



Pictured are members of the Vermillion Area Swim Team who qualified for the state swim meet.

(Submitted photo)

## VAST team members headed to state championship this weekend

Sixteen members of the Vermillion Area Swim Team will represent the community this weekend at the State Swim Meet in Aberdeen.

VAST swimmers who will be competing include:

Victoria Andre, age 10, will swim in the 100 Medley, 100 back, 100 breaststroke, 50 free, 50 back, and 50 breast events.

Anna Hackemer, age 15, will compete in the 200 freestyle, 50 freestyle, and 100 freestyle events.

Elizabeth Hallaway, 10, will represent Vermillion in the 100 breaststroke and the 50 breaststroke events.

Annika Holdhusen, 10, will compete in the 200 freestyle, 100 medley, 50 butterfly, 100 back, 100 freestyle, and 50 freestyle events.

VAST standout Jacob Krier, 16, will have a very busy weekend, competing in the 200 freestyle, 100 butterfly, 200 back, 50 freestyle, 500 freestyle, 100 back, and 100 freestyle events.

Ten-year-old Hunter Lavin will swim in the 200 freestyle, 200 medley, 100 medley, 100 backstroke, 100 breaststroke, 50 breaststroke, and 100 freestyle competitions.

His sister, VAST standout Madisen Lavin, 12, will represent Vermillion in the 200 freestyle, 200 medley, 50 butterfly, 100 backstroke, 500 freestyle, 100 butterfly, and 100 freestyle events.

Another VAST standout this season is Lexi Malimanek, 13, who will compete in the 200 freestyle, 200 medley, 400 medley, 200 backstroke, 500 freestyle, 100 backstroke, and the 1000 freestyle events.

Brady Martinez, 10, will swim in the 100 medley, 50 butterfly, and the 50 and 100 breaststroke events.

Madisen Martinez, 13, will represent Vermillion in the 200 freestyle, 200 medley, 100 butterfly, 200 breaststroke, 50 freestyle, 100 breaststroke, and 100 freestyle events.

Kyleigh Moran, 14, will swim in the 200 medley, 200 breaststroke, 50 freestyle, 500 freestyle, 100 breaststroke, and 100 freestyle events.

Megan Muriuki, 10, will be swimming the 200 freestyle, 50 butterfly, 100 breaststroke, 50 freestyle, 50 backstroke, 50 breaststroke, and 100 freestyle during the state meet.

VAST's Gabriel Telleria, 9, competes in the 200 freestyle, 50

butterfly, 100 backstroke, 100 breaststroke, 50 freestyle, 50 butterfly, and 100 freestyle events.

His sister, VAST swimmer Isabel Telleria, 11, will represent Vermillion in the 100 backstroke.

VAST's Anna Van Holland, 11, will swim the 200 medley, 100 medley, 100 backstroke, 100 breaststroke, 50 freestyle, and 500 freestyle events.

Finally, VAST swimmer Charlie Ward will represent Vermillion in the 100 breaststroke and 50 breaststroke events.

VAST swimmers Morgan Mollman, 8, Olivia Granaas, 10, Raphael Sternadore, 7, and Seth Druin, 14, also qualified for the state meet but will not be in attendance this weekend.

All state qualifiers should be congratulated for achieving the times necessary to make it to state. Good luck this weekend! Bring home the medals!

The Vermillion Area Swim Team is led by Head Coach Mike Moran and four assistant coaches. The team will be wrapping up its winter season in mid-March and is looking forward to the start of the summer season on May 1.

activity and employing more than 122,000 South Dakotans. The South Dakota Department of Agriculture's mission is to promote, protect, preserve and improve this industry for today and tomorrow.

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The 2012 Governor's Ag Ambassador was Jim Woster of Sioux Falls. For years, Woster has been a cattleman, media personality, philanthropist and spokesman for agricultural interests.

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After his time in Pennsylvania, Draper went overseas to the Balkan region, where he worked for Haliburton.

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## Watt's research focuses on effects of bullying

By Travis Gulbrandson

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Some surveys estimate that approximately 10 to 11 percent of teenagers report being bullied on a regular basis. Those same teens show a higher instance of psychiatric disorders later on.

Dr. Michael Watt, assistant professor of Basic Biomedical Sciences at the University of South Dakota, currently is overseeing a project at the university which focuses on how the brains of people bullied in adolescence are affected by the experience.

Ultimately, this research could lead to more effective treatments for the problems that arise, including anxiety, depression, attention deficit, eating disorders, substance abuse and suicide.

"There's a big, big need to understand how this exposure to bullying during adolescence actually results in these disorders," Watt said. "To do that, we try and focus on areas of the developing adolescent brain that we know control behavioral responses."

Prior to the project at USD, all of the studies relating to bullying had been retrospective in nature – usually involving a survey of people who had been bullied.

"No one had really looked at what was happening within the brain itself, so we developed a model to try and replicate what's going on with teenage bullying," Watt said.

Through this model, the researchers are able to observe the prefrontal cortex, which enables such cognitive processes as decision-making, regulation of emotions and working memory.



"All of those processes are disrupted in the disorders which are associated with bullying," Watt said.

"What we found was

that after the bullying experience, activity of neurotransmitter dopamine was much, much lower in the prefrontal cortex."

According to Watt, other studies show that this dopamine is very important for complex cognitive processes, which could be affected long-term in the brain during adolescence, a time of major growth and reorganization for it.

"Unfortunately, that state of flux within the adolescent brain makes it particularly vulnerable to stress-induced insult, such that normal development will be disrupted," Watt said. "This can result in some extremely negative impacts on behavioral regulation in later life."

At the USD labs, Watt and the other researchers try to figure out how the brain functions under normal conditions, identify what has gone wrong because of a stressful experience, and then look at how to fix it.

"Ultimately, we hope that the information from all of these studies can actually be applied in biomedical research so that treatments for disorders that have emerged ... can be treated more effectively," Watt said.

The research model was first set up in 2008, and is hypothesis-directed, with

further investigations into other factors as they arise.

"The research plan as a whole doesn't really have an end, but we will focus on particular components at a time," Watt said. "Typically, our experiments take anywhere from three months to maybe two years before we can get all the information that we need."

Watt recently was awarded a grant from the National Science Foundation that will enable the research to continue for the next three years.

This, coupled with the efforts of graduate and undergraduate student researchers, makes the process much easier.

"Without their assistance, a lot of this work would be taking far, far longer to do," Watt said.

Now that researchers are beginning to understand the underlying changes in brain activity related to bullying, they also may become better able to restore some of the damage caused by it.

"There is a huge, huge burden on society to recognize that bullying is a big problem. It's not a rite of passage, and it shouldn't be regarded as such," Watt said. "We can't seem to deal with all the consequences of bullying just by trying to permit bullying in the first place. You can't monitor teenagers' behavior 24 hours a day."

"So, that's where if we do see some kind of psychiatric disorder resulting from being bullied, we need to step in and try a treatment option," he said.

"Often the most successful are a combination of psychological treatments like behavioral therapy, and also some pharmaceutical treatment."

"Hopefully we can make the pharmaceutical side of things even better," he said.

## Ag Ambassador nominations sought

The South Dakota Department of Agriculture is seeking nominations for the South Dakota Governor's Ag Ambassador Award.

Nominees should be those who have continually worked to promote agriculture in South Dakota. The individual or organization nominated must possess:

- Strong ties to agriculture in South Dakota
- Leadership skills in agriculture
- An emphasis on education through campaigns or programs, and
- Focus on pro-active agriculture policies and

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