

# One in a *Vermillion* Million

## Meet Paul Pederson



DEPUTY PAUL PEDERSON

By David Lias  
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As a parent, Clay County Deputy Paul Pederson knows the joy involved in watching a youngster grow and mature.

It's an experience that's compounded in his daily work as the school resource officer for the Vermillion School District. He began his role with the district in 2009.

His office is located in the high school building, but he often can be found in the district's other buildings carrying out a variety of tasks, from teaching DARE classes at Jolley Elementary to giving a presentation to students at the middle school.

Paul has been with the Clay County Sheriff's Office since September 1999. Prior to that, he was the chief of police in Irene for one and one half years. He is a certified DARE instructor and is a department firearms instructor. In addition to

his duties as school resource officer, Paul assists with all other duties of the sheriff's office.

He received his bachelor of science degree from the University of South Dakota in criminal justice. He has also been a member of the U.S. Naval Reserve since January, 1999 and was deployed in 2005 to Kuwait to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I teach DARE classes at Jolley School for nine weeks, and I'm in the process of doing that right now," Paul said. "I'm considered as kind of an administrator in any of the buildings, but I try not to take an administrator role. I'm a liaison officer between the school, law enforcement and parents, so if a parent has an issue with his or her kid, they can come talk to me about possible legal issues without getting the law involved - in other words, so that they can take care of the issue at home."

He may also serve as resource to any student who may be experiencing problems at home.

"If a kid has issues going on at home, I'm a liaison for them," Paul said. "I can tell them of the options they have. Also, if a kid could potentially be arrested for a criminal offense here at school, I can help deal with it and perhaps be involved in issuing a school suspension rather than calling law enforcement - it's so we can deal with the problem at the lowest level and yet still perhaps wake the kid up to the problem."

He also plays an important role in the school district during times of emergency.

"If we have an active shooter type of situation, - if it happens to occur in the building that I'm in, I'm the first line of defense, so to speak, to protect that building," Paul said. "I implement, along with the school staff, the lock down procedures for all of the buildings and review them with the staff and the administration to make sure they are all up to date on what we're going to do if something should occur."

His occasional visits to Austin Elementary are more to serve as positive reinforcement of student behaviors. "I go over and do programs just for them - topics such as

shopping safety."

It was a lesson that particularly hit home when his family was shopping at the Mall of America recently and became they became separated from their young daughter.

"We couldn't find her for about two minutes, and it scared the bajeebers out of me," Paul said. "So I came up with a presentation for the kindergarteners and first graders over at Austin Elementary on what do when they get separated from their moms and dads while shopping.

"I also go over to the

middle school any time a teacher requests that I give a presentation," he said. "I've talked to the kids about cyber bullying and I've done some stuff in some math classes. I do similar things at the high school - I've given presentations about the Fourth Amendment to the government class; I present to the speech classes about how we use communication in law enforcement, both verbally and reading body language. Even in some of the science classes - we may go out and reconstruct a crash, so to speak, so the kids see how law enforcement figures out how fast vehicles are traveling when they crash."

Paul said the best part of his job is simply watching as kids grow up around him.

It's great to watch them, whether they are athletes or active in the plays and other stuff, to just see them progress," he said. "Some of the students may have had some issues when they were younger ... and watching them realize that they made mistakes at that time, and seeing them figure that out is by far the coolest part of this work for me."

Paul also enjoys the less formal relationship he's been able to form with the community's youth.

"I like to have the kids see me more not just as a law enforcement officer, but also as a parent," he said. "What I love is when I'm out in the community, not at work, maybe just shopping or going to a movie or something, and I run into kids - it doesn't matter if they are a high school kid or an elementary kid - and they look up and say, 'Hi, Deputy Pederson.'"

We have almost 1,000 kids in our school district, and to have almost all of them know who you are is kind of cool," Paul said. "I enjoy that."

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### CORRECTION PLEASANT VALLEY TOWNSHIP Annual Township Meeting

The Citizens of **PLEASANT VALLEY TOWNSHIP** in Clay County, South Dakota, and who are qualified to vote at said Township, are hereby notified that the Annual Township Meeting for said Township will be held at the Clay Rural Water System main office, 30376 SD Hwy 19, in said Township on **Tuesday, March 6, 2012, at 7:00 p.m.** for the following purposes: To elect one Supervisor for the term of three (3) years; one Township Clerk and one Treasurer, each for the term of one (1) year; and to do any other business proper to be done at said meeting when convened.

Marilyn J. Rohrer, Clerk

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