



VERMILLION'S CHILDREN A Seussical Day to Play

WHY NOT SPEND A DAY READING DR. SEUSS WHILE MEETING SOME OF USD'S TALENTED ARTISTS?

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

What better way to celebrate the birthday of the famed children's book author, Dr. Seuss, than by spending time with the cast of the University of South Dakota's upcoming production of *Seussical*?

The cast came to the Vermillion Public Library to perform some songs and just have some fun with kids of Vermillion.

Holly shares a birthday with Dr. Seuss. Her favorite Dr. Seuss book is "There's a Wocket in my Pocket."

"Today is my birthday," Holly said. "I'm 8. We figured out that if Dr. Seuss was alive today he'd be turning 111."

Holly said she can only imagine being 111.

"It would be kind of hard and kind of easy," she said. "Hard because you have trouble walking and stuff. It would be easy because people would help you."

Holly, like other kids there, not only enjoyed the singing but also making their own Whos by coloring them in, listened to stories read by the characters from the show, searched for Horton's lost clover, and played "Schmitz says" and "pin the heart on the Grinch."

"I made an entire Who family," Holly said showing off her artwork. "The mom is Sara, the dad is Bill, and then the girl is Lilly. I just need to sign and then I'll be done."

Not everyone participated in all the activities.

"The Grinch is too scary," said preschooler Aurora.

Aurora did make her own Who sporting a purple complexion.

"Because it's my favorite color and also pink," she said.



Kids of all ages got to hang out with the cast of the University of South Dakota's production of *Seussical* and get a sneak peek at a few of the show's numbers as well as participate in Dr. Seuss-themed activities.

SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK:

Not only were there kids at the library to participate in the *Seussical* activities, but some were there as part of the cast.

Mackenzie, grade five, snagged the part of Cindy Lou Who in this production.

"I just prepared a song and we learned a dance in the studio," she said. "We were taken one by one into the studio to sing our song."

"That was pretty much it. They have about five kids and about 10 tried out."

Mackenzie previously told the Plain Talk she plans on becoming an actress and writing a biography about her achievements when she grows up.

Bridget is another fifth-grader that is part of the show.

"I sang a song from the Broadway version of the *Little Mermaid* [for the audition]," she said. "I think it's really fun."

Both Bridget and Mackenzie performed with USD theater students for their Brigadoon production two years ago.

They seem to have no problem with nerves or pressure performing alongside college students.

This production is extra special though because of the subject matter.

"I love Dr. Seuss," Bridget said. "I like his poems."

Bridget said her favorite Dr. Seuss book is *Horton Hatches the Egg*.

"Because it's got Maisy and Maisy's really funny and Horton in a tree," she said. "It's just really odd."

According to Bridget, they practice about three hours every day for the show.

The long hours only increase the fun they have with it.

"In second grade we did *Seussical Jr.* so I'm a little familiar with it," Bridget said. "For all the songs it's exactly taken from the books."

Kids attending the event reported fun times in school as well as Dr. Seuss week was celebrated as well as the beginning of Read Across America.

"Today it was Mr. Brown Moonday (Monday) and so you

dress up like a cow with black and brown spots," Bridget said. "Mackenzie had black and brown spots over her nose like a cow."

"My teacher hardly did anything but the librarian did," Holly reported.

Rylee, 9, likes Dr. Seuss books because of the lessons they teach.

"Green Eggs and Ham is my favorite," she said. "I like in the story how we learned don't judge something because of its cover."

The *Seussical* event kicked off a raffle the cast of *Seussical* is doing in connection with the library.

Every time kids check out a book they can enter a raffle for four free tickets to see the USD production of *Seussical* in April.

For more information, contact the library at (605) 677-7060.

To learn more about USD's production of *Seussical*, visit usd.edu/fine-arts/theater/current-season.cfm



A Legislative Cracker Barrel was held at the Vermillion City Hall last Saturday. One of the main issues discussed involved teacher salaries.

ZACH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Another Barrel of Talks at City Hall

By Zach Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

A Legislative Cracker Barrel, which was held at Vermillion City Hall on February 28, gave the public the opportunity to hear from South Dakota leaders and Legislators. Members of the audience asked questions for the majority of the meeting.

The panel included Ray Ring and Nancy Rasmussen from the House of Representatives; Barry Vickrey, current professor and former Dean of the University of South Dakota School of Law; and State Senator Arthur Rusch.

Ring was happy that the event was well-attended.

"It's nice to know that people care about these issues," said Ring.

Some of the most prominent issues that were addressed included health care, education, and guns.

"We've dealt with nine gun bills, one of which is alive," said Ring. "We've also had bills to repeal the sales tax on food and to change the no-fault divorce requirements. The latter of these two bills went much farther."

According to Rasmussen, one of the most prevalent issues at this time is the issue of school funding and teacher salaries.

"We're not increasing education funding very much," said Ring. "Teacher's salaries have been falling since 1995."

According to Vickrey, the South Dakota average K-12 teacher's salary for the 2012-2013 year was \$11,500 below the national average.

"I know from personal experience as a higher education administrator that we were underfunded in 2008," said Vickrey.

There needs to be more interest and support for secondary and higher education if these numbers are going to improve,

according to Vickrey.

Arthur Rusch emphasized the fact that the money for funding has to come from somewhere.

"This is a difficult issue," said Rasmussen. "School funding and teacher salaries need to be addressed."

According to Rasmussen, the state uses a reserve fund to deal with tragedies in South Dakota such as snowstorms and flooding. These reserves could be used for educational funding.

