

BACK TO THE BOOGIE!



The Vermillion High School Dance Inferno team was back in action last Friday night during halftime of the Tanager boys' basketball game against Parkston.

THOMAS HATZENBUHLER / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Flu Shots, Load Limits Discussed at County Meeting

By Alan Dale
The Plain Talk

The flu seems to have the same level of importance in Clay County in recent years.

According to Jill Munger, Clay Community Health Nurse, a total of 1,282 flu shots were given over the final quarter of 2014 – the same number as the year before – she announced at Tuesday's Clay County Board of Commissioners' meeting.

Munger also told commissioners that WIC participation throughout the county has held steady over this quarter but over the numbers are slightly down here and throughout the state.

"We usually run about 300 participants, 300 names in the system, but of

those on 250 are active," Munger said of WIC program, a nutrition and education program. "That means they actually pick up check and participate in the program."

Immunizations and TB tests are also down "substantially" this quarter and 33 percent compared to the same times last year.

Additionally, the Health Nursing Quarterly Report stated that their baby care caseload is up 20 percent over the last quarter and up 30 percent compared to the same quarter a year ago.

"We continue to see all pregnant women monthly whether they are on case management or not," Munger said. "We see them just to assure that they are getting good prenatal care with their doctor and getting the education they

need for pregnancy."

In other items: County commissioners unanimously approved to follow the state program for load limits.

In the spring, when the frost comes out of the roads, they will put posted weight limits for various county roads. Those will be in effect until the frost completely comes out of the roads and then the load limits will be lifted by the county commissioners where applicable.

Layne Stewart, the Emergency Management Director for the County, gave his quarterly report.

The commissioners unanimously approved the authorization to grant for a portion of Stewart's salary as part of the SLA Quarterly Activity Report and a performance report.

Stewart also announced the Jan. 26 'Heroes Behind the Badges' blood drive which is considered a "friendly competition" between local police, emergency medical services (EMS), and fire departments.

He encouraged people to donate to anyone they are able to do with since the "trophy stays in the same, exact place, no matter who wins."

County Sheriff Andy Howe's jail meal bid specifications were unanimously approved by commissioners to set the bid opening at 9:15 a.m. starting on Tuesday, Jan. 27.

Tri-County News out of Irene was designated a legal newspaper along with The Plain Talk at Tuesday's meeting.

School Board Raises Opt-Out Notice at Recent Meeting

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

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

"An opt-out is a determination by the school board that it cannot operate under the tax limitation measure currently in state statute," Superintendent Mark Froke said.

"We have had opt-out for 10 years," school board member Chris Esping said. "As we know we've had to make a lot of cuts over the years. Funding has been a continual issue. Inflation has increased 10% over those 10 years so we did discuss increasing opt out to 880,000 so it would be 80,000 increase reflecting that 10% increase."

Esping presented the numbers on how the increase would affect 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," Esping explained. "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."

The school board members felt confident that the Vermillion community will understand.

"It is going to be another expense to taxpayers but I hope that the citizens of Vermillion School District can understand that we have increased cost just to maintain what we have," school board member Dave Stammer said. "I'm ok to ask the \$880,000 and I hope that the taxpayers will understand. We haven't raised it for 10 years. We've been trying to be as frugal as we could."

This sentiment seemed to be unanimously shared between the board members.

"I can tell you each board member here, part of the reason we're sitting on this board is to try and be good stewards of the public's funds in providing education for our children," Board member Shannon Fairholm said. "I can tell you that everybody watches every penny. Things have been cut and cut and cut to the point to where now we have things like soccer or tennis that lay in the balance as we try to balance budgets and find the reasonable solutions to make everybody happy."

Board member Doug Peterson agrees. "We really do control costs," he said. "We're one of the highest performing schools in ACT at the lowest

cost. We're already squeezing every penny out of the tax dollars. We're doing a good job of that. We really do count on continuing to cover those costs and deliver the same programs we're doing right now."

According to Esping, educators in the district should be commended for providing such high-quality services with the current budget.

"We credit the teachers and the administrators for keeping those costs low yet providing our students with an excellent education," Esping said. "We want to continue to do so."

According to Esping, the increase is sorely needed to continue operating as usual. "For the last several years we've been dipping into our reserves and as we are forced to continue to do that our reserves will continue to deplete very quickly," she said. "Then we're in the position where we have to borrow money which isn't responsible."

"This increase isn't as large as we probably should ask but it's one that we feel at least content about asking," Fairholm said. "We just ask your consideration and allow this to go through."

This does not make the decision easy according to

Fairholm.

"First of all we want to thank you for approving the opt-out that we've had for the past ten years," she said, speaking to the public. "This is something that was a very hard decision to begin with and we all want the best education that we can have for our children. We have decreasing enrollment, we have 10% inflation and fixed costs that are continuing to rise. It makes it very difficult."

Stammer also offered some comfort to those worried about funds in regards to the large upcoming remodel project at the high school.

