

Meet the County Sheriff: Andy Howe

By Zach Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Andy Howe, Clay County Sheriff, is dedicated to keeping the streets of South Dakota safe.

Howe has been a sheriff, a deputy, and a jailer.

"There are always a variety of tasks to complete as a sheriff," said Howe. "From the moment the phone rings at the beginning of the day you never know what is going to happen, but it is very enjoyable."

Luckily, Howe has many people on the job to help him enforce the law. The jails are also staffed with more jailers than in the past, which is a very important change.

Howe has many stories from his extensive career in law enforcement, but one particular event from the early 90s is impossible to forget.

"A young mother was enticed from her home with the promise of financial aid and other items for her new baby," said Howe. "The mother went along with this woman, and it turned out that the whole thing was a plan to kidnap the baby. The woman met up with her husband along way to Union County, stabbed the mother, and kidnapped the baby."

Howe had the opportunity to be heavily involved in this case. Howe and another deputy searched houses throughout Union County and eventually made their way to the Sioux Falls area.

"On one of the roads, we found a car and the baby," said Howe. "We were then

able to return the baby to the mother."

The people behind the incident were convicted of kidnapping and attempted murder.

"I was a new deputy at the time," said Howe. "It was an incredible experience."

Howe recalls that the baby's family has sent a thank-you practically every year on the baby's birthday.

"This is an experience that I will never forget," said Howe.



Howe was not sure if they would find the baby because the criminals had fled the state at one point.

"We kept looking and we didn't give up until we found the baby," said Howe.

Howe explained that he couldn't believe something this horrific happened in this area. Luckily, with the help of witnesses and vehicle description the baby was found.

Howe also remembers when the girls who were recently found in South Dakota went missing many years ago in Union City.

"This was one of the first cases that I worked on," said Howe. "It was wonderful when we found the girls under a bridge."

There have been many changes since Howe first began working in law enforcement.

"In the past we just had the old jail, and a lot less space," said Howe. "Things have really changed since I have been here."

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

Granting Good Deeds for the Hungry

By Alan Dale
The Plain Talk

Food for thought was more than just a saying for the Vermillion Middle School's eighth grade science program.

Instead it has become a mantra that turned into \$9,950.

On Thursday, the South Dakota Community Foundation (SDCF) selected VMS's science program as one of eight recipients in its most recent round of Community Innovation Grant awards.

Eighth-grade science teacher Natasha Gault received the grant along with about a half-dozen students at the middle school commons when Jeff Veltkamp, development director at the SDCF presented them with the check.

"Food insecurity is one of the largest obstacles facing children in our community," Gault said. "One in four children in Clay County is food insecure. With the help of this grant, my students will discover how farming knowledge can help the community create a local sustainable food resource for individual families in the community through hands-on learning."

The hope is to take this grant and use the funds to complete Science Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Investigations regarding poverty and food insecurity in Clay County.

"Mrs. Gault came up with the idea and she asked us if it was something we would be interested in and there were so many students that were completely 100 percent

interested in it," eighth-grader Taylor Tarr said. "So when she told us about it, it just blossomed into this project to help the hungry."

The students will design, build, and maintain a school garden and living laboratory on campus.

They will then present their project to help solve the food insecurity problem with the local poverty task force and other community members.

"We will then try to figure out what plants can go next to which plants so they can grow better," Tarr said. "We are going to have to start by (April) or else our plants probably won't make it in time."

"Once the garden starts we are hoping to get food out to people by early or late May," Tarr said. "We just have to figure out what works in our environment and what type of food people want to eat."

The middle school students were really enlightened by the food issues that distress so many people.

"We heard the poverty rate and couldn't believe it was so high in our town," eighth-grader Delaney Stapp said. "So we immediately thought of ideas and ways that we can help."

Students will also collaborate with Feeding SD, Vermillion United Way, and the Vermillion Food Pantry.

They also hope to work with local entities like MASABA and take a tour at South Dakota State University to get more ideas on how best guide their project.

The fact that an agricultural town is



Jeff Veltkamp (center) presents a \$9,950 check from the SDCF to Natasha Gault's eighth-grade science class. The students plan to use the money to aid the county's hungry.

ALAN DALE / THE PLAIN TALK

suffering from such a high level of food deprivation isn't lost on Tarr.

"It's kind of ironic when we are surrounded by farms in our community and still there are so many people in our community that don't know where their next meal is coming from," Tarr said. "It makes you grateful that you still have that box of mac 'n' cheese you don't want to make or something. Some people don't even have that...they have nothing. It makes you grateful for what you do have."

Stapp took a closer note of how the issue affects kids close to her.

"There are actually quite a lot of kids in our school that have to do programs separate from the school in to get free and reduced lunches and to get backpacks to take home food on the weekends," Stapp said. "You don't realize how many kids it is until you find out about until it comes into your perspective and (the problem) dawns on you."

Stapp also traveled to Belize and encountered people who actually do

struggle to find the simplest meal.

"They told me there is nothing like not knowing where your next meal is coming from, being so unsure," Stapp said.

The funds received by the middle school are part of the Community Innovation Grant program, which is a partnership between the SDCF and Bush Foundations out of St. Paul, Minnesota.

"Rather than growing a garden, (the SDCF) grows dollars," Veltkamp told the middle school students. "We turn around and give it to communities and groups like you."

"This is a selective process and you should be proud that you received this. Good job."

The grant puts a bigger sense of obligation and responsibility to the students.

"You have the fact that people need this and need this from the community, but then you add on to the fact that this isn't your money it makes you strive to do the absolute best that you can possible do," Stapp said.

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The competition emcees were Randy Hammer, Mitchell Olson and Gretchen Burbach, all show choir alumnus.

Olson and Burbach both fondly remembered their days in Vermillion High School's own "Swing Choir" back in the day, even appearing in costume to announce the awards at the end of the day.

Though Rhythm in Red was not able to compete, they still put on a stunning performance before the final awards ceremony to thunderous applause from their loyal fans and friends.

"This is our favorite performance because everybody's here to support us and the entire auditorium is full," said Rhythm in Red member Jessica Brady.

Brady went on to say that the fact that they were not being judged only added to the enjoyment.

"It definitely takes the stress off