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USD advances plans for bachelor nursing degree

The South Dakota Board of Regents has given The University of South Dakota permission to develop a plan for a bachelor-level degree in nursing to be offered at the Vermillion campus and online.

The board's consideration of this request takes into account an urgent need to graduate more nurses with bachelor's degrees in South Dakota, said Jack R. Warner, the regents' executive director and CEO. "There is a long-term need for more registered nurses to meet our health care workforce needs, and vacancy rates in the nursing profession are projected to become very serious. We also recognize that associate-degree RNs need convenient access to a bachelor's degree so they can advance in their careers and be eligible for admission to graduate programs," Warner said.

He said USD officials will return to the Board later for official approval of the B.S. degree in nursing, once plans for the new program are completed. If approved, the USD program will be directed to registered nurses already in the field who have an associate degree from USD or another institution. It will deliver bachelor-level general education and advanced nursing courses required of a bachelor-degree program.

Warner also stressed that USD's associate degree in nursing will continue with no changes, as it produces the majority of the system's two-year degrees and there will continue to be strong demand across South Dakota to hire entry-level nurses with an associate degree. Likewise, the long-standing B.S. degree in nursing at South Dakota State University will continue, as will SDSU's Upward Mobility program for RNs. "We see strong evidence that an additional bachelor's program in nursing is justified, due to the changing direction of the nursing profession and our state's workforce needs," Warner said.

USD also intends to continue its "one-plus-one" arrangement with Lake Area Technical Institute in Watertown, so that Lake Area's licensed practical nursing graduates can complete courses for the USD associate degree in nursing and become registered nurses.

There are no plans to request new state resources or additional student fees to support the B.S.N. program on the Vermillion campus.

SD Ag Dept. offers financing for farmers and ranchers

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture (SDDA) would like to remind farmers and ranchers that it has financing programs available to assist producers during these difficult economic times.

In response to stricter banking regulations brought on by the national financial downturn, some South Dakota producers have experienced difficulty obtaining loans. Some operators have been asked to make larger down payments and provide additional documentation to their lenders.

The SDDA has programs available that partner borrowers with local lenders to provide lower interest rates. The SDDA's current rate is 4.5% and affects the Livestock Loan Participation and Rural Development Agricultural Loan Participation programs.

The Livestock Loan program partners SDDA with a local lender to provide opportunities for livestock operators with current facilities, equipment and feed. The SDDA can finance 50% of the total loan amount, or a maximum of $100,000, for up to 5 years.

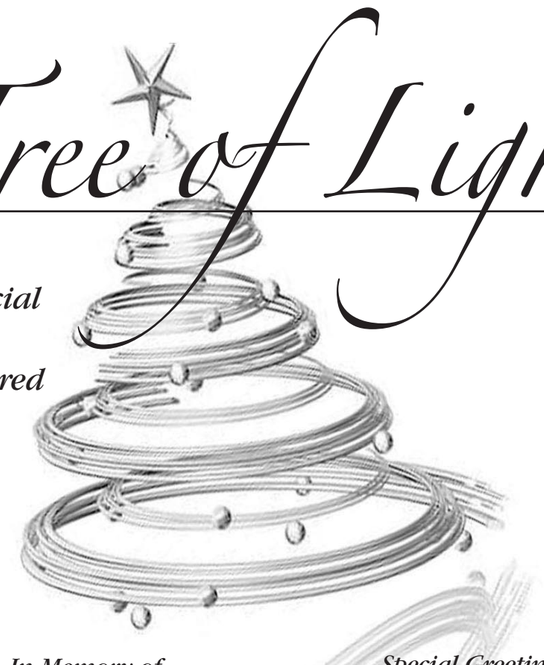
The Rural Development Loan program is designed to help producers purchase land, buildings, equipment, machinery, or other improvements for a new or existing operation. This loan also works in conjunction with a local lender and can provide up to 80% of the total loan amount, or a maximum of $300,000, for up to 10 years.

In addition to the participation loans, SDDA also has guaranty loans and bond programs, which can provide producers with low-interest financing.

For additional information on any of the financial programs offered through the Value Added Finance Authority, contact your local lender or Michael Schelske, Loan Administrator with SDDA, at 605-773-5436. Program summaries and application forms are available at www.state.sd.us/doa/ag_dev/loan.

Dakota Hospital Foundation Tree of Lights

Thank you to all those making a donation to Dakota Hospital Foundation (DHF) through the Tree of Lights fundraiser. A special word of thanks to Sanford Vermillion employees, DHF Board members and Tree of Lights committee members who volunteered their time selling lights. Thank you to the USD Department of Music for the wonderful partnership and the fabulous Holiday Concert. Proceeds from the Tree of Lights project will assist in covering the cost of mammography services for the uninsured and underserved population in our service area.



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