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Tragedy at Falls Park



At approximately 1:30 p.m. Friday, March 14, rescue workers recovered the body of 16-year-old Madison Wallace of Vermillion from the Big Sioux River at Falls Park in Sioux Falls.

(Photo by David Lias)

Vermillion teen drowns in attempt to save sibling

By David Lias

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The body of a Vermillion teenager who disappeared in the icy waters of the Big Sioux River on March 14 was recovered by rescue workers the next day.

Madison Wallace, 16, apparently drowned after she entered the river to save her little brother, Garrett Wallace, 6, also of Vermillion, after he entered the water. The incident happened at Falls Park in Sioux Falls, in a stretch of river below the falls.

A bystander, Lyle Eagletail, 28, of Sioux Falls, also plunged into the river March 14 to help the two siblings. Crews removed his body from the river on March 16.

Garrett Wallace was eventually able to exit the river shortly after the incident occurred. Despite numerous eyewitness accounts, it is still unclear whether Madison Wallace, Eagletail, or both played a role in saving him.

"We do have some sad news," Sioux Falls Fire Chief Jim Sideras told reporters early Friday afternoon, March 15. "We did find the young girl who went in after her brother. We found her in an area we where we thought it would be best to look for her."

The teen's body was recovered near a man-made dam located about a block downstream from the falls.

"She's been removed, her family has been notified," Sideras said, "and she's been taken to one of the local hospitals."

"I talked with the father, and the mother (at the time) was going back home (to

Vermillion). She's now returning back to Sioux Falls," he said. "They are still in a state of shock. Our prayers are with them, and we're just trying to help them cope the best that we can."

Sioux Falls has made their fire chaplains available to the Wallace family, he said. "It's going to be a long, slow process for them."

Crews used backhoes Friday to remove ice from the river. The equipment remained busy through the day as the search for Eagletail continued.

"We're still looking for the young man," Sideras said March 15. "We still have some issues with the water. We still have ice to move out. We hope this will go fairly quick; we just don't know time wise because of the conditions that we have going on in the water."

Falls Park, a city tourist attraction where people often picnic and wedding pictures are taken, remained closed to the public on March 15.

"We don't want the public down here yet, because we still have a lot of trucks here," he said. "We anticipate that we could be here another 12 hours. We just don't know at this time. We're still maintaining a dive team from Minnehaha County."

Sioux Falls and Minnehaha County law enforcement and rescue personnel quickly responded March 14 and began searching the river for Wallace and Eagletail. They were initially hampered at that time by heavy flows in the river.

"We had so much water flowing last night," Sideras said. "We were able to shut off the water so it's not as bad as it was

Mourners celebrate the gift of Madison

By David Lias

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Holding back sobs, but with a firm voice, Anna Cable thanked God for the gift of Madison Wallace as she presented the invocation at the Vermillion teen's funeral service Tuesday night.

"Thank you for the many blessings ... and for the honor and privilege of brushing lives with this remarkable young woman," Cable said in her prayer that began the night's services at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in Vermillion.

Madison, 16, drowned in the



WALLACE

icy water during a family outing to Falls Park in Sioux Falls.

A bystander, Lyle Eagletail, 28, of Sioux Falls, also entered the river Thursday evening to help the two siblings, and lost his life in the river. Crews

recovered Madison's body Friday afternoon, and located Eagletail's body in the churning river Saturday.

The crowded church, filled with the young woman's friends, family and fellow community members, learned how she often thought of others rather than herself, and that a disability made her more determined to work hard and be curious.

Margaret Knaphus, Wallace's grandmother, read a life sketch describing her granddaughter's character and personality. Madison was described as a "gifter."

"She showed her love by

sharing her friendship, and with homemade gifts," Knaphus said. "There were eight in the family, so she was always busy."

She loved to crochet, to make hair clips and homemade greeting cards. Madison also mastered origami, Knaphus said, and with her zest for life, loved to go bike riding, rollerblading and rock climbing.

During a family visit to Cascade Park near Orem, UT, "Madison loved to climb tall trees quite often and watch her family try to find her," Knaphus said, causing laughter to roll through the church.

"She would often call her



A Rabbit Dance, in which men and women dance together, was held near the conclusion of the 41st annual USD Wacipi Sunday afternoon in the DakotaDome. To see or purchase images from this event, visit spotted.plaintalk.net.

(Photo by David Lias)

Wacipi keeps tradition alive

By David Lias

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Sunday evening, the drums became silent and dancers left the floor of the DakotaDome as the 41st annual USD Wacipi, held March 16-17, came to a close.

Presented by the Tiopay Student Council, the Wacipi is a powwow featuring Native dancers, drummers as well as Tiopay competitions, including Miss, Junior Miss and Little Miss USD Tiopay.

Warren Peterson, a USD student from Lower Brule who currently serves as the Tiopay Student Council president, said planning that began last year by past council members helped make this year's event a success.

"The executive who took this powwow will start the planning work for the next one, and then the next exec will finish the planning of it," Peterson said.

In other words, he was ultimately in

charge of last weekend's festivities.

"Things went as well as planned, and it wouldn't have been as successful if it wasn't for the previous execs laying down the groundwork to make it the event that it is," Peterson said. "They made it big, and everybody was waiting for it to happen."

"I think we've had more vendors than we've ever had this year, and a lot of people thought we had more people participating this year, as well," he said.



Lieutenant Gov. Matt Michels returned to his hometown to address a capacity audience at the annual Vermillion Chamber of Commerce and Development Company banquet. The event was held March 14 in The Eagles.

(Photo by David Lias)

Michels: Vermillion is a community of compassion

By David Lias

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Lieutenant Gov. Matt Michels told a bit of his life story while addressing the annual banquet of the Vermillion Chamber of Commerce and Development Company.

The Vermillion community, he said, is richly woven throughout his family's history.

Addressing a capacity audience in The Eagles Thursday night, March 14, he talked of his grandfather, who originally tried, and failed at being in cobbler in Vermillion. He later found success as a businessman in the community.

"Their whole world was centered around commerce, and the destination of this community was commerce," he said, speaking of his grandfather, and his great-uncle, who also was involved in the Vermillion community a couple generations ago.

Michels' grandfather attended the University of South Dakota, and the lieutenant governor brought his 1925 USD yearbook, "The Coyote," to the



MICHELS

banquet. "It was interesting as I looked through this," he said. "One way this yearbook was paid for was through advertising."

He flipped through the back pages of the yearbook, showing the ads that appeared nearly 90 years ago. It was a light-hearted exercise that punctuated by Michels' amusing reading of the ads that brought back memories of businesses that no longer exist, and served as a reminder that several of the community's establishments have existed for a long time.

- Michels found ads for:
- The Coyote Theatre – "the theatre of quality, showing the best of Paramount and First National Pictures, and leading, legitimate plays."
 - The Coyote Barbershop,

described as "the world's best barbershop."

- The Plain Talk – "Printing pleases particular people. Promptly executed."
- The First National Bank – "Capital & Surplus ... \$100,000."
- "And one of my personal favorites – Sanitary Barbershop and Billiard Parlor," Michels said, flipping through the yearbook. "That's because the world's best barbershop was already taken."

The Vermillion community also promoted itself in the 1925 yearbook with this advertisement: "Vermillion, South Dakota. State, University, City. Vermillion can and will meet your requirements for it is an ideal city of home and education. Vermillion is progressive, beautiful, modern and the county seat of Clay County. Clay County is a rich agricultural county, and except for the lands around the river, it is a level prairie where hundreds of beautiful farms are found. Corn is king. Diversified farming has long been the rule here. Crop failure has never been known. Vermillion has always realized its