

# Sandy Aakre retires as N.G. chaplain

Chaplain (Major) Elmer 'Sandy' Aakre of Vermillion retired from the South Dakota Army National Guard (SDARNG) in February 2010. Sandy served for 22 years as a chaplain, first with the 1st Battalion of the 147th Field Artillery in Sioux Falls and since 1999 as the chaplain for the 153rd Engineer Battalion in Huron.

Sandy was deployed several times – the longest being to Iraq from December 2003 to March 2005. He was also deployed for state relief efforts to Hurricane Katrina Relief in Louisiana, Fargo Flooding Relief in North Dakota and served as the SDARNG Chaplain for the Spencer, SD Tornado Relief efforts.

Sandy was also deployed to Germany, Italy, Korea and Suriname as a chaplain for Army work deployments. He felt blessed to be able to travel and serve soldiers on four continents.



Chaplain (Major) Elmer 'Sandy' Aakre

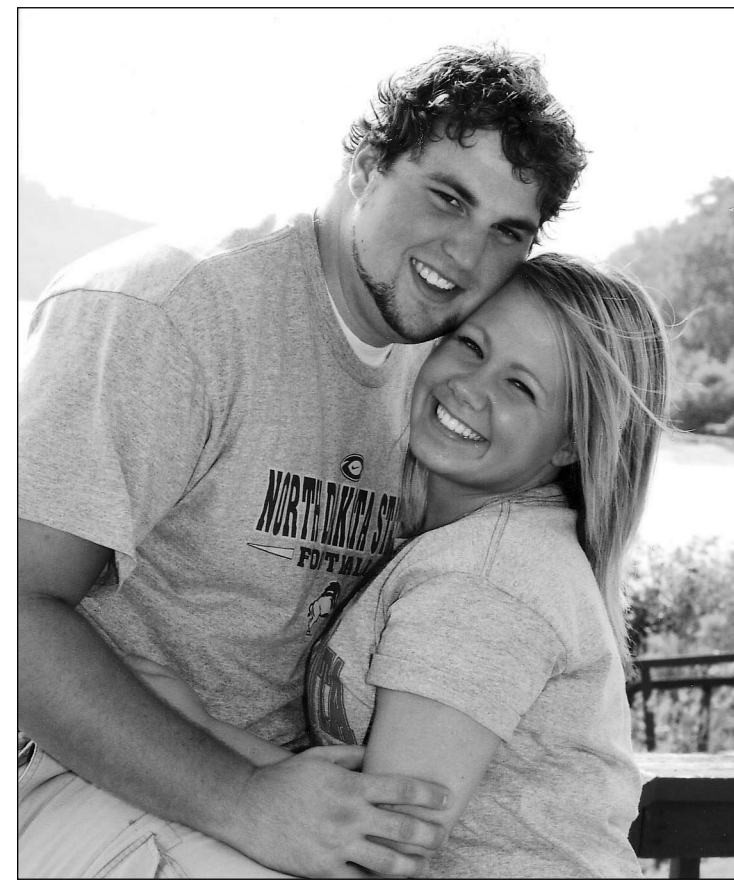
The retirement party was held in Huron on Feb. 6. A framed HHC pennant and a display case for his awards were presented to him by the unit. Letters from the President Obama, Gov. Mike Rounds and the Chief-of-Chaplains were read. The Chief-of-Chaplains sent a thank you letter to Shelley along with a pin and a necklace for her steadfast support of Chaplain Sandy. Gov. Rounds has designated Feb. 28 as Major Elmer O. Aakre Day in South Dakota.

Sandy earned the following awards during his Army service: Meritorious Service Medal//Army Commendation Medal//Army Achievement Medal//Army Reserve Components

Achievement Medal//National Defense Service Medal (Second Award)//Army Service Ribbon//Army Reserve Overseas Training Ribbon (Second Award)//Driver and Mechanic Badge with Driver – Wheeled Vehicle(s) Clasp//Armed Forces Reserve Medal/W/M Device//Global War on Terrorism Services Medal//Overseas Service Ribbon//Overseas Service Bar (Second Award)//Meritorious Unit Citation//Navy Unit Commendation/Iraq Campaign Medal//Two Campaign Stars//Louisiana Relief Ribbon//North Dakota Relief Ribbon//

When asked how retiring from the Guard would be like, Sandy replied that he would miss ministering to the soldiers and sharing in the relationships with soldiers that made serving in the Guard special. Sandy urges any of our ABCD ministers that qualify to check out the military chaplaincy.

Sandy is currently working on the history of the 153rd Engineer Battalion and will have a published book by mid-May 2010.



Gerry Ebel and Nicole Larson

## To be wed

Mr. and Mrs. Van Larson of Vermillion announce the engagement of their daughter, Nicole Ann to Gerry Ebel, son of Gerald and Carol Ebel of Yankton.

Nikki will be graduating from The University of South Dakota in May with her

degree in nursing. Gerry will be graduating from North Dakota State University in May with his degree in health and physical education.

The couple will exchange their vows on July 17 in Vermillion at Trinity Lutheran Church.

## Commodity program available in Clay County

The Center, Yankton is now accepting applications for the commodity surplus food program in the Clay County area to include Vermillion.

This program is designed for over 60 low income seniors. Income guidelines are monthly income for a single person household is \$1,174 and for two person household \$1,579.

The program is also open to low income pregnant and breastfeeding women, other new mothers up to one year postpartum, infants, children up to their sixth birthday. (Eligible participants cannot participate in USDA's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) at the same time they participate in CSFP.) Women-Infants-Child

dren eligibility guidelines are: income up to \$1,670 for one person, \$2,247 for two people, \$2,823 for three people and \$3,400 for families of four.

