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VERMILLION'S CHILDREN

St. Agnes Kids Honored for Fitness

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

In a world where inactivity is on the rise, the students at St. Agnes Elementary School are doing their part to stay fit.

Students are currently participating in the Century Club, a program where they keep track of all the active things they do.

"You fill out sheets and every row is a mile," said Jack, 11. "I work out two times a day so I fill out two sheets a day. Fifteen minutes of exercise counts as a mile."

Jack's exercise total stands at 75 miles and counting. That's 1,125

minutes or almost 19 hours.

Jack and classmate McKenzie, 10, were among a group of students honored at an assembly last Friday where they received a certificate from Charlie Coyote himself for completing 25 miles (about six hours) or more.

"It's not just running," McKenzie said. "I fill out most of my sheets from soccer."

McKenzie herself completed 25 miles.

One reason both McKenzie and Jack have racked up so many miles is



Jack and McKenzie (shown directly right of Charlie Coyote) were among St. Agnes students presented with a certificate for completing 25 miles or more with the school's Century Club.

SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

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VCDC Responds to Eagle Creek Counterclaim

By Alan Dale
The Plain Talk

The game of legal ping pong between the Vermillion Area Chamber and Development Company (VCDC) and Eagle Creek Software Services Inc. continues.

Last week the VCDC, which filed the original lawsuit in October against Eagle Creek for a breach of contract, responded to the software company's countersuit it filed earlier in January. The VCDC stated that Eagle Creek's answer to the suit were not accurate in claiming that the plaintiffs had not honored any of the incentives promised to the software company that would play a role in them setting up a business in Vermillion.

In the Eagle Creek response, which was filed on Jan. 6, the software company claimed that the decision not to move into the building nor pay any additional fees stemmed from the The South Dakota Governor's

Office of Economic Development (GOED) allegedly didn't living up to incentives promised to the software company.

In the writing of the counterclaim there are no direct assumptions that the VCDC didn't live up to the incentives. Rather, the Eagle Creek counterclaim states that the VCDC may have known of GOED's alleged decision to not honor those incentives, but there also the software company doesn't claim that this is the definitely the case. Additionally, at some points of the counterclaim, it reads that Eagle Creek assumes GOED didn't have the intent to meet the incentives and the software company mistakenly entered into the contract not knowing this.

They also claim that the VCDC may have made the same mistake, yet are countersuing them on the grounds that they "may" have known.

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G-A-M-E Faces

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Editor's Note: Releases were signed by parents of the children participating in the spelling bee and last names were publicly viewable on the program. Last names will be used in this article; however The Plain Talk will continue to use only first names of children in future articles.

It was hard to tell who was more high-strung, the spelling-bee participants or their family members in the audience of last Saturday's Regional Spelling Bee.

Sure, Vermillion's Owen Dudley came out on top as the top speller and champion, but the day's journey to get there is a story in itself.

"It's always hardest on the parents to watch their child onstage because you want to do everything for them and they're in a situation up there where you can't," said Cheryl Havermann, organizer of the event. "They're on their own up there. I think the parents feel it more than the contestants most of the time."

Students grades 1-8

■ GAME, Page 7A



Vermillion Owen Dudley won the Regional Spelling Bee held at the Aalfs Auditorium on the University of South Dakota campus last weekend. The competition showed just how much this event means to a lot of people.

THOMAS HATZENBUHLER / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Vermillion Opt-Out Passes; Increases \$80K

By Sarah Wetzel,
For the Plain Talk

Among the subjects discussed at Monday's Vermillion School Board meeting was the passage of the opt-out.

The school board approved Jan 12 to raise the opt-out from \$800,000 to \$880,000.

"Following the motion that was made in Jan, once that was published, there was a 20-day window where taxpayers could petition that resolution and that ended on Thursday at 5," reported Sheila Beerman, business manager. "There was no petition filed which means the levy will be spread over the next five years."

Board member Chris Esping explained at the last meeting how the opt-out would affect tax levies.

"If you have a house that was assessed at \$200,000, at the \$800,000 opt-out it would cost you \$227 in taxes," she said. "If we bump it up to \$880,000 it would cost \$250 dollars so it's a \$23 increase per year. That would greatly benefit our budget."

Board members expressed their gratitude for the confidence in them expressed by the community with this action.

High School Project update:

Mike Hubbard of Johnson Controls presented the final recommendations for the High School project to be done over the summer.

He presented the board with a packet listing all the recommended remodels and upgrades the board had asked the company to look at. Should the entire list be completed, Hubbard said it would cost the district a whopping \$6.5 million.

Board members wanted to make it clear that they have no plans to spend the whole sum which is why in other meetings they will be

prioritizing the list and removing less-needed items.

"We knew that this was going to come in at a pretty high price," Board member Doug Peterson said. "\$6.5 million is not a surprise because we asked Johnson Controls to give us what they could possibly do. We wanted to see what the options were so we could put together the best plan."

"This will help us plan down the future," Esping said. "We know we cannot do all of this but we can build it into the next 5-10 year plan."

As far as prioritizing, board members said they will be focusing on items that affect student learning directly such as the remodel of the chemistry labs.

"That will affect student achievement in the science area," board member Dave Stammer pointed out.

Some items on the list that might be sorely wanted will have to be delayed.

"As much as we need the things at Austin, in order to focus on the high school, we might have to delay work on Austin," board member Tim Schwasinger suggested.

The board will be holding a special meeting Monday night to go over possible changes to the list.

Education legislation: Superintendent Mark Froke reported on a few legislative items at the state-level dealing with issues such as the capital-outlay fund and the Juvenile justice system.

According to Froke, the SD legislature is in full swing with a plethora of bills to discuss.

Two specific bills Froke mentioned were House Bill 1207 and Senate Bill 73.

HB 1207's purpose is to "revise certain provisions concerning the school district pension fund and capital outlay fund tax

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USD LAW SCHOOL: JUSTICE IS SERVED

By Zach Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

The University of South Dakota School of Law has been around for a long time, and it continues to thrive as an essential part of the Vermillion community.

According to Nicholas McNerney, the Admissions and Enrollment Coordinator, the Law School traces its' roots back to 1901.

"It graduated its first class in 1902 which consisted of one student," said McNerney. "He was a transfer student, which is why he was able to graduate when the school was open

only one year."

The student body has grown considerably since then.

"The first law school building opened several years later in 1907," said McNerney. "Arts & Sciences now calls that building home. The current home of the law school opened in 1981."

The USD Law School is particularly unique because it has one of the smallest student bodies in the Midwest. As a result, the school is able to respond better to the needs of each individual student.

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Students and community members alike benefit from the powerful impact the USD Law School has made on the Vermillion community and on the state of South Dakota.

ZACH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK: