying, "We think that this is the way the world's going to go. We think over the next 10 years there's going to be hundreds of thousands of jobs repatriated to the United States from offshore outsourcing, and we think they're going to go to South Dakota."

"It's our mission, our goal, that we can bring those jobs to South Dakota," he said.

Eagle Creek provides consulting and technical expertise, focusing on

customer relationship management, information management and applications development.

The ceremony took place at the site of what eventually will be Eagle Creek's home in Vermillion. Currently, the area is a dug-up corner of an alfalfa field southwest of Walmart. When workers complete their task, Eagle Creek's new home – a 32,000 square foot building – will be added to Vermillion's skyline.

The company's mission is to help its clients increase quality and efficiencies while managing price and risk in software development, deployment and support.

Berhendt said he hopes to continue to expand this mission in Vermillion.

"We will compete against everyone in the world," he said. "We will deliver multi-million dollar projects out of here. We will compete against every global technology company there is, and we've demonstrated over the last nine years that we can compete, and we can successfully implement technology

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Howe: 'This is just the beginning'

By David Lias

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Steve Howe, executive director of the Vermillion Chamber of Commerce and Development Company, admitted to feeling very excited and a bit nervous, all at the same time Tuesday morning.

This was after he successfully served as master of ceremonies to an outdoor program at the construction site of a 32,000 square foot building that, when completed, will serve as the home of Eagle Creek Software Services.

The business has the potential to add up to 200 new, good-paying jobs

in the near future to the Vermillion community.

"This is a new venture for us; while development company is in our name, it's more about economic development and business recruitment; it's not about literal industrial development and building office structures and things of that nature," Howe said, while standing just a few hundred feet from an area where dirt has been moved and leveled in preparation for the new building. "It's a new challenge for us, so we're very excited but nervous."

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Freshmen find their way around VHS

By Travis Gulbrandson

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Students were back in the halls of Vermillion High School on Friday, but they weren't taking any classes.

Instead, they were attending an open house, which took place from 9 a.m. to noon, and found many of the incoming freshmen were getting tours of the building from upperclassmen, as well as asking questions and figuring out just how to get their lockers open.

"It pretty much gives them an overview of the school, and makes it a little more comfortable for them when they have to come that first day," explained principal Curt Cameron. "Also, it gives them the opportunity to meet some of the upperclassmen."

The tours were given by members of the student council and the National Honor Society, among others.

The open house allows "the freshmen to come to school knowing more people and feeling more

comfortable adapting to high school life," said student body president Josie Huber, who spent the morning answering questions about the school's various clubs.

"It's going good," said Maddie Mockler, a sophomore acting as one of the tour guides. "They're kind of scared, but they're excited to be here and see everybody."

Nicole Klemme and Amanda Finnegan were two of the incoming freshmen that came to check things out on Friday.

"We finally got our lockers open," Klemme said after several minutes of trying.

Finnegan said that in addition to questions about policies and classes, she wanted more information about block scheduling.

"It's kind of confusing," she said. "I've never had that before."

Huber said "being overwhelmed" is one of the primary concerns students bring to the open house.

"They want to know how hard the classes are," she said. "A lot of kids are

worried about being too overwhelmed and being too involved, but I don't think that's a problem. I'm involved in a lot of clubs, so I feel like being involved is a better way to help you adjust to high school."

The open house also provides an opportunity for the students to work out any problems with their schedules, Cameron said.

"Before, the freshmen would have to come in with the upperclassmen on the same day, and it was just a deluge of kids," he said. "Now this really helps alleviate the numbers, and it helps the administration as far as being able to give more individual guidance."

This is the third year the open house has taken place, Cameron said.

"Prior to this, we would have the kids come in in the spring, and we would go over the curriculum," he said. "We would have everybody in the auditorium, and we would do group tours of the building."

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Incoming Vermillion High School freshmen Amanda Finnegan and Nicole Klemme attempt to open their lockers during an open house Friday morning.

(Photo by Travis Gulbrandson)



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