

## A NEW YEAR, A FIRST BABY



The first baby born at the Sanford Medical Center in Vermillion was Tuff Chayten born on Jan. 1 at 8:20p.m. Tuff was born to Kelsey Heeren (left) and Jesse Voegeli of Beresford. Tuff weighed 7 points, 2 ounces and was 19 inches long. Tuff enters the world with a new big brother, Landon. The family were presented with a welcome bag from Sanford Vermillion as well as a number of other gifts donated by a number of Vermillion businesses.

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## A look ahead at 2015: The County

By Sarah Wetzel  
For the Plain Talk

Leo Powell, who has been serving as a County Commissioner for a decade is committed to listening to the voice of the people.

"I'd like to know what's going on," he said. "We can't do this job unless we know what's on the people's mind. When I ran for this job I did it to represent the people."

According to Powell, things are looking up for the county in the coming year.

**Q: What do you predict for Clay County for the year 2015 in terms of economic stability?**

**Powell:** "What I see happening is that we continue to operate with a balanced budget which we have done for at least the 10 years I have been commissioner."

This is the first year that we ran over in the last seven days. We had to supplement our budget because there's been a lot of activity in the welfare department with things we couldn't anticipate so we had to borrow from this year's budget to finish out 2014's budget. We never really ran out of money but on paper we were out of money.

You can't anticipate what welfare's going to do and what Judiciary is going to add to your cost each year. We look at history and

then we look at what we think is coming."

**Q: What about taxes?**

**Powell:** "What I think people want to see is the taxes stay where they're at or go lower."

Whether that's doable or not I don't know. People want better roads and better bridges and we'll see if that gets through by way of the wheel tax.

Proposed legislation has some clauses about increasing fuel tax among a number of things.

The stipulation about the increase is the counties that don't have a wheel tax in place or a five-year comprehensive plan, they won't be able to bring in those funds, that is if the legislation goes through. I might predict that if not all of that bill goes through, at least part of it will.

The governor did say in his speech to the elected officials in Pierre that his first four years no tax increases.

The speech he gave this year, he said he's not going to say that again because some things might happen."

**Q: Will we see a difference in the roads?**

**Powell:** "The governor has made it a point to improve the rail, the roads and the bridges so there will be something happening there and that's a plus to Clay County but we have to be prepared having a wheel tax. It's

hard to explain that to the public. If you maintain your car, you need to maintain everything else."

**Q: What would you like to see happen in Clay County personally?**

**Powell:** "I would like to see all the roads passable. I would like to see all the bridges be safe. We've got some very unsafe bridges. It is a priority."

Economic development is also a priority but the county doesn't play a very active role in that.

We have representatives and are part of Tax Increment Financing (TIF). That helps get projects started and to get streets and infrastructure in. Developers can't always come up with the money.

I'd like to see some of our farm-to-market roads improve because it's difficult for the farmers.

In February-March we put on the load limits and don't take them off till April and it's pretty hard to drive your truck during that time."

**Q: If the roads were perfect, what would be your next priorities?**

**Powell:** "I'd like to find a way to better fund things like meals on wheels, the library, the museum and the food pantry. There's so many projects."

They are services to the community, and they come in last. You can't erase 30 years of negligence to the roads."

## A look ahead at 2015: The VCDC

By Alan Dale  
The Plain Talk

With any turn of a calendar year a lot of questions about what to expect with the newest dateline.

We all know what happened in the year just departed, but what can we see coming in the future? Well that's the real issue now.

The Plain Talk has dedicated the time this week to looking at various forecasts for 2015 in Vermillion-proper and here we discussed the future goals and plans for the Vermillion Area Chamber and Development Company (VCDC) with its executive director Nate Welch.

**Q: What do you predict for Vermillion in 2015 in terms of what the VCDC's influence will be on potential growth and change?**

**Welch:** It's always hard to predict the future, there are so many different forces of good and bad that can help and hinder growth or change.

That being said, I am so excited for Vermillion in 2015. We have so many great things going, the VCDC is proud to be a small part of Vermillion's future growth. On multiple occasions I have had exciting conversations with people who say 'there is an exciting change in the air'.

That tells me we have excitement and engagement among so many and I truly hope that continues in 2015.

At the VCDC we will continue to work hard to be a voice and a leader for the community in having a collective vision for this community, and making efforts to work towards that vision.

**Q: What are some plans the VCDC has for 2015?**

**Welch:** Some plans for 2015 for the VCDC include continuing to work every day at helping Vermillion grow, including helping current businesses grow, bringing new businesses and visitors to our great community.

