

# Gov. Dugaard Speaks At Local Summit

BY SARAH WETZEL  
For The Plain Talk

In front of more than 300 youth from across the state, Gov. Dennis Daugaard attended and spoke at the Inaugural Gifted Education Summit at the close of the 32nd Annual South Dakota Governor's Camp on the University of South Dakota Campus Friday morning.

Other special guests included First Lady Linda Daugaard, S.D. Senator Arthur Rusch (R-Dist. 17) and S.D Representative Nancy Rasmussen (R-Dist. 17).

Daugaard recognized what an important part the Governor's Camp and the Ambassadors of Excellence camp plays in the Gifted Education Initiative.

"I'm very glad that we're having kids get here to the university setting and seeing what it's like to be on a university campus, hear from people who are interested in their post-secondary education and get them ready for the world of work," he said. "At the middle school level I think it's really important for kids to see learning and intellectual curiosity as not making them a geek or a nerd or an outcast but in fact by seeing others who have a little more intellectual curiosity they might see that it is a good thing. Having social support for this kind of thing is important."

Rusch agreed. "Obviously USD and the campus is really important to me since I've been here 50 years since I came here as a student," he said. "It's been a major part of my life. I'm really happy to see these talented kids here and I think that special gifted education is really important and I'm really glad they make this effort to give this opportunity to those kids."

According to the summit director Elliott Johnson, the summit was added to camp this year to help further their efforts to expand programming for gifted students throughout the state.

"The advocacy aspect was really important to us because we didn't really have that at camp before so the summit was there to really have that sendoff," he said. "We need to get more gifted programs because they're dying right now and we need more opportunity for these kids. It's so important to know that oftentimes our education system pushes for students who are behind but the higher learning students need that same opportunity. We don't challenge them enough. A lot of times you'll hear from the students, 'Well I get straight-A's and that's all the teachers expect of me.' They need more."

In Gov. Dugaard's address he applauded the students and gave them some tips to help further their education outside of camp and throughout their educational careers.

"Especially if you're a senior in high school, take Dual Credit Courses," he began. "It's a course you take while you're in high school but it's taught at the college or tech school level. So not only does it give credit toward your high school diploma but it also gives credit toward a degree after high school. They can give you a head start on a university or tech school degree and save you hundreds and in some case thousands of dollars."

Secondly, Daugaard encouraged the kids to visit the South Dakota MyLife web page.

"That's a tool to help you choose the right pathway that will lead to job opportunities after you graduate," he said. Back in my day having a college degree was enough. That's not true anymore."

Thirdly, he stressed the importance of earning as much financial assistance as possible.

"Get after those scholarship applications because if anyone can apply, you can," he said. "You, be-



SHAUNA MARLETTE/  
FOR THE PLAIN TALK  
**TOP: Members of the South Dakota Governor's Camp, which has been held on the Campus of USD for the last week open the Gifted Education Summit with a song. BOTTOM: Governor Dennis Daugaard and SD First Lady Linda Daugaard were honored guests and speakers at the first ever Gifted Education Summit held as part of the South Dakota Governor's Camp which was held on the campus of USD this past week. Here Daugaard talks to the more than 300 middle school and high school aged students from around the state about taking advantage of the opportunities available for education in South Dakota.**

cause of your intellectual prowess have the ability to rise to the top of the applications. Get out there early and look at scholarships."

Both Daugaard and the participants of the camps took time during the summit to honor First Lady Linda Daugaard.

"Marrying Linda was the best decision I've ever made," Daugaard said. "Over the past four and a half years she's been working on issues like infant mortality. There are too many infants who die and we want to stop that. She's been encouraging kids in elementary school to read and also (addressing the issues facing) foster parenting. She's done a lot for the state and we're very lucky to have her as First Lady."

First Lady Daugaard was honored with the State Initiative Award, given for her work in furthering education in South Dakota, especially in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) areas.

"You spent a week here learning and thinking how great Science, Technology, Engineering and Math is," she told the gathered students. "But your job's not over. Your next job is to go home and when you go back to school, talk to the teachers that sent you here and say, 'I've got a job for you. We need to spread the word about gifted education and how we need to continue it in our school system.' We need to get more students to come here because you're the ones that are leaders."

Other awards given at the summit included the Alumni Achievement Award given to Kevin Went for his past participation in the camp and then returning and giving back to the camps.

The School Spirit Award was given to Cheyenne-Eagle Butte High School for their efforts in supporting their students by fully



funding 26 students to attend camp, among other things.

Despite the social stigma that gifted education camps are for only a select elite few, director Johnson said that is not the idea they are trying to promote.

"I actually started as a middle schooler who wasn't in a gifted program," he said. "I heard about it from a friend. I had to actively pursue how to be a part of it because I wasn't noticed by my teachers. A lot of these students don't have programs themselves. They themselves feel they're gifted. That's the beauty of it all. If you want to challenge yourself as a student which is what all these kids want to do, you can be a part of this program."