"This is not just a tragedy in education, but a social tragedy as well, because our towns are only getting smaller," continued Rasmussen.

Rasmussen explained that it is difficult to find specific businesses in smaller towns, and more people flock to Sioux Falls as a result. With fewer kids in schools located in shrinking towns, the social aspect is altered, and the state cannot use as much money to fund the school.

"If we use the reserve funds one time to raise teacher's salaries, what do we do the following year?" said Rusch.

Ring believes that the state actually has more reserves than needed, and there is often extra money left over.

"Floods do happen, but it is tragic if the teachers continue to be grossly underpaid," said Ring. "Our taxes don't vary much, and we do have extra money that we could use. We shouldn't make biased estimates, but we should free up the one-time money that isn't really one-time money."

The rainy day fund of the state could be used for so much more than floods.

According to Vickrey, people don't take enough interest in educational funding.

For an extended version of this story visit www.plaintalk.net

SHARK

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However, if all of the panel members opt out, the entrepreneur leaves empty-handed.

Vermillion High English teachers Teramie Hill and Carla Kozak have spearheaded the competition which is being helped along by the Vermillion Chamber Area & Development Company (VCDC).

"Our lesson plans are centered on getting students comfortable with public speaking and modeling good presentation skills," Hill said. "At the same time, students are creating prototypes, models, or complex drawings of their products to prepare for the competition. Next week, after the first round of presentations, they will work on "word choice" and prepare commercials for their products."

"(On March 11) we will show the commercials and then announce who has made it to round two, which is on March 19."

So far Hill has seen a high level of engagement from her students.

"Our students are incredibly excited to showcase their products," she said. "It's amazing

to hear some of the higher level thinking displayed in their conversations and see the follow through with their products."

The students are finding out the highs and lows of work like this, but are learning plenty about themselves.

"The most fun part of this project is to take the ideas that we have and make it into the real deal or close to that," freshman Anneliese Taggart said. "The hardest part is making sure you have every detail and everything else the sharks might ask. So you have to know everything about your project: how much it might cost, the equipment that you may want to purchase and stuff like that."

Taggart's group came up with an "Innovative hairbrush" with a rubber piece behind the bristles and when the piece is torn out, its take out the hair with it instead of having to do so with one's hand. There is a storage compartment to keep a comb in and another compartment in the back of the head of the brush.

What's made things even easier for the teachers is that the students are taking charge of the project.

"The kids are policing themselves, setting goals for meeting deadlines, and learning how to compromise and work with others to achieve that final

product," Hill said. "Many groups have even been seeking out expertise from other VHS teachers to help them develop or better understand the science behind their products."

And some of those products?

"Mrs. Kozak and I have been amazed at some of the great product and marketing ideas the kids are developing," Hill said. "I think we sometimes underestimate how creative and tech savvy these kids are if they have a little structured guidance."

Freshman Riley Beach conceived of a car air freshener that would be put in the engine so the vehicle would always smell good due to the pleasant scents being continually pumped out as the motor runs.

"(The project) is very time consuming, but well worth it in the classroom," Beach said. "It's a good idea. It's nice to see some of our ideas go somewhere. The idea I've had is one I've had my whole life so it's neat to be able to show it."

Beach says that the competition isn't that dog-eat-dog yet and has been more competitive.

It doesn't mean he isn't serious about it.

"We have dedicated three weeks of this, every day in class," Beach said. "It is actually something that can go

somewhere."

Taggart's group is a little bit more fired up about going after the top spot.

"Our group is a little bit competitive," Taggart admitted. "Me and a lot of other people would not share our ideas with each other because we didn't want them to get stolen and we thought we had such good ideas."

"Our group is competitive and we're in for the long run."

Yet one must remember these are only 14 and 15-year-old students, so some of the challenges inherent do rise to the surface.

"The biggest struggle has been breaking down the costs to produce one unit," Hill said. "For example, a group creating an innovative hair brush found the average cost of plastic per gram by researching Internet sources and then weighed a similarly sized hair brush (in grams) on a balance scale in order to determine the cost of materials."

"Another group is currently determining how many mini solar chips are needed for their solar charging device. Students have overcome these struggles through research, communication, and collaboration with their group members."

The students are also keeping an eye on what the professionals

are doing and wonder how they could apply some ideas to their current projects.

"With our project we remembered a lot from a long time ago and it didn't seem significant then were like 'we could make this, but we could make it so much better and improve upon it,' freshman Ethan Simmons said. "When you think of inventions you might have thought 'oh that's easy.' But then you look at what you have to do to move it forward and you realize 'oh so this is what you have to do.'"

"Nothing that you see is as easy as they make it seem. It takes away some of the fantasy. It's still cool and it's still fun, but you realize how much work you have to put in to it."

Simmons' group has conceived of a charm bracelet that attach and have magnets on the end so they can clip on to others. It would be used as a charity item.

Taggart says that the project has given her new perspective on her future and that is a large part of what this project's goal was in the first place.

"I am more interested in business and a lot of other people in my groups are," Taggart said. "I was interested in more science, but now it's more, 'hey business.'"

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• ATTENTION •

The Garfield Board of Supervisors will meet as a Board of Equalization at the Marshalltown School
Wednesday, March 18th, 2015
at 7 p.m.

Please call 605-253-2524 for an appointment.

Jim Danielson, Clerk

Are You Concerned About Your Medicare Options?

See me as I represent many fine companies.

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