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Volume 128, Issue 11
USPS 657-720



Friday,
March 15,
2013 **75¢**

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Firm chooses Vermillion



Gov. Dugaard and Eagle Creek Software Services President Ken Behrendt join the audience in laughter at remarks made by University of South Dakota President James Abbott during a Wednesday afternoon press conference at the Al Neuharth Media Center on the university campus.

(Photo by David Lias)

200 new jobs will be created in community

By David Lias
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The term “offshore” has gained increasing popularity in recent years to describe everything from bank accounts to call centers that have fled the United States for other countries.

Eagle Creek Software Services hopes to popularize a new term – “onshore.”

That’s how the business describes its operation in the Midwest that will soon be expanding significantly in South Dakota, particularly in Vermillion.

“It’s our goal to bring 1,000 jobs to the state of South Dakota in the next three to five years, which will make South Dakota a major player in the IT outsourcing market,” said Ken Behrendt, president of Eagle Creek Software Services, at a Wednesday afternoon press conference on the University of South Dakota campus. “A new \$10 million technology center is to be built in Vermillion that will house 200 of those jobs. There’s a reason we are doing this. Simply put, American has an IT (information technology) problem, and it’s time for America to solve that problem.”

Officials from USD, the city of Vermillion, and state government, including Gov. Dennis Daugaard, joined Behrendt as he announced a unique partnership involving the state, the university and his private company to generate new jobs.

Those jobs will boast pay higher than the state’s average wages, and the supply of employees will come from USD and its recently formed Information Technology Consultant Academy.

Unique partnership

“We’ve been working with this company for a long time,” said Steve Howe, executive director of

the Vermillion Chamber of Commerce and Development Company in an interview before Wednesday’s press conference. “This company provides software outsourced services for other companies.

“These jobs that are to be created will require a college education. The pay is well above average – far greater than the average salary in Vermillion,” Howe said. “The wonderful thing about this employer is that they hire employees

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‘Help Wanted’ following Culver, Upward resignations



Vermillion Athletic Director Jason Huska shakes hands with Coach Gary Culver after he and Principal Curt Cameron (at Culver’s right) presented the coach with the game ball on Sept. 23, 2011. Vermillion defeated the Lennox Orioles 20-0 that night in the DakotaDome to give Culver his 200th coaching victory.

(Plain Talk file photo)

By David Lias
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Administrators and the board of the Vermillion School District will follow a standard procedure of placing “Help Wanted” advertisements in education-related publications as they begin the search to replace two of the state’s most experienced high school coaches.

Monday night, the board agreed to release both Gary Culver and Mark Upward from their extra duty assignments as football coach and gymnastics coach, respectively.

Both men will continue in their roles as educators for the Vermillion School District. Culver teaches mathematics at Vermillion High School. Upward is the district’s elementary principal.

“The openings will be advertised, and we’ll take applications, and screen the applications,” Superintendent Mark Froke said Tuesday. “Interviews will be taken, and we’ll select the best possible people that we can to serve the students and the school district.”

Culver, the all-time winningest coach at Vermillion High School, has completed 36 years at the helm of the Tanagers football program. During his tenure, he led the Tanagers to five state championships in 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995 and 1999.

Under his direction, the Tanagers also won 10 regional championships, 12 Big Eight Conference championships, and made 27 playoff appearances in the 32 years of high school football playoffs in South Dakota.

Upward just completed his 33rd year as head gymnastics coach at Vermillion High School. “He has been very successful during that time in that capacity,” Froke said at Monday’s school board meeting, shortly before the board accepted his coaching resignation.

Upward coached seven state championship teams, and seven state runner-up championship teams. “He also has coached 42 individual state title winners, and has gone to the state tournament 27 of his 33 years coaching,” said Chris Esping, school board president.

In a letter to Jason Huska, the district’s athletic director, Upward, 60, expressed thanks to the school board, Vermillion Booster Club and the Vermillion community for the support they have shown to the gymnastics program.

Upward is the architect of Vermillion gymnastics. He helped set up the program upon his graduation from the University of South Dakota in 1975 and became head coach in 1979.

Esping noted that Upward received the Coaches Hall of Fame Award in 1998, the Coaches Leadership Award in 2002, and the Pete Torino Award in 2007. In 2009, Upward received the South Dakota High School Activities Association (SDHSAA) Distinguished Service Award for his efforts in advancing gymnastics in not only Vermillion, but throughout the region.

“He was selected three times as the South Dakota Gymnastics Coach of the Year – in 1982, 1984 and 1985. He had some tremendous accomplishments

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