We are looking forward to continuing to add to the benefits and strengths of the Chamber of Commerce.

We are looking forward to helping to be a louder voice promoting Vermillion and the fantastic things we have right here in our great town and around our area.

That louder and prouder voice will help us attract visitors to our community, students to the University, professionals to our businesses and even new residents to our town.

**Q: Let's talk about progress on projects like Bliss Pointe. Where do you see that standing by 2015?**

Welch: I am so excited to begin seeing homes go up at Bliss Pointe and watching that development become a neighborhood where people call home.

Bliss Pointe is an investment into the future of Vermillion. Whether that investment takes one year, five years or 20 years to fill, it is such great vision for Vermillion and an opportunity of a lifetime for homeowners and even investors.

And the best part, it adds homes to our community and an opportunity for workforce in our community to grow.

**Q: What are some goals for the VCDC? Our poll said that people would like to see more businesses in Vermillion. Any comment on that? Any chance we will see some more of them pop up? Thoughts on bringing in more outside franchises etc?**

**Welch:** Some of the goals of the VCDC are that we continue to promote the community and the business climate in the Vermillion Area. We certainly are supportive of new businesses coming to town. Anytime we can increase the opportunities for quality of life along with sales tax revenue, the community benefits.

Vermillion may not have a lot of franchises, but that certainly doesn't mean we lack quality and variety. Anytime we can continue to grow in those kinds of businesses we will see great benefits to the community and the quality of life.

**Q: We have noticed some businesses recently have closed. Is this more a nature of the beast or is that a concern?**

**Welch:** Starting businesses is hard. Keeping them going is tough. Unfortunately that is part of the challenge. It's also part of the drive for many.

We never like to see a business close, especially when you have great people who you know work very hard to put everything they have into that business.

We certainly don't take it lightly and never chalk it up with a shrug of the shoulders and say "it happens". We try and figure out what can we do to help our Chamber Members keep their business alive and even help it grow.

It is such a great feeling seeing a business expand, re-invest in itself and grow.

It hurts just as much to watch them lock the doors for the last time. Sometimes though, with those changes come great opportunities.

I see a great future for Vermillion to seize opportunities and take advantages of challenges.

**Q: What are three goals you would love to see long**

term happen? Maybe some projects you would like to get to an embryonic stage so that we have some stuff to look forward to for 2016?

**Welch:** I only get to pick three!! There's not one magic bullet when it comes to the next thing, but there are certain parts that are extremely important to help make our community as successful as it can be.

1. Engagement – A community is nothing without it's people. It really isn't. But each person doesn't make a community. To be that, we must be together, work together and support one another. It doesn't mean we have to always agree – in fact that certainly doesn't have to be the case. But we can support each other, we can promote one another, we can encourage one another, we can cheer for one another and we can help one another. That is what the VCDC is here to do and one of my goals this year is to help us continue to grow in that area. By growing our Chamber Membership allows us to be a stronger voice of Vermillion in the community and for Vermillion in the state and region. I hope and encourage everyone to engage yourself into the community, whether through business or volunteering with organizations that share and drive your passion.

That will allow you to truly commit to your community and help it to become what it can and help it be better for our next generations!

2. Hard work – A former coach used to tell us, "the harder you work, the luckier you get".

Sometimes growth and opportunity comes with luck, but we can help our luck increase with hard work. The staff at the VCDC along with the Board of Directors and all the volunteers work very hard and as we continue to work hard, I can assure you we will do everything we can do have luck on our side.

3. Vision – As much as we want to have a vision for what will happen next year or the year after or ten years down the road... we all know we can't fully predict what the future will hold when it comes to challenges and opportunities. But we can prepare for them as best as possible and then we can be readily and available for adjustment while still being steadfast in a long-term vision. We may know how to drive to the Missouri River blindfolded, but it still doesn't mean we ever take our eyes off the road.

We would need to be ready for hazards in the road and we also want to keep our eyes out for adventures along the way.

## FARM

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said. "They are watching their input costs and other expenditures."

However, he remains optimistic about the farm economy, even with a few bumps in the road ahead.

"I think we are going strong as an industry," he said. "With any business, there needs to be some caution. But the ag industry as a whole is thriving and doing well."

Bohnsack offered his thoughts to the Press & Dakotan while manning the bank's booth at the Dakota Farm Show in Vermillion. The three-day show kicked off Tuesday and runs through Thursday in the DakotaDome on the University of South Dakota campus.

