

One in a *Ver*Million

Meet Cindy Knutson

By David Lias

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Cindy Knutson is glad she listened to her brother.

His influence combined with her love of working with young people eventually led Cindy to her job as director of the Trinity Lutheran Preschool in Vermillion.

The preschool will be celebrating its 30th anniversary later this year. Cindy has been its director for the past 17 years.

Cindy used to work at the Mathilda Geppert Childcare Center – a daycare service offered by the University of South Dakota – that once was located just a couple blocks away from Trinity Lutheran Church, which houses Trinity Lutheran Preschool.

USD's daycare today is located in a different location under a different name.

"I was there for five years, and then the job opening here came up, and applied for it, and I've been here ever since," Cindy said.

Cindy grew up in Alcester, and her husband, Lowell, is a Vermillion native who grew up on his family's farm near here. Their daughter, Shelli, will be getting married later this year, so this will be a busy year for the Knutson



CINDY KNUTSON

family.

Cindy's list of duties as the preschool's director nearly fills an entire page. She regularly interacts with parents and children, creates daily lesson plans, takes care of numerous administrative duties, plans field trips, organizes fundraisers and hires, trains and evaluates staff.

"I meet with parents

day-to-day, work on a monthly newsletter, and put together lesson plans," she said. The preschool accepts children ages 3 to 5 years old. This year, 28 children are enrolled in the preschool.

"That's really great," Cindy said. "And I'm also the main teacher. What we concentrate on is helping children prepare for

kindergarten – getting them ready not only academically, but also socially. For some kids, the preschool is their first experience away from home. With a lot of the 3-year-olds, the value of the experience is they learn to get along with their friends and get to know other children besides those in their family."

Cindy is a graduate of Dakota State University in Madison with degrees in criminal justice and social service.

"That is a scary field, and so I decided to go back to school," she said. "My brother talked me into studying elementary education, and from there, I got involved in early childhood."

Cindy received her education degree at the University of South Dakota in Vermillion.

"One of the best parts of my job is just the little things – like some of the things the children will say. Out of the blue they will come up with something that just leaves you thinking, 'That is so cute.'"

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