

INSIDE:

Highlights

Learn about Vermillion's past ■ p. 2

Welcome Table will meet Feb. 1

The next Vermillion Welcome table will meet Monday, Feb. 1 from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the United Methodist Church.

The Feb 1 meal will be sponsored and served by Friends of Welcome Table.

Thank you to Sanford Vermillion for sponsoring and serving last Monday's meal.

KAOR will broadcast games

The University of South Dakota athletic department has announced that KAOR 91.1 FM out of Vermillion will serve as a broadcast affiliate for the remaining home and away Coyote basketball games in 2009-10.

That will begin with Thursday's men's and women's doubleheader at Houston Baptist, and continue through the rest of the 2009-10 season.

KAOR-FM is the student-run radio station of The University of South Dakota. The station operates 24 hours per day.

Highway Patrol plans checkpoints

The South Dakota Highway Patrol has sobriety checkpoints scheduled in February in the following counties: Beadle, Bennett, Brown, Brule, Charles Mix, Codington, Custer, Hughes, Jerauld, Lake, Minnehaha, Pennington, Roberts, Sanborn, Stanley and Union.

For sobriety checkpoint text message alerts, visit act-civilized.com.

Blood donors needed after stormy weather

Community Blood Bank and Sanford Vermillion Medical Center will host a blood drive on Saturday, Feb. 6 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the USD Sanford School of Medicine building in conjunction with the annual health fair.

"During the first month of 2010 Community Blood Bank was forced to cancel six community blood drives due to the severe weather conditions. This has placed a heavy strain on the blood supply," states Ken Versteeg, executive director, Community Blood Bank. "community Blood Bank uses 550 units of blood per week to meet the needs of patients in our hospitals we serve. We are hoping this blood drive will help bring the supplies up to an adequate level to help get through the first part of February."

Donors must be at least 17 years old (16 years old with signed parent consent form found at www.cbblifeblood.org), weight 110 pounds or more and be in good general health the day of the donation. Please bring an ID with you. It is recommended that you eat and drink plenty of fluids before donating blood. It only takes 20 to 25 minutes to donate with Community Blood Bank. Community Blood Bank is the sole blood provider to Sanford Vermillion Medical Center and 28 other local hospitals. For more information log onto www.cbblifeblood.org or call 1-877-877-3070. Walk-ins are always welcome.



A University of South Dakota student appears to be a ghostly figure as she crosses Cherry Street Monday afternoon. Strong winds and blowing snow greatly reduced visibility in the Vermillion region, making travel hazardous. Many communities in the region followed Vermillion's lead and cancelled school that day. (Photo by David Lias)

Winter storm brings fierce winds

From Plain Talk and AP Reports

A winter storm that moved across several Midwestern states Monday brought fierce winds and light snow that was easily blown around, leaving travelers stranded and closing some schools and businesses.

Vermillion schools remained closed Monday as the region was greeted that morning with wind gusts and blowing snow that made travel treacherous.

There were times Monday afternoon when a combination of wind and freshly falling snow greatly reduced visibility even within Vermillion's city limits.

The weather was so bad in northeastern North Dakota that Grafton construction com-

pany owner Jack Burns decided not to even leave his house.

"It wasn't worth it," he said. "We definitely can work outside in the cold, but you can't work outside in the wind. We pretty much have to wait until this blows over."

Heavy snowfall was not expected, Monday, but strong winds were blowing around what was falling — or had already fallen in the last several days — in the Dakotas, Iowa, Nebraska and Minnesota, creating whiteout conditions in some places. Ice buildup on power lines also was a problem in some areas.

Crews in the Dakotas, Nebraska and Iowa were continuing efforts to restore electricity to about 13,000 people, mostly in rural areas.

School board agrees to continue opt-out

By David Lias
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Citing an inability to meet the Vermillion School District's financial needs under tax limitation measures that will kick in soon, the Vermillion School Board unanimously passed a resolution Monday that would extend the current opt-out of the state's property tax freeze for another five years.

The opt-out is for the same amount that district voters approved in March 2005 — \$800,000 annually for a five year period beginning this year on property taxes that are payable in 2011.

"We've looked over different figures and projections, and it appears to me, that without continuing the opt-out, we most certainly have to cut at least a \$1 million from our general fund budget, probably within two years," School Board President Mark Bottolfson said. "We'd be looking to (cut) \$500,000 real fast, and at least another \$500,000 the following year."

Bottolfson noted that continuing the property tax freeze opt-out at its current level for another five years would strictly maintain the quality of education presently being offered by the school district.

"We've shown some credibility over the last five years with our opt-out," he said. "We've met most of the promises that we stated — we only used the money as it was necessary — we all know that for two of the five years we reduced the amount from \$800,000 to \$500,000, and that saved our taxpayers \$600,000 over the past five years."

