



This group from the Vermillion Area Dance Organization were among the performers at the W.H. Over Museum's 47th annual Christmas Festival Sunday afternoon.

(Photo by Travis Gulbrandson)

OVER
From Page 01

One of those vendors was Roger Leff of Sioux City's Flowers by Roger, who was selling silk flower arrangements.

"I've been coming here for a number of years," Leff said. "Same spot, same place. It's very good."

"It's always different, and our vendors are very good about bringing new things and doing different things," Johnson said. "We try to keep it open-ended, and if somebody wants to come, we try to find room for them. ... We love to have a variety of people."

Leff said he thinks it's that variety that keeps people coming back year after year.

"Almost everything is handmade," he said. "A lot of places you go, they have Avon and things like that. This is craft (oriented), things that people make."

Another table among the vendors was helmed by the Tiopaye Student Council, the Native American student group from the University of South Dakota.

The students spent the afternoon selling T-shirts, wojapi and fry bread.

"We're fundraising for the powwow and other events

that we do on campus, and we're supporting the museum," said USD student Aspen Ducheneaux. "We've sold quite a few things, and hopefully there's a good turnout for everybody."

Johnson said the museum is always open to new potential vendors for upcoming festivals, as well as vendors who deal in specific products.

"One thing that we really miss is, we used to have a group of people come down from Yankton making lefse, and they've aged out of wanting to do that," she said. "We've had at least four or five inquiries today, so if anybody in the Vermillion area likes to make lefse, they're welcome to come and set up a lefse factory. We'd love to have them."

Sunday wasn't only about vendors, though. Visitors were treated to an afternoon of performances from the Vermillion Area Dance Organization and others, featuring groups of dancers, cloggers and baton-twirlers of various ages.

The afternoon also coincided with the unveiling of two new Native American exhibits at the museum. One dealt with commodities distribution, and the other with Native American boarding schools.

"That's completely done by the USD students,"

Johnson said. "Dr. Bradley's class met here all last semester, and they built those exhibits during that time. They did a really good job. We're very proud of that."

Of course, being the Christmas season, there were also plenty of decorations, including many trees that were decorated by area groups and individuals.

There also was a tall Christmas tree in the lobby of the museum.

The lobby also served as de facto headquarters for Santa Claus himself, who spent the afternoon handing out candy canes and having his picture taken with visiting children.

All the activities made things a bit crowded at times.

"There are a lot of people that showed up," Ducheneaux said. "I was surprised at the turnout, and I'm glad that Vermillion is supporting the museum."

Johnson said the museum sees the festival as "kind of a Christmas gift to the community."

"We thoroughly enjoy doing it, and we like to see it grow," she said.

For more information about the W.H. Over Museum, visit <http://www.whovermuseum.org/>.

COLD
From Page 01

However, the other events that were scheduled for Friday night and the next Saturday went on as scheduled.

Children and parents spent the evening at the Edith B. Siegrist Vermillion Public Library to making free ornaments to take home, and to decorate stockings for soldiers serving overseas as part of the Stockings for Soldiers program.

The following day, Dec. 7, area kids got to take pictures with Santa at the Vermillion Hy-Vee. Howe said both events went well despite the still-cold temperatures.

"The library still had kids coming in, and there were still pictures with Santa the next day," he said. "I don't think it was as well-attended as they would have been if we had the full parade, particularly the Friday night event, but I do know that there were plenty of kids that did get over there and enjoyed making the crafts and

seeing Santa." Although it's still very cold in the Vermillion area, the 20-below temps seem to be gone – at least for now.

As of press time, Accuweather.com is predicting a high of 15 degrees Saturday, followed by a high of 2 degrees Sunday.

Next week should be a bit warmer, with temperatures predicted in the mid-20s for most of the week.

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