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## Cutting through the smoke

### Vermillion Fire Department makes 'leap' in technology

By Travis Gulbrandson  
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Thanks to advances in technology, the Vermillion Fire Department is able to better respond to and deal with fire-related emergencies.

Through a variety of funding sources, the department has two new thermal cameras for use at the scene of a fire, and three iPads for its vehicles.

"We're really making a big leap," said Fire Chief Shannon Draper.

Local firefighters utilized this new equipment last Friday during a training session at the Ivan Pierce Fire Training Center, located across the road from the airport.

The thermal cameras – ISG E380s – were acquired in the past three months, and allow firefighters to enter a smoke-filled room and still be able to see with remarkable clarity.

The cameras show how hot the fire is burning, as well.

Capt. Matt Taggart said the cameras are very effective for what is called "salvage and overhaul."

"After the bulk of the fire is knocked down, then we go in and check for hot spots," he said. "It's excellent for finding hot spots in walls, in ceilings, behind things, under big piles."

"As far as search and rescue, thank God I've never had to use it for that purpose. But it would



Members of the Vermillion Fire Department enter a room where a controlled fire is burning at the Ivan Pierce Fire Training Center during a session last week.

(Photo courtesy of the Vermillion Fire Department)

certainly do a great job of doing that," he said.

During Friday's session, the firefighters entered the ground floor of the training center, where they came upon a closed door, behind which a fire was burning in a metallic fire pit.

They then entered the room and used the cameras to take readings on the fire during the various stages of its extinguishing.

"In a house fire, you cannot see your hand in front of your face, really," Draper said. "With

that camera, I can see right across the room, and I can see victims. If (firefighters) don't have a camera with them, they're taught to feel with their hands. You can imagine how long that would take. Time is so crucial, and so our goal is to put a camera on

those other two trucks."

Both cameras were purchased through tax dollars and an association to which the volunteers belong that has in the past bought fire trucks and other

■ FIRE, Page 06



Vermillion's Tyrell Harper soars in for a layup during a game against West Central Jan. 9 at the VHS gym. Harper, who moved to Vermillion from Florida to be with an ailing brother, has become a standout for the Tanagers, averaging nearly a double-double a game.

(Photo by David Lias)

### Harper finding a home in Tanager lineup

By Jeremy Hoeck  
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A family emergency brought Tyrell Harper to Vermillion High School.

And if there is such a thing as a blessing in disguise, the Tanager boys' basketball program is glad the 6-foot-6 athletic wing player made the move.

Harper, a native of Florida, arrived in Vermillion last summer to help take care of his older brother Deandre Thomas, who had been suffering heart problems. Harper's middle brother is 15 years old, which left Harper with a "hard decision."

"When my brother got sick, I knew I had to come up here," Harper said after a home game last week.

Suddenly, Harper went from Seminole High School in Sanford, FL, with an enrollment over 3,000 students to Vermillion High School with just under 1,300 students in the entire school district.

Talk about a culture change. "Coming up here, I knew it would be tough, but I didn't know it would be this tough," Harper said.

So far, though, he is adjusting quite well. Through 11 games, Harper is averaging 11.9 points, 9.4 rebounds, 2.7 assists and 2.2 steals for the Tanagers.

Though Harper maintains the style Vermillion uses isn't too different from his previous school, there is naturally an athleticism disparity.

"I haven't been to Florida, but I would bet Florida high school basketball is a lot different than South Dakota," Vermillion head coach Jay Drake joked.

"I think he saw that early on, trying to adjust the way the game's going to be called. He's just steadily improved each game."

Although the Tanagers were winning right out of the gate this season, it took a while for Harper to find his rhythm.

"My first game, it was crazy, I was playing to the crowd and not my game," Harper said.

"My teammates are a big reason why I'm having success," he added. "I just do what I have to do to help the team."

The Tanagers would have likely been a contender without the athletic Harper. But with him, they're a legitimate state tournament threat — they would need to first get through a competitive Region 4A.

At 11-1 entering tonight's (Tuesday) game at West

■ HARPER, Page 07

### Study: Student activity rates are consistent

By David Lias  
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Smaller Tanager athletic teams on the sidelines, and fewer vocal and instrumental musicians at VHS concerts aren't a sign of dwindling interest in student activities.

The smaller numbers are more likely indicators of the effects of decreasing enrollment at the high school.

Dean of Students Jason Huska shared data at Monday's Vermillion School Board meeting that show student participation in both athletic and fine arts in the school district per each sport and activity.

He has tracked the number of male and female participants in these various activities from 2007-08 to this year.

■ VHS, Page 06



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