

VOICES IN THE NIGHT



The Vermillion Middle School 7th and 8th graders performed during Tuesday's winter concert at the Vermillion High School auditorium. A nice-sized crowd were entertained by a solid performance by the young talents.

THOMAS HATZENBUHLER / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

'Nerd Night' returns to Vermillion

By Thomas Hatzenbuhler
For the Plain Talk

Wil Wheaton, an actor of "Star Trek" fame, recently said the following of being a nerd: "I am a nerd. It's awesome to be a nerd. I don't know what the world is going to be like by the time you understand this. For me, when I was growing up, being a nerd meant that I liked things that were a little weird, that took a lot of effort to appreciate and understand. It meant that I loved science, playing board games, reading books and really understanding what went on in the world instead of just riding the planet through space."

Until now, at this very recent point in time in the history of our species, the label of nerd was, generally speaking, negative and almost derogatory in nature. And

despite the rise in popularity of high profile intellectuals, led by the late Carl Sagan and his protégé Neil deGrasse Tyson, animosity towards or general social distrust of intellectuals, or the synonymous term thereof—i.e., nerds—seems to continue.

Furthermore, in our current sociopolitical culture, knowing too much about any given topic may work against oneself. Anti-intellectualism is alive and well, especially at the junction of science and politics, and as such, experts are often stymied by their own expertise or are wrongly accused of being interested only in securing funding for their own esoteric research.

It was therefore intellectually and societally invigorating to witness the return of Nerd Night to the Vermillion

area on Thursday after a hiatus of more than six months. The event was held at its new venue, the Varsity Pub.

"Nerd Night is basically a casual event in a bar where we invite three speakers in to talk about a topic they love. It could be anything; we've had topics such as beer and cigars in the past," explained Lindsey Peterson, USD student and current president of Nerd Night. "The speakers talk for about 10 minutes, answer questions, drink beer and have a good time."

Nerd Night may be a casual event, but it is also a celebration of the intellectual life and an opportunity for experts or otherwise knowledgeable individuals to share their passions and insights with the general public.

For an extended version of the story visit www.plaintalk.net.



Shown here, the living room in the Austin-Whittemore House, the flagship home for the Clay County Historical Society's Tour of Homes.

ZACH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK:

Homes for the Holidays

By Zach Wetzel
For The Plain Talk

Five historic homes opened their doors last weekend at 4:30 pm for the Clay County Historical Society's Tour of Homes. Transportation services were sponsored by Vermillion Public Transit.

Maxine Johnson, Interim President of the Society, remarked on the beauty and history of the Austin-Whittemore House Museum.

The building serves as the headquarters for the Society.

"The mission of the Clay County (SD) Historical Society is to bring together those people interested in the history and prehistory of Clay County and adjacent areas," said the Society's website.

Wess Pravecek, who supervises the Austin-Whittemore House, was very enthusiastic about last weekend's tour.

"This is one of the largest fundraisers," said Pravecek.

Pravecek explained that there are five houses on the tour, including the Austin-Whittemore house. Members of the tour were treated to a buffet of hors d'oeuvres, cider, and coffee.

According to Pravecek, the Austin-Whittemore house dates back to 1882, and is a treat to behold.

There is an old play room and a gorgeous living room complete with flickering Christmas dioramas.

A flyer about the Austin-Whittemore house revealed that the house was donated to the Society in 1969. Before its' donation the house belonged to the Austin Whittemore family.

The flyer further explained that the brick house was built by Horace J. Austin, a member of the state legislature.

Many fancy dinners for legislators and dignitaries were held in the house. According to the flyer, when Mr.

Austin passed away, the house was expanded to include a dining room, conservatory, and upstairs bedroom. The house is a must-see attraction on the tour.

"If you're going to hit two places outside of here, visit the Merrigans and Luanne Ouellette," said Pravecek. "You can be within one house and the other within five or ten minutes."

Pravecek described the Merrigan's as a big house with tons of lights.

The Merrigan home, which used to be a farmhouse, was certainly a highlight of the tour.

"It was your basic old farmhouse," said Nick Merrigan. "We were paired up by age, two per room, with no air conditioning. We used to fight over who had the working fan. Or we'd come down and sleep on the porch."

According to Nick, before the house was renovated, the ceiling was very low and the basement was unfinished. Showers and laundry facilities were located there.

