

USD Hosts Gifted Camps

BY SARAH WETZEL
For the Plain Talk

The University of South Dakota (USD) is unique in many ways, one of which is showing passion for gifted education.

According to educationdegree.com, USD is one of the 115 schools in the nation and the only one in South Dakota that offers a degree in Gifted Education.

One of the ways the passion is manifested is USD's hosting of two camps for 315 gifted students which took place over the past few weeks at USD.

"It's South Dakota Gifted Camps and we run two camps under that title," said director Andrea Wange. "The first one is Ambassadors of Excellence and it has been running for 27 years. It was founded in extension to the South Dakota Governor's camp. That has been running for 32 years."

According to Wange, both camps target kids who have been identified as gifted by school officials. The Governor's camp is for students grades seven through nine while the Ambassadors of Excellence extends the opportunity for high school students.

"Most of our ambassadors are governors that have grown up in camp and then just continue at the high school level," Wange said. "That one runs two weeks."

The kids stay in the dorms, attend classes and participate in many team-building activities.

"While they're here we have university graduate students and professors as camp staff and they offer classes to explore and enrich these kids," Wange said. "It gives them something they don't normally get in that K-12 setting."

There are a variety of classes that appeal to multiple intelligences including the chemistry of ice cream, the aggression and neurotransmission of shrimp, video game art, cell phone photography and multiple forms of visual art.

"They find their skills, desires and passions and learn how to transfer that out into doing amazing things," Wange said. "It's really learning to empower yourself."

Kayla Olinger is a team lead this year and also teaches a class on Kinesiology.

"It's the study of human body movement," she said. "It's what my whole degree is on. So, I give a background of the biomechanics of the human body and how it moves. This year I focused a lot on how it changes and how your reflexes change from an infant into being an adult."

According to Wange, a gifted camp like this has proved invaluable in building lifelong friendships and social skills.

"What makes our camp different from other camps is we know that relationships are super important," Wange said. "We live in a relationship world and we need to work on that. A lot of our kids that come here struggle with communication and are a little more introverted because they're so focused on the things they're interested in. It's sometimes



USD hosted two camps for gifted middle and high school students over the past few weeks, helping enrich their learning and relationship skills while creating lifelong memories.

SARAH WETZEL/FOR THE PLAIN TALK

hard to communicate with someone about those things.

"We're really big on team building and building relationships," Wange said. "What we know about gifted kids is that oftentimes in that traditional K-12 setting they don't connect. Now they're with kids who get them. They think like them, they think outside the box, they're innovative. That builds that relationship and actually they become lifelong friends. We have a handful that have met their significant others here at camp."

Wange mentioned that there is even one student in camp this year whose parents met there.

Olinger knows the joy of building friendships with other gifted children first-hand, she being a graduate of the camps.

"It's terrifying at first but it's also so empowering knowing you're not the only one who feels this way," she said.

Olinger understands the struggle of gifted students to thrive in the traditional K-12 setting.

"A lot of kids don't have gifted programs in their schools so they become the helpers," she said. "So how do we get it so they can keep learning? It's just opening them up to those conversations and helping them learn that they can have more to their education."

Part of what the camps focus on to facilitate this type of education is simply encouraging the kids to get out of their boxes.

"Something we tell all our kids is 'Change Happens...' and they will repeat 'just outside your comfort zone,'" Wange said.

Olinger said she encourages her students to try new things despite the chance that they might fail a few times.

"You're going to fail," she said. "It's going to happen and we talk about how we can pick them up from there. It's OK to fail as

long as you just keep going and you'll figure out how to move forward."

While most of the kids come from South Dakota, the program has the possibility of becoming nationwide.

"We also extend to Iowa and Nebraska," Wange said. "We have a couple of kids from Alabama and Philadelphia. So, we're getting to that piece where it's not just South Dakota now. The kid from Philadelphia is a senior and his mom was looking and looking and there was nothing like this in their area. He's also interested in coming here as a student. We've corresponded throughout the year and he was able to join us and he's just loving it. I think that's cool too, because not only do we focus on impacting gifted education and these kids but these kids grow up on this campus every summer for two weeks. It's a natural fit for some of them to come here and go to school as well."

Though Wange has only been leading the camps for a year and a half she is pleased with the way it is running.

"Governor's camp is exciting," she said.

"This year we're moving in a new direction and holding a gifted education summit on Friday from 9-10 a.m. out between Old Main and Slagle. Gov. Dennis Daugaard will be here and talk about gifted education and its relationship to STEM and then we'll be honoring First Lady Linda Daugaard's work in STEM education. That's a new drive on how we need to make connections to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. We know that is helping our kids excel in the classroom."

For more information on the camp and their gifted education program, visit usd.edu/education.

High School Students Attend Healthcare Careers Summer Camp at USD

The University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine hosted 40 students from four states at the ninth annual Healthcare Careers Summer Camp.

Soon-to-be sophomore, junior and senior high school students from South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska and Minnesota had an opportunity in June to learn about health care professions and meet with more than 30 professionals representing a wide range of specialty areas. In addition to daily sessions that introduced students to the gross anatomy lab, administering EKGs and CPR certification, camp participants were able to speak directly with presenters and ask career-minded questions about the health care industry. Tours of the Sanford Medical Centers in Vermillion and Sioux Falls, USD Sanford School of Medicine and Southeast Technical Institute were also made available to campers.

Students participating in this year's camp:

- South Dakota: Megan Kingsriter of Aberdeen; Breanna Sweet and Caitlin Worth, of Beresford; Laycee Cain, Jacob McAninch, Jade Müller-Smit, Rusal Ali, Yosan Tsegai, Katherine Rust, Emma Duprey and Jordan DeBoer of Sioux Falls; Jessa Ziegeldorf of Brandon; Jaylynn Stocklin of Eagle Butte; Sierra Smith of Lantry; Jady Woodward of Dupree; Cole Brand of Faulkton; Marlee Jones of Groton; Garrett Tiehen of Harrisburg; Bernadette Stelzle, Paige Werner and Grace Sutton of Rapid City; Amber Buskness, Amanda Ricke and Sydney Swenson of Madison; Rachael Boekelheide of Northville; Elizabeth Heidenreich of Brentford; Deidre Lamb of Onida; Jennifer Gillaspie, Shaina Seidel and Kathleen Zickrick of Pierre; Sophia Taggart of Vermillion; Tiffany Divine of Wakonda; and Hannah Williams of Yankton.

- Minnesota: Victoria Sheldon of Apple Valley and Morghan Byrnes of Pipestone.

- Iowa: Derrick Okine, Jonathon Landeros and Esmeralda Saucedo of Sioux City.

- Nebraska: Danae Smith of Neligh. Sponsorship of the ninth annual Healthcare Careers Summer Camp was provided by Sanford Vermillion Medical Center, the Dakota Hospital Foundation, Delta Dental of South Dakota Foundation, Sanford Canton-Inwood Medical Center, Sanford Health Burke Medical Clinic, Sanford Jackson (Minnesota) Medical Center, Sanford School of Medicine, Northeast South Dakota Health Education Center, USD School of Health Sciences, Sanford Health, and the Seventh District Medical Society.

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