"We've said all along that we'd use it (the funds provided by the opt-out) to maintain programs and keep class sizes the same that they've been in the past, and I think that we've done that," Bottolfson said.

The school district has taken steps, he said, to reduce costs during the five years of the present opt-out.

"We've reduced administration by 1.5 FTE (full-time equivalent)," he said. "We no longer have a director of instruction ... the buildings and grounds coordinator position has been eliminated, and time and time again, the idea of establishing a foundation has been brought up. It's up and running, it's in its infant stages, it could use some funding, but it has been established."

Over the last 10 years, the school district's general

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Talks between USD, school, city center on DakotaDome dollars

School district's desire to play inside may be thwarted by contract amount

By Justin Rust
 Plain Talk

The Vermillion School District wants the Tanagers to play football in the DakotaDome.

The University of South Dakota wants the Tanagers to play in the Dome.

But the price to play in the Dome could outweigh the district's desire at this point, which has forced the school to look at other options as it contemplates the future of the high school football program.

For the past 30 years, an agreement has been in place to allow Vermillion to use the Dome for home high school football games. Currently, the Vermillion School District pays a net amount of \$15,000 a year; Vermillion pays \$20,000 and USD pays \$5,000 for use of high school facilities.

With planned improvements to the Dome, the price has risen.

Both sides began talking about a new contract Nov. 3, 2009 when the initial meeting was held between the Vermil-



This aerial view of the DakotaDome taken in 2001 shows its sporting its new, pristine \$13 million roof. The 30-year building needs additional improvements, but Vermillion school officials presently find the dollar figures included in USD's new contract offer to be too burdensome. (Photo by Bill Willroth Sr.)

lion Public Schools and the USD DakotaDome Cooperative Use Advisory Committee.

After the group gathered all the information and held a few more meetings to discuss what both sides had gathered, a proposal was made. Right now, the proposal is in between \$1 million to \$2 million shared between the school and the city to be paid out over

the period of 15 years, plus an annual fee to be determined which would allow the high school to use the Dome for the Tanagers' five or more home games a year.

According to Vermillion School Board member Chris Girard, USD's offer is closer to \$2 million and the district's is around the \$1 million range.

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Discussions on facility use scheduled Friday

By David Lias
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Rich Van Den Hul, vice president of finance and administration at the University of South Dakota, said it's important for the people of Vermillion to realize that a final decision regarding future use of the DakotaDome has yet to be made.

"We continue to have conversations, and I think positive conversations (involving the city and school officials) and I think it's important for the community to know that it's not the state that provides money for these projects. That's going to come from the students' pockets," he said. "We have a limited ... budget, we have \$8 million in needs at the Dome that we identified over the next 10 years ... so we can't keep asking the students to pay more and more fees."

"We have to look at all of the people using the facility, and that's what this is really all about," Van Den Hul said. "It seems to me that it's fair, because in the original deal, the school district bought the turf. That was \$300,000 in 1979. Well turf nowadays costs from \$900,000 to \$1 million, and we're not asking them (the school district) to pay that whole amount; we're just looking at an option that may work."

He noted that there other cities which are homes to universities in South Dakota and other states in the region which have reached fair financial agreements that allow community entities, including school districts, to use university facilities.

"It's not just the students who are paying the bills," Van Den Hul said. "It's everyone that utilizes it. It's sort of becomes the home field."

In Vermillion, he said, the university, the school district and the city use each other's facilities on an ad hoc basis. He noted that the Tanagers play football in the Dome, the high school graduation ceremonies have traditionally been held

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Court asked to overturn air permit for SD refinery

By Chet Brokaw
 Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Three groups opposed to a \$10 billion oil refinery planned for southeastern South Dakota have asked a judge to overturn a state board's decision to grant the project an air quality permit.

The Board of Minerals and Environment granted the permit in

August after finding that Hyperion Resources, based in Dallas, had met the requirements set in state laws and rules. Board members endorsed the state Environment Department's recommendation to issue the permit for what would be the first new U.S. oil refinery built since 1976.

The Sierra Club and local groups Save Union County and Citizens Opposed to Oil Pollution have filed a

lawsuit in state court arguing that the permit should be thrown out because it does not address some environmental issues.

Hyperion filed its own court appeal, which asks that the board's decision on a carbon monoxide limit be overturned.

Circuit Judge Mark Barnett of Pierre has consolidated the two appeals to be heard as one case. After

further written arguments are filed, a hearing is scheduled for June 23 in Pierre.

Ed Cable of Save Union County said Monday that opponents believe the state board has not complied with the federal Clean Air Act. Both the process and the information used by the board were flawed, he said.

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