"One thing I'd like citizens to know is that's capital outlay money," he said. "The opt-out is for our general operation fund. It's separate funding. For the last four years we have known this remodel has been coming. We've been saving in our capital outlay fund to do these things."

"I think that the citizens of the school district support us," Stammer said. "I'm content to pass a resolution and if they do decide to take it for a vote they can do that."

Though there will not necessarily be a public vote for this issue, it is not out of the question.

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program this provides students the opportunity to take courses on a concurrent basis that are related to the building trades such as computer assisted drafting, OSHA safety procedures, and welding. Additional dual credit courses are planned to be offered in the vocational program area at the high school.

"Teachers, counselors, and administrators are working with the students in preparation to take the new state required online assessment which is titled Smarter Balanced Assessment. This assessment replaces the Dakota Step test to determine how well students are learning the new state content standards.

"This test will determine a student's level of knowledge and skill in areas such as problem solving, analysis, comprehension, and evaluation. It is anticipated that since the assessment is completely new that differential scores will result from students taking this new test.

"Teachers and administrators continue to

work on comparing the school's math curriculum to the new state standards. Educators continue to study the math curriculum and it's alignment with the Smarter Balanced Assessment as well. Once educators have completed the study and comparisons they will be selecting a new math textbook series that best matches the local curriculum and new state standards."

Q: What are three things you would like to see happen in the schools this year?

"It is my desire to have every child to be known very well by at least one adult in the school system. We want all students to feel very safe and secure while attending Vermillion Schools and know that they can turn to at least one adult in the school system if they need help with any problem.

"We are striving to achieve our school district's vision which is to provide a personalized educational program to meet the needs of every student in the system. We want to customize our program for the students to do an exceptional job preparing our students for the next step in their education and life.

"I am excited to see the

Jolley Elementary students do so well in their individual reading goals – I hope they will be able to realize their collective goal of reading one million minutes this school year.

"The students are half-way to realizing their goal and it is half-way through the school year so I expect that they will be successful! We appreciate the support of the USD basketball teams and coaches in encouraging our students to achieve this goal.

"We are very close to seeing the students reach the district goal of a 24 ACT average composite score.

"Last year's graduates averaged 23.6 on the college entrance examination which was among the very top scores in the state. Vermillion students have been consistent in scoring among the top in the state with the ACT test."

Q: What are some goals the school board has for 2015?

"The district goals are as follows:

1. Integrate 21st Century Skills to enhance student

achievement and academic opportunities for all students.

2. Improve K-12 reading, math and science student achievement.

3. Students attain a 24 average composite on the ACT test.

4. Students attend school at least 96% of the time.

5. At least 95% of the students will complete graduation requirements.

Q: What are some projects the schools would like to get started on and where will they get the funding to do so?

"The school board has been planning an upgrade in the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system of the high school which will take place over the summer months. The high school academic area is now 50 years old which contains original equipment that is simply wearing out.

"Since the school board saw these problems coming they saved funds in the capital outlay area to use in this project as well as plan to borrow funds at the current time when interest is at a very low rate."

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Thank You!

The family of Clarissa Annette Kaiser wishes to express our sincere thank you to all our relatives and our many friends for remembering us at this sad time! We were over whelmed by all the cards, hugs, tears and just knowing people care.

Thank you to the Bergen and Gayville ladies for the nice luncheon. Thanks everyone for the delicious food! A special thank you to Jeff and Tim Becker for keeping our drive-way clear!

Thank you also to the Hansen Funeral Home for all their help! Thank you everyone for all the prayers. Clarissa was our life!!

Felder named VP of HR at USD

E. Lee Felder has been named vice president of human resources at the University of South Dakota. Most recently Felder was director of human resources at the Bryan Independent School District in Bryan, Texas. His start date at USD is Tuesday.

Previously, Felder served as associate director of human resources, Mays Business School Recruitment and Retention Program Coordinator, lecturer, and Reserve Officer Training Corps Veteran Training Officer at Texas A&M University from 2006 to 2008.

Prior to working for Texas A&M University, Felder spent 23 years with the Air Force as a director in human resources in various training or teaching positions at domestic and foreign locations, including instruction, leadership and management/HR training for students during a 10-week off-site development program with students from several other universities at Ellsworth AFB, S.D.; writing HR policies and procedures and providing analysis impacting employees worldwide while stationed in San Antonio, Texas; and while stationed at the Pentagon he was responsible for providing high-level HR management and expertise for more than 2,000 actions during the Gulf War.

- Courtesy of USD News

Parents and Teachers of St. Agnes School invite you to a

Ham Dinner

To Kick Off...

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK
SUNDAY, JANUARY 25
11:00 AM – 12:30 PM
ST. AGNES GYM
ADULTS \$7 • STUDENTS \$4
CHILDREN UNDER 3 ARE FREE!
DELIVERY AND TO GO DINNERS ARE WELCOME!
CALL 624-4144

Participate in the "Silent Auction" beginning at 11 a.m. & "Live Auction" beginning at 12 noon! There will also be games and crafts for the kids!