A typical box contains: two boxes of cereal, canned meats, nonfat dry milk, peanut butter, one or two packages of pasta products, two pounds American cheese, three large cans juice, two cans fruit and four cans of vegetables.

You will receive a postcard of approval after you submit your application and proof of income. You may then pick up the commodities on Thursday at the Food Pantry. You must be able to pick up your box weighing 20-35 pounds or have someone accompany you to carry the food box for you.

Location of pick up shall be the Trinity Lutheran Church located at 816 E. Clark St.

To apply for the program contact the Center at 1-605-665-4685 for an application, Proof of income is required. A copy of a bank statement and/or a copy of your social security statement will be needed. Yankton office hours are Monday through Thursday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Ask for Aves or Colleen. Applications are also available by contacting the Vermillion Senior Center at 624-8072, BUT must be returned to The Center, 900 Whiting Drive, Yankton, SD 57078 attn: Aves Sejnoha.

## USD/ from page 1

understand the benefits of economic development statewide by having a large number of university graduates across South Dakota.

"And when you look at research funding, there is direct economic development in South Dakota by having research conducted at universities in our state," Alberts said. "We bring in substantial private and federal dollars to fund research."

The state university system is preparing for a lean budget by looking for cuts in its operating budget for the coming year. That comes on top of a long period of only small increases in support from the state to higher education.

"We've been getting by on little for quite some time," Alberts said. "It's been 12 years since we've even had an inflationary increase (in the budget) for maintenance and repair of our buildings here on campus. Salaries weren't increased last year, and it doesn't look like salaries will be increased this year, and we already have faculty that are being paid very little compared to surrounding states."

South Dakota has been

fortunate in being able to consistently provide an affordable education, and not a "cheap" learning experience, to students in its higher ed system, he said. "I'm worried that if we face too many cuts, we're going to be looking at a cheap education system in South Dakota."

Alberts said many people are shocked when they learn how little financial support is provided to the university from the state budget.

"In 2010, the overall budget for public higher education in the state was \$652 million, and of that, only 26 percent was actually funded by state money," he said. "The remainder was research dollars that we brought in, tuition that students paid, fees and other revenues that you generate from, for example, residential halls."

Declining state financial support, he said, drives up the cost of tuition and limits the chances of lower income students to take part in higher education.

Paul Rann, a Student Government Association senator, said it is important for USD students to give direct input to legislators from their home districts regarding the nega-

tive impact that could be experienced in the state's higher education system without appropriate budgetary support from the Legislature.

"We just really want students to know that the Student Government Association has been doing all we can to make contacts in the Legislature, and makes students' voices heard," Alberts said, "but we need the help of every student at the university."

Rann told the students that legislators that he has spoken with are primarily focused on making cuts to the state budget, including cuts to the revenue allocated to higher education.

"We're an easy target, so it's a touchy subject for some lawmakers," he said. "There are others who are more receptive to helping the regental system."

Alberts said it is important to understand that much of the state budget is allocated to programs, such as Medicaid and Medicare, that can't be cut. "Once you get past those expenses, there really isn't that much of the state budget left, and the Board of Regents system

makes up the largest share."

Legislators, he said, feel that programs like economic development and tourism provide direct returns to South Dakota. "For whatever reason, it's difficult convincing them that public education is an investment in this state. They feel that it is so easy to transfer the costs of this education to the students that they're more than happy to make cuts in our area."

Rann said student representatives from universities across the state have been working together to try to protect programs, such as the Opportunity Scholarships.

"One of the main things that may likely impact that program is that the scholarship has only been allotted \$2 million, and it requires about \$4 million in order to be fully funded," he said. "It's a question of whether lawmakers are simply going to cut the amounts of the scholarships in half, or find some other sources for the \$2 million that's needed."

"For the most part, what's good for USD is good for every other school, and what's bad for USD is bad for every other institution," Alberts said.

## New South Dakota Ag & Rural Leadership class seeks participants from ag industry

Farmers, ranchers, and agri-business people ages 25-55 are encouraged to enroll in the upcoming South Dakota Ag & Rural Leadership class.

The deadline to sign up for the South Dakota Ag & Rural Leadership Class VI (SDARL) is March 15. Applications and more information are available at this link: <http://sdarl.org>. Organizers will interview candidates in April, class members will be announced in May, and the group's inaugural session will be held on Nov. 20 in Chamberlain.

Up to 30 South Dakotans will make up SDARL Class VI. The group of men and women will engage in 11 seminar sessions, including national and international ones, over the course of the 18-month class.

Former South Dakota State University meat science professor Dan Gee, and his wife, Rae Jean will lead the course. Dan Gee said past SDARL classes have helped prepare leaders.

"Men and women interested in taking leadership roles in agriculture or rural communities are encouraged

to apply," said Gee. "Our goal is to get people involved in the decision-making processes that will affect their community."

Past program participants include agricultural producers, bankers, non-profit professionals, economic developers, and others who work in agricultural-allied industries. Program alumni have gone on to serve in state and local government, as well as national and international leadership positions.

The Livestock Foundation developed the SDARL as a method to develop more leaders for the state's most important industry. 2010 will mark its 11th year.

SDARL is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to identifying and developing leadership for agriculture and rural communities in order to enhance the quality of life for all South Dakotans.

E-mail SDARL executive director Dan Gee at [Dan.Gee@sdstate.edu](mailto:Dan.Gee@sdstate.edu) or program director Michelle Robbins at [Michelle.Robbins@sdstate.edu](mailto:Michelle.Robbins@sdstate.edu) for more information.

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