Members of the public said they were impressed with the Merrigan home, and that the kitchen was their favorite part.

The homes on this tour, which included the former farmhouse and a former hospital, were certainly worth the trip.

"There has been steadily declining interest in the tour," said Joe Hoffman, past President of the Society.

The Society hopes that future attendance will improve.

In the words of Pravecek: "This is a fun event. What's new now will be a treasure later on."

While the Tour of Homes is the largest fundraiser for the Society, there will also be a 'Sweets and Treats' activity next week, according to Pravecek.

For more information, visit <http://www.cchssd.org/events/>.

Vermillion Area Arts Council gears up for another year of planning

By Katie Clausen
For the Plain Talk

The Vermillion Area Arts Council met Dec. 3 to discuss upcoming events, management, and issues within the artists' community in Vermillion and the surrounding area.

President Joe Geis is looking forward to adapting into his new role helping members of the Council oversee the services they provide for local artists.

"We're a group of individuals with a building and we do what we can to help support artists in the community," Geis said.

The VAAC aspires to help local artists of all types have a venue to expose the public to their art.

"We are open to performing artists, visual artists, painters, sculptors, and musicians," Geis said.

"We try to keep it narrowed down to serious artists, but basically all are welcome."

The VAAC provides artists with use of the Washington Street Arts Center.

"We try to be very inclusive and support any artist who shows up," Geis said.

The meeting is two-fold in its approach on planning and looking at future events.

"We will be talking about a lot of things," Geis said. "A lot of it will just be maintenance stuff at this point. But I do know we will be doing a little talking about the St. Patrick's Day festival."

The VAAC will be lining up holiday events, fine arts events and 2015 activities. Some activities and shows will be new, some are Vermillion Traditions; such as the Chili Blues cook-off.

"We always do a Chili Blues," Geis said. "This was my first year going to that and I felt that was a fantastic time."

The VAAC is looking at Vermillion as a whole community, featuring art from both USD and locals who are unaffiliated with the university.

"Something that I'm hoping to do is be able to use the arts council to bridge that gap," Geis said. "We have time, people, and resources available to help artists out."

Geis and the VAAC are excited about events coming up in the spring.

"Recently we hosted the artist sustainability event," Geis said. "And we have the Martin Luther King Day for Peace coming up and we like to involve the kids from the community in that too."

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 6th Annual Parade of Lights, Community Tree Lighting, Stockings for Soldiers, Coloring Contest – Lunch With Santa and Pictures With Santa a great success!

City of Vermillion	Al & Pat Pravecek	Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity
Vermillion Street Dept.	Nancy & Tom Nelson	Maloney Real Estate & J & M Real Estate Solutions
Vermillion Light & Power Dept.	CorTrust Bank/CorInsurance – serving hot chocolate	USD ROTC Color Guard
Vermillion Police Dept.	Peterman Photography – Pictures with Santa	Baily Gale – Miss Cedar County Rodeo Queen & Diamond C Ranch
Vermillion Fire Dept.	All of the Parade Participants:	Vermillion Fire Department
Vermillion Public Library – sponsoring 'Stockings for Soldiers'	Edith B. Siegrist Vermillion Public Library	Miss SD USA & Miss SD Teen USA
Mick & Cheryl Breske	Classic Hits 106.3 - 5 Star Communications	Vermillion Area Farmers Market
Paul & Jeanne Hagenbuch – donating the Community Christmas Tree	CorTrust Bank	Dorothy Olson
Hy-Vee – sponsoring the coloring contest, lunch with Santa & pictures with Santa	Broadcaster Press/Plain Talk	USD – Charlie Shuttle
USD Fine Arts Dept. – USD Carolers	Vermillion Public Transit	The Pride of Vermillion Marching Band
USD ROTC Color Guard	Kappa Alpha Theta & Alpha Xi Delta	Dan & Peggy Lund
	Louie's Carpet Cleaning	Brad Conrad
	WNAX & Passing With Flying Colors	

Congratulations to the Parade of Lights Winners!

1st Place – Maloney Real Estate & J & M Real Estate Solutions

2nd Place – WNAX & Passing With Flying Colors

3rd Place – Miss SD USA & Miss SD Teen USA – Future Productions, LLC

On behalf of the VCDC Holiday Events Committee:

Kimberley Andres
Laurie Siegel

Stacey Allen
Barb Martin



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