Johnson said the gifted camps are not limited to a select few, they actually want more kids to attend to hopefully spark the love of learning in as many young hearts as possible.

"I think making sure everyone wants to continue in the education system is vital," he said. "We're losing kids in South Dakota because they don't feel like they're being challenged right now. These kids go and rave to their friends and we see more come every year because more kids want to learn how to be gifted. The moral of the story is everyone can be which is what these kids find out here."

Nancy, 13, an incoming eighth grader from Watertown, commented on her invaluable experience at the camp and her passion for

gifted education.

"The camp has taught me a lot of things," she said. "It has taught me music skills, communication skills and it's taught me to be myself and to celebrate individuals. Everyone here feels a sense of connection because people in different towns either have a lack of gifted education or they have no gifted education at all. So it's pretty neat here because you get to express yourself and really understand what it's like to expand your knowledge. I really want to take those rules and atmosphere and apply it at school."

Nancy feels she is a unique example because she feels she is gifted in other areas than STEM.

"I have an artistic mind, unlike a lot of people at school," she said. "I'm good at reading, writing and theater but I'm not good at math. I'm kind of looked at as someone who isn't exactly smart just because I'm not in math. Being artistic isn't bad. Everyone accepts scientific minds as brilliant and STEM is great, but I really want to talk about the arts because that's even better."

Nancy looks forward to advocating for the cause of gifted education.

"There's this quote that says be the change you want to see in the world," she said. "So this is us, the gifted kids changing education in South Dakota. It might not be the whole world but it's ours."

## Choir

From Page 7

to buy music. Music alone is hundreds and hundreds of dollars. It's amazing the general cost of things in general. We're trying to be very frugal but it still costs a bit of money."

According to Steele, it's a small price for the result.

"Granted it's just music but you're also getting game time, snack time, learning time for almost two and a half hours," she said. "[My daughter] will try out and if she gets in I will have no problem paying the \$300 because I know it's worth every cent for her to be in that choir."

Once the program gets running this year Steele said she hopes to expand even further to include a non-audition choir for younger children.

More ideas for the choir involve collaboration with other groups such as the Yankton Children's Choir and the Sioux Falls Symphony.

"There's tons of stuff that we can do we just need to get the ball rolling," Steele said. "Right now what we need is the community to support and businesses to make donations and individuals that want to sponsor children, things like that."

According to Steele, donating businesses and individuals will be recognized on all programs. Businesses wishing to become regular sponsors will receive the choice of a business card in the program and on the website.

According to Steele, music has had a big impact on her life and teaches skills she wants to share.

"Creating music, I would put it above sports in teaching you things like teamwork and setting goals and achieving goals, learning how to get along with people, just the chance you get to create something from nothing," she said. "That is incredible. Where once there was a silent room now there is a room filled with the music you are creating. Just the sense of community you gain in a choir or band is a very powerful thing. It gives, especially for children, a way to express themselves."

In an age of technology, Steele feels particularly passionate about the subject and hopes the choir will help.

"This is their time to unplug and discover what they can do themselves," she said. "That's why us as music teachers are pushing for music to be considered a core subject. It's getting much closer. It's not just that music can make you smarter. It gives you and your children a chance to create and to experience and that's a big deal to experience life and not just from music on the radio. Music has been a huge part of my life. From my dad singing to me at campfires when we went camping. It's always been there."

Auditions will be held September 8 from 4-6 p.m. and September 10 from 5-7 p.m. at the United Church of Christ (UCC) on Main St.

Parents need to fill out an electronic audition form prior to the auditions and will be assigned a time on one of those days. The link to the form can be accessed at [vermillionchildrenschoir.weebly.com](http://vermillionchildrenschoir.weebly.com) or on the Vermillion Children's Choir facebook page.

## More Dinners Together



My husband and I enjoy dressing up and going out for dinner. But when my heels started hurting, I visited my Avera podiatrist who helped me choose the best treatment plan. Now, I can pay attention to my date and still wear my favorite shoes.

**Talk to an Avera podiatrist if you have pain while:**

- Walking or climbing stairs
- Standing for long periods of time
- Bending or flexing your foot
- Wearing certain shoes



Sanford Vermillion Clinic  
20 S. Plum St.  
Vermillion, SD 57069

15-ORTH-3833

Schedule an appointment with an Avera podiatrist by calling 605-668-8601.




## It's more than just a mortgage.

It's the place you'll call home. With 18 years of experience, Darren Melstad can help you get the job done right. Home buying success—it's you and  together.

4939 S. Western Ave., Ste. 100 | NMLS# 400286 | 605-977-8511

COMPETITIVE RATES • FIRST-TIME HOME BUYER PROGRAMS  
ONLINE APPLICATIONS • INSTANT PREQUALIFICATIONS • REFINANCING



©2014 First Interstate Bank, LLC. Used with permission.

[firstinterstate.com](http://firstinterstate.com) Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender. 