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Jones' Food Center closing



Gregg and Nikki Peters, owners of Jones' Food Center, announced Tuesday that after 17 years, they will close their grocery store early next month. The couple plans to expand Jones' Ace Hardware in the building currently housing the food market.

(Photo by David Lias)

Expanded hardware business will fill main building

By David Lias

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In what Operations Manager Bob Starr terms as an effort to "refocus," Gregg and Nikki Peters have decided to close Jones' Food Center in Vermillion.

In its place will be a much larger Jones' Ace Hardware.

"It is a refocusing," Starr said. "The first three years competing against a Wal-Mart, we did very well. In a town the size of Vermillion, to be able to sustain and grow the first three years against a formidable player such as

Wal-Mart, and having another big store with Hy-Vee in town is certainly admirable, but the last three years, once the economy turned (downward), it became increasingly difficult."

For a good portion of the time Jones' Food Center was open in Vermillion, its only competitor in town was Hy-Vee. The addition of Wal-Mart to the city in 2006 with its food store gave local people a third option for grocery shopping.

For most of its 17 years in Vermillion, Starr said, Jones' Food Center was able to fill a unique niche.

"Ultimately, when the economy

really turned here about three years ago ... we started to lose some of those customers (to Hy-Vee and WalMart)," he said, "even though we believe we have the finest meat in South Dakota, we have a great selection of natural and organic foods - things they don't carry. We would put up our quality against anybody's on any given day."

"But the fact of the matter is, those guys are in business and they are very good at what they do," Starr said, "and it has just become tougher and tougher for a family business to compete against the likes of the Wal-Marts and the Hy-Vees in the world."

Starr said the decision to close the food store did not come easily to Gregg and Nikki.

"When Ace Hardware came to us and approached us with this idea, it was something we looked long and hard at," he said. "It's been over a year now that we've really contemplated it, and it's an offer that we can't refuse and it brings something to Vermillion that is sorely lacking right now. It really is a win-win deal for everybody, as difficult as it is to lose the grocery side of the business."

An inventory reduction sale begins at Jones' Food Center on Wednesday,

June 20, and is expected to last three weeks.

"Our goal is to be done, with the doors closed for business on the grocery side by July 10 at the latest," Starr said.

The lot that houses Jones' Food Center has been a place of growth for most of the time that the Peterses' store has occupied the main building in the past 17 years. That building houses a branch of Wells Fargo Bank on its south side. On its north side is Mister Smith's Bakery, Café and Catering,

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Organizers 'astounded' by Shakespeare festival's success

Visitors to Prentis Park were treated to lessons in Elizabethan folk dancing before the Sunday, June 10 performance of "As You Like It." Elaine Peacock and Grace Freeman offered instructions on the proper moves to make. Music was provided by Cindy and Rebecca Gehm and Bruce Gray.

(Photo by David Lias)



By Travis Gulbrandson

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With an estimated 1,300 visitors, smooth-running performances and good weather, the first annual South Dakota Shakespeare Festival held June 8-10 was a triumph, organizers said.

"From a production standpoint, I was astounded with our success," said artistic director Chaya Gordon-Bland. "In every way, shape and form for our first year out of the gate, it exceeded my expectations."

It was a success in terms of numbers, as well.

Festival executive director Gregory Huckabee said first-night attendance of "As

You Like It" was 325 people, followed by 435 and 323 on the next consecutive nights.

The numbers were tallied by volunteers at the entrance gates, and a second survey was taken about an hour into the production, Huckabee said.

An additional 100 people were attracted by the various workshops held throughout the weekend, bringing the total up to about 1,300, he said.

It was estimated through a license plate check within a five-block radius of Prentis Park that 15-20 percent of the attendees came from outside Clay County, Huckabee added.

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Session strikes chord with youth at National Music Museum

By Travis Gulbrandson

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Earlier this month, area kids had a chance to become acquainted up-close with the National Music Museum.

Incoming first-through sixth-graders took part in the 2012 Summer Discovery Series - Star Wars! - a four-day session that allows them to learn about instruments and the museum itself.

"Number one, my overall goal is that they learn that the museum is a cool place, and that it's a place where they can come and have a good time," said Dr. Deborah Check Reeves, course instructor and curator of education at the museum. "It's a place for them, as well as for adults."


The kids were split into two different groups, the fourth-



Dr. Deborah Check Reeves demonstrates the gamelan for students entering first through third grade during Star Wars!, a four-day educational session at the National Music Museum.

(Photo by David Lias)

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