When it comes to the current lower crop prices, Bohnsack put the market in historical perspective.

"We have had high commodity prices the last 7 to 10 years," he said. "Commodities like corn and beans are down, but that's from highs that were significantly up (the previous years). The prices are down, but they're not tremendously lower."

When it comes to expenses, the farm sector is benefiting from the current falling fuel prices, he said. However, other input costs haven't seen a great deal of adjustment in relation to crop prices, he said.

"The land values are holding, which is good. The land prices have been steady for the last two or three years," he said. "The land rents are still rising, but they will stabilize because of commodity prices."

While producers can tighten their expenses, other factors are out of their control, Bohnsack said. Those factors range from drought to international trade.

"The market is in the process of finding an even keel," he said. "There are a lot of things out there. It's a global market, and you have to plan for it."

Many of those concerns will be addressed during First Dakota National Bank's annual AgriVisions conferences, Bohnsack said. The bank is holding gatherings later this month in Yankton, Crooks and Mitchell.

This year's featured AgriVisions speaker is Dr. Brent Gloy, founding director of the Purdue University Center for

Commercial Agriculture. He co-founded Ag Economic Insights with the website www.ageconomists.com, and he specializes in agricultural finance and agribusiness.

Gloy will speak on the topic "Managing For Success In The Shifting Ag Environment." After many years of high commodity prices with strong profitability, the landscape in the row-crop sector has shifted dramatically. Gloy will provide a short- and long-term economic perspective and strategies to position for long-term success.

"Dr. Gloy will offer a farm management perspective," Bohnsack said. "He will give ideas on what to do for stability in the short term and success in the long run. How do we weather the short term? How do we plan for the long term?"

The Yankton conference will be held at 7 p.m. Jan. 26, at the Best Western Kelly Inn. An RSVP is requested by Jan. 21 and can be made by calling (800) 657-5826 or (605) 665-4904.

Gloy will also speak at 1 p.m. Jan. 27 at the Crooks Community Center and at 7 p.m. Jan. 27 at the

Mitchell Technical Institute.

While the current market requires adjustments, many farmers do so as part of their regular business operation, Bohnsack said.

"With my customers, we have a strategic planning session on an annual basis," he said. "We look over the past year, and we see where we are (headed) with the 3- to 5-year plan. We see if we're on course or if we need to make adjustments."

Such corrections are necessary because of changing conditions, he said.

"Our strategic plan is a work in progress, and we revisit it on an annual basis," he said. "We look to the future for maximum efficiency."

While farmers currently face challenges, they are also very adaptable, Bohnsack said.

"Farmers are restructuring themselves," he said. "We're maneuvering and changing plans. The ag industry is resilient by nature."

That's where the Dakota Farm Show and similar events come into play, Bohnsack said.

"There are farmers who place orders here (with exhibitors) every year, but

they aren't here just to buy something new," he said. "They're also looking at what ideas are out there. Are there better ways to do 'X'? If there's something new, then we may do that."

While Bohnsack greeted a visitor at his booth, technicians Doug Johnson and Garold Williamson were offering a challenge for visitors to their Southeast Research Farm booth. The experimental farm is located along University Road, north of Vermillion and southwest of Beresford.

The Southeast Research Farm's booth contained a "mystery crop," with correct guesses qualifying for a prize drawing. No one had submitted the right answer by mid-afternoon Tuesday.

Johnson and Williamson didn't want to reveal the crop's identity to a reporter. However, they offered a hint.

"It's not commonly grown here (in southeast South Dakota), but it is grown on the research farm," Williamson said.

While no one may guess the mystery crop, the two men were promoting an event where everyone is a winner – the research farm's annual meeting. This year's event is set for

1-4 p.m. Jan. 27 at the Community Center in Parker.

This year's topics include: multi-hybrid planter and crop research; the 2015 weather outlook; technology in precision agriculture; a beef Extension update; and the use of cold pressed soybean meal in swine rations.

The research farm is working with the multi-hybrid planter for the third year, Johnson said. The driver can correct the planter to stay in line and can switch from one hybrid for low land to another hybrid for high ground.

Weather conditions can affect the effectiveness of switching hybrids, the men said. One year saw a gain of 9 to 10 bushels an acre for corn, while another year saw little difference because cool weather affected germination.

The two technicians said the annual meeting reaches out to farmers in the research farm's service area, bounded by the Missouri River and Interstate 90.

"They rotate the annual meeting around the region," one of them said. "It makes it easier for people who may be interested (in the research farm) but who we normally don't see during the year."