

Lowry enjoys 'active' role at Wellness Center

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Before Samantha Lowry became assistant director of activities at the University of South Dakota Wellness Center last year, she had never been to Vermillion.

Just prior to her hiring, the Ohio native was attending graduate school and serving as graduate assistant for intramurals at Old Dominion University at Norfolk, VA.

"I did a national job search because my philosophy is, anywhere with a job is better than home without one," Lowry said. "Of the schools that showed an interest in me, USD had the best whole package."

"I do want to pursue a doctoral degree, and (Wellness Center director) Steve Mayer was

very supportive and said that would be fine if I took classes here and there," she said. "He wasn't worried that it would affect my work performance."

Mayer had himself overseen intramurals in the DakotaDome prior to his becoming Wellness Center director.

At work since July 22, 2011, Lowry said some of her primary responsibilities involve overseeing intramural sports and club sports, which includes overseeing staff members, event scheduling and training officials.

"I like to get the staff involved so it's not just me motor-mouthing at them," she said.

Another of Lowry's long-term projects is the development of what she calls an "outdoor adventures-type program" that will lead people on

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camping, hiking, biking or canoeing trips.

"It's not exactly my expertise, so it's slowly happening," she said.

Lowry said her first year at USD has been "pretty smooth."

"Obviously, when there's someone new taking over a program, there is always going to be changes, as much as you're going to try to mirror what was happening before so that

you can evaluate," she said. "The staff seemed to take very well to the small changes that I asked of them, and they really were very understanding of (why) I wanted to try this differently or that differently."

"They liked having someone who was dedicated just to them, whereas in previous years Steve had so much going on," she said. "He was doing a juggling act. So,



they really liked that I was always there to listen if they needed anything."

When she's not at work, Lowry said she enjoys playing sports and watching them on TV, as well as hanging out with friends.

"Now that I live really far from my family I don't get to see them as often," she said.

Above all, Lowry said she appreciates that she

has an "active" job.

"I like the fact that I'm still kind of interacting with the student body on a regular basis, and I like that I can adjust my hours as needed, so I can come early in the morning and get all my stuff done, or I can do two half-days and stay later at night," she said. "I just like the flexibility of the job and the fact that I'm not always stuck at a desk."

Museum of State Historical Society wins award

The Museum of the South Dakota State Historical Society is the recipient of an Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) Leadership in History Awards for the exhibit Our South Dakota: Big Land/Big Ideas/Big Heart.

The AASLH Leadership in History Awards program, now in its 67th year, is the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of state and local history.

Our South Dakota: Big Land /Big Ideas /Big Heart opened at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre in October 2011. The exhibit creates a whimsical and fun environment for informally learning all about the state. Four major themes – comparisons, landscapes, big ideas and community – run throughout the exhibition.

Geared to appeal to a K-sixth grade audience and families, Our South Dakota features many hands-on activities:

- Visitors can draw themselves into an animal wall to see how they measure up to a mammoth, bison and prairie dog.
- They can sit in a combine cab and "harvest" corn.
- A community picnic table invites visitors to share a card game.
- Ten-foot photographs show off the variety and beauty of South Dakota's landscapes.

• Visitors can handle pelts, feathers, and claws from the animals that make those landscapes their home.

"This exhibit is visually exciting as well as offering terrific hands-on experiences in an environment that is fun for all ages," said Jay Smith,



A full-size mammoth, bison, antelope, coyote and prairie dog allow visitors to see how they "measure up" in the Our South Dakota exhibit.

(Photo courtesy South Dakota State Historical Society)

Museum Director. "We are delighted that AASLH recognized the quality of Our South Dakota through a Leadership in History Award."

This year, AASLH is proud to confer 59 national awards honoring people, projects, exhibits, books and organizations. The winners represent the best in the field and provide leadership for the future of state and local history.

Presentation of the awards will be made at a special banquet during the 2012 AASLH Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Friday, Oct. 5. The banquet is supported by a generous contribution from the History Channel.

The museum in the Cultural Heritage Center is open 9 a.m.-6:30 p.m. CDT Monday-Saturday and 1-4:30 p.m. Sundays and most holidays. There is a small admission fee for ages 18-and-older. For more information, call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.history.sd.gov/museum.

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