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**PLAIN TALK**

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**VCDC offers flood relocation program**

By Travis Gulbrandson

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Continued flooding along the Missouri River has the potential to damage or destroy homes across the state.

For those whose homes become uninhabitable, the Vermillion Area Chamber & Economic Development Company (VCDC) is offering up to \$5,000 to relocate or rebuild in Clay County, it was announced Wednesday, June 15.

"We do see this as an economic development issue," said VCDC's executive director Steve Howe. "We want to make sure that if people are forced to make a life decision that requires relocation that they stay in this area."

Three one-time grant funding options will be provided through the Vermillion Now! Economic Development Initiative:

- A \$3,000 payment for homes purchased between \$100,000 and \$149,000,
- A \$4,000 payment for homes valued at \$150,000 and above and
- A \$5,000 payment for new construction

The program is administered only under VCDC, and not the City of Vermillion or Clay County.

Grants will be available at least through August, Howe said.

"If the Corps says they're going to increase the flows, or they're going to keep it longer than August, than obviously, we can be flexible with our program to address this need," he said.

Although the program has been in effect for just more than a week, Howe said at least one Clay County family is considering taking part, and others have inquired with an eye toward exploring their options.

"We know the water's at the volume capacity right now. (We don't know) what that's going to do to the banks and what that's going to mean with water running this fast, this high for the next two months," he said.

Howe added that living in Clay County is not a requirement for participation – anyone in the state with a home damaged by the flood is eligible.

The program was first discussed Thursday, June 9 and was finalized the next Tuesday.

"Literally, this all happened in less than a week," Howe said. "That's one of the things that we pride ourselves on at the Vermillion Area Chamber & Economic Development Company, that we can be responsive. That if something needs to get done, we can get it done in a short period of time. ..."

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**Ponderosa vs. Mighty Mo**



Larry Brady observes the havoc that a high, fast-flowing Missouri River can wreak. This stretch of bank near the Ponderosa housing development, seemingly stable with a thick growth of trees, was stripped away by the churning water in 30 minutes time. Homeowners took action to stabilize the bank near their properties so they wouldn't also succumb to the river.

(Photo by David Lias)

**Project helps keep rising river at bay**

By David Lias

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There is a gargoyle on Larry Brady's property. It's not perched on a flying buttress of some grand cathedral-like building.

It's a simple statue, in the middle of the backyard behind Brady's home in the Ponderosa housing development along the Missouri River in southeast Clay County.

The statue faces the river, snarling as if to try to warn the rising water to stay away.

Brady laughs when that's pointed out. He knows he and other homeowners along the river need all of the help they can get.

Brady remembers a time when the water has been as high as it now – 1997 comes to mind. The high levels of the water that year prompted him to move his house 40 feet farther inland.

He can't recall an instance, in the nearly 20 years he's lived by the Missouri, when it's been so vicious.

Brady's and several of his neighbors' parcels of property line a stretch of the river where the channel narrows. Further upriver, the water appears calm and placid. By the time it flows through the bottleneck near Brady's home, it's a completely different creature – boiling, churning, racing by at an estimated 13 miles per hour – swift for the normally calm Missouri – and able to easily chew up and spit out the river bank if given a chance.

**FROM DR. JEKYLL TO MR. HYDE**

The river changed from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde shortly after the U.S. Corps of Engineers began increasing the flows through mainstem dams on the Missouri River in South and North Dakota

and Montana three weeks ago.

The Corps stated in late May that rapidly changing weather conditions in Montana, northern Wyoming and the western Dakotas prompted the release of an unprecedented amount of water from the dams. Saturday, as Brady watched the river churn past his property, water was being released from Gavins Point Dam near Yankton at the rate of 150,000 cubic feet per second (cfs).

He suspected more water would eventually be headed toward Clay County after the Corps announced late last week that releases from the Oahe Dam would increase to 160,000 cfs by last Sunday.

Turns out Brady's hunch was correct. After a good portion of the state was hit with torrential

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**Local students learn leadership at HOBY**

By Travis Gulbrandson

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Five Vermillion high school students had a chance this month to learn how they can make a difference in their community through leadership and public service.

From June 9-12 the students attended 2011 Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership South Dakota (HOBY), which aims to impress on them the significant impact they can make through volunteering, among other things.

The event took place on the campus of Dakota State University in Madison.

"It basically teaches them how to be a leader, how to think for themselves and it challenges them at the end at the end of the seminar to complete 100 hours of service in their communities," said Sarah Szymonski, a 2009 HOBY alum who served as a junior facilitator this year.

The students who participate

are between their sophomore and junior years, and are chosen by a panel made up of several community members based on an essay they write about leadership, and an interview.

Mackenzie Huber was chosen as Vermillion's official HOBY ambassador, with William Card serving as an alternate. Brooke Schwasinger, Mark Helenurm and Sarah Hansen also attended.

"(HOBY) basically just challenges them to be better people, and I think that's a really powerful message for sophomores to hear, just because they're trying to figure out where they fit in in high school. I think it's a really critical age that they chose for the ambassadors to be at," Szymonski said.

Schwasinger and Hansen each said they gained from the experience.

"I feel like I got to know myself a little more, and met

■ **HOBY**, Page 5



The 2011 Hugh O'Brian Leadership South Dakota took place June 9-12 on the campus of Dakota State University in Madison. Representing Vermillion were (back row, from left) ambassadors Mark Helenurm, Sarah Hansen, Brooke Schwasinger and William Card, and (front row, from left) team alumni Cassie Donahoe, ambassador Mackenzie Huber and junior facilitator Sarah Szymonski.

(Submitted photo)

**Karolevitz more than a writer**

By Randy Dockendorf

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Bob Karolevitz was known as a prolific writer, churning out 37 books, more than 3,000 columns and a wealth of other articles.

But for the Yankton County author, it wasn't about numbers. His stories shared a mixture of warmth, humor and a love for people and everyday life.

He was inducted into the South Dakota Hall of Fame in 1986 and the South Dakota Newspaper Hall of Fame in 1996. He was named Yankton's "Citizen of the Year" in 1997 and wrote columns for both the Yankton Press & Dakotan and the Vermillion Plain Talk.

In May 2010, Karolevitz penned his farewell column, sharing with readers the end of



KAROLEVITZ

his writing career because of failing health.

And now, the final chapter has been written in his life.

Karolevitz died last Friday at age 89. His funeral was held Wednesday at Sacred Heart Church in Yankton.

Karolevitz was known by many as a writer, but for others he was much more.

He and Sister Ann Kessler of Sacred Heart Monastery in Yankton shared common bonds:

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