

One in a *Ver* Million

Meet Andrew Bensen

By David Lias

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Andrew Bensen can count on one thing every week.

At approximately 3 p.m. every Thursday during the summer at the Clay County Fairgrounds, he will be busy.

Andrew is the manager of the Vermillion Area Farmers Market held that day. There's also a "Saturday edition" of the market held in downtown Vermillion throughout the summer, managed by Susan Heggstad.

Thursday's market featured vendors selling new potatoes, greens, asparagus, eggs, strawberries, baby beets, kohlrabi and other produce.

It's also a place to purchase hand-made tie-dyed clothing, seedlings, fresh bread and fresh flowers.

The market strives to educate its shoppers – last Thursday it held a workshop demonstrating

how to home-brew beer – and volunteers offer activities for children who stop by.

"This is my third year (as manager)," Andrew said.

The local farmers market continues to grow and attract more and more local customers.

"We received a \$50,000 grant from the USDA last year. We applied for it two years ago, and after we received that, it allowed us to do a lot more advertising, it allowed us to cut vendor fees in half so that it is more affordable for people," he said. "We also started a winter market last year, and this year, we may offer a winter market two times a month instead of just once. We may try to expand it."

The grant allowed the farmers market to also hire a market education coordinator last year.

Funding constraints didn't allow that this year, but volunteers have stepped in to make sure those education efforts

continue.

"Every workshop that we hold usually applies to something that you can purchase at the market," Andrew said. That day's beer brewing demonstration showed how hops, which are grown locally by a woman in the Wakonda area, could be utilized.

"With raw kohlrabi or something as simple as raw spinach, sometimes people are intimidated to something with it from scratch," he said. "So if there's someone showing them simply how to wash it, or how to cook it, then there will be more people buying that produce."

Fresh produce, the types of products one would associate with truck gardeners who sold their vegetables at roadsides in the past, is the key to a successful market.

"The more produce providers there are, the better everybody does," Andrew said. "The baker points it out, the people selling tie-dye point out



that the more produce we have, the more customers we have."

The main reason for creating the Vermillion Area Farmers Market is to allow people the opportunity to purchase fresh, straight-from-the-garden produce as it comes in season. The added benefits are the enhanced opportunities it provides for people with a green thumb, or for

craftsmen and women to market their products.

"It provides a place for people who make their crafts to sell them," Andrew said. "And, besides providing a place for people to buy vegetables, I think nationwide a lot more people are wanting to know where their food comes from, or are wanting to have more of a role when it comes to

buying the food they eat, and this is obviously the best way to experience that.

"For so long, there was a disconnect between people and the knowledge about the source of the food they buy," he said. "Eventually, nobody really thought about it, but now, people are starting to think about that again."

Small change to library project approved

By Travis Gulbrandson

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A small change to the renovation of the Vermillion Public Library

was approved by the Vermillion City Council during its June 4 meeting.

Due to an error in the project's planning stages, doors of the incorrect size

were ordered for the library's south entrance.

While the plans for the building identified the need for two eight-foot sliding doors, the architect named two seven-foot, four-inch sliding doors in the bid spec.

"(The mistake) happened in the documents that we prepared between the floor plan and the actual door schedule," said Mark Aspaas of Architecture Incorporated. "We even have meeting minutes that show that the building committee wanted an eight-foot-wide opening."

"We're not trying to say anything different, it's just it was a mistake," he said.

Aspaas said the error was caught before the doors were ordered.

"So it's not like there's

something that has to be reordered," he said. "It's a difference of cost, basically, between two pairs of sliding doors."

The cost is \$507, which was approved unanimously by the council.

Architecture Incorporated has agreed not to charge its eight-percent fee on the increase in the project.

City Manager John Prescott said work on the project is "moving along well."

"They're slightly ahead of schedule in terms of where they would like to be at this point in time," he said.

The council also approved several measures relating to Thursdays on the Platz, which will take place July 12, July 16, Aug.

9 and Aug. 23.

One of the approved items is the closure of Market Street from W. Main Street to the east/west alley between W. Main and Kidder streets from 5-9 p.m. on each of the four dates.

They also approved a permit for the event to exceed permissible sound levels by no more than 50 percent from 6 to 8 p.m.

The council also approved a request for \$500 from the city's Bed, Board and Booze fund, which Prescott said will go toward "some of the promotional items" of the event.

Council members further approved a special daily malt beverage and wine license for the Vermillion Chamber of Commerce and Development Company for beverage sales during the event.

"Typically we do malt

beverage sales from six to eight," said Michelle Maloney, Thursdays on the Platz Committee member.

Maloney added that event sponsors are asked to provide volunteers to help with the event entrance gates "to make sure that nobody's walking around with alcohol."

Additionally, everyone who serves alcohol is certified by the Techniques of Alcohol Management program, she said.

City Finance Officer Mike Carlson vouched for the regulation of this aspect of the event.

"The police did a review and reported back that the records check revealed that there has been no issues (that) occurred in the last years," he said.

Thursdays on the Platz has been held for the past three years.

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