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# PLAIN TALK

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## Midwest Ag suffers \$50k in fire damage

By David Lias  
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Midwest Ag, located in the 1400 block of E. Cherry Street, Vermillion, suffered an estimated \$50,000 in damages from a fire Friday night, Feb. 1.  
The Vermillion Fire Department responded to reports of the fire at 8:40 p.m. Friday.  
According to a report from Vermillion Fire Chief Richard Draper, motorists driving past the Midwest Ag business reported to 911 smoke and fire coming from the building. First units on scene reported heavy smoke conditions and fire in the rear of the building. Upon entry, crews moved equipment including a skid steer to a safe area and extinguished multiple fires including a large burning oil tank.  
The fire department's quick interior attack and coordinated ventilation limited the smoke and fire damage to the production area of the business ultimately limiting damage.  
Responding units were: Vermillion Fire Department – Ladder 1, Engine 1, Engine 2, Engine 3, Rescue 1, and Utility 1; Yankton Fire Department – Ladder 1, Support Air Truck; Vermillion Police and Clay County Sheriff.

Members of the Vermillion Fire Department prepare to enter the Midwest Ag building Friday night. Passers-by reported smoke and flames coming from the structure. View more photos taken at the scene at [spot.ted.plaintalk.net](http://spot.ted.plaintalk.net).

(Photo by David Lias)

## Sentinel bill big topic at forum

## Health fair gets to the 'heart of the matter'

By David Lias

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To arm or not to arm school employees?

That was the issue that District 17 legislators grappled with during a legislative forum held Saturday morning.

Freshmen State Reps. Ray Ring, Vermillion (D), Nancy Rasmussen, Hurley (R) and Sen. Tom Jones, Viborg (D) addressed a large audience during the two-hour meeting held in Vermillion City Hall meeting chambers.

The event was sponsored by the Legislative Affairs Committee of the Vermillion Chamber of Commerce and Development Company (VCDC), the VFW Auxiliary, the Clay County Democrats and the Clay County Republicans.

Ring noted that school sentinel legislation – HB 1087 – had been approved by the state House just days earlier on Jan. 29, and is scheduled to now be heard by a Senate committee.

The proposed legislation would allow districts to arm school employees, hired security personnel or volunteers. The bill leaves discretion up to the schools. Proponents argue it grants more local control to districts, especially those that are not located near law enforcement, to train and arm their own security and staff. Those against the bill say more guns are not the answer.

According to the bill, the school board must run its security plan by the county sheriff before implementing a sentinel program. Willing volunteers, staff and hired security personnel are also mandated to go through state training and certification in order to implement a program.

"The initial bill that was brought had no provision for



District 17 Reps. Ray Ring and Nancy Rasmussen and District 17 Sen. Tom Jones receive input from Saturday's audience at the legislative "cracker barrel" forum held in Vermillion. Sitting at Jones' right is Ted Muenster, who moderated the meeting.

(Photo by David Lias)

training for these school sentinels," Ring said, adding that the legislation was approved by the House Education Committee on Friday, Jan. 25 and received considerable debate on the House floor Jan. 29 before receiving approval by state representatives. "We made the bill more acceptable, in my opinion, with an amendment that requires that people, before they become school sentinels, receive training.

"I spoke against the bill in the committee, and on the floor," he said. "I think it's a bad idea, and it will now go to the Senate side, where I believe it has been referred to the Senate State Affairs Committee. I'm afraid it's going to pass. The governor hasn't committed

himself, yet. He's pretty much hedged so far."

Rasmussen said that although she doesn't serve on the Education Committee, she sat in on the committee's meeting when it heard testimony regarding the school sentinel legislation.

"I just think it's a really important bill," she said. "The testimony was long, and it was emotional, because the safety of our children is emotional for us."

Rasmussen said she was surprised the bill passed by a close vote – 8 to 7 – in the House committee. She said she believes the strong emphasis on local control in the legislation, which leaves the ultimate decision on whether guns are allowed in schools up to school

boards, is to satisfy the concerns of West River lawmakers.

She said the bill's primary sponsor, along with lawmakers from western South Dakota, are concerned about security, response times and other issues in sparsely populated areas of the state, where schools are more isolated.

"I and my husband made phone calls over the weekend, because with the local control, I thought the bill was addressing the school boards, and we didn't have any school board members come (to Pierre)," Rasmussen said. "In our calling, I had two in favor of the bill and one against. Ray and I talked about this ... Ray received e-mails that were the opposite. I wanted to

By Travis Gulbrandson

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The Sanford Vermillion Community Health & Wellness Fair held on the USD campus last weekend really allowed visitors to get to "the heart of the matter."

The main display in the annual event, now in its seventh year, was a giant inflatable walk-in human heart, which sat on the floor in the main hall of the Lee Medical Building, where the fair took place.

"(The display) explains where the blood goes through once it comes to your heart, what the deoxygenated blood goes through and how it comes back out," said Paul Davis of the mobile heart screening unit from Sanford Hospital. "If you can listen, it has a sound effect (of a heart) pumping. That's what gets the kids."

Adults were drawn to the exhibit, as well, said Davis, who also was on-hand to coordinate heart screenings for all age groups.

"It's was kind of cool," he said. "When we first start rolling it out, everybody is like, 'What is this big thing laying on the ground?' Then it blew up, and you can hear, 'Ooh, ahh.'"

"There are a lot of people with questions on it, a lot of people going through it," he said. "Then they go back and get their friends and bring them back here."

Along with the heart screenings, area residents had the opportunity to get a number of other tests, such as blood pressure, blood sugar and lipid panel.

According to Mary Merrigan, marketing director at Sanford Vermillion, approximately 200

visitors came to view the 30 different vendors and information booths and take some of the 15 possible screenings.

Louis Papka, physician assistant, associate professor and academic coordinator of USD's PA program, oversaw a session that checked cardiometabolic risk factors, measuring visitors' waist circumference, weight, height, body mass index and blood pressure.

"Even if they're healthy, we would like them to go away with a better understanding of what their risk factors are later in life, as well as now, for the development of heart disease and diabetes," Papka said. "So we do discuss with them proper nutrition, exercise, smoking cessation – basically health promotion and prevention."

Near the heart display was a booth that taught visitors hands-only CPR using small mannequins.

"We are providing ... a DVD instructional with the hands-on mannequins," said Heidi Fodness, RN. "It shows you the rate at which you should be doing the chest compressions and how to identify that somebody needs CPR."

"It takes about 22 minutes, and then if there are questions, it may take about 30 to 45 minutes," she said.

Fodness said knowing CPR can be an important skill to have.

"I believe that with knowing CPR and other life-saving techniques, that the community will be much more aware, and they will feel more comfortable if they ever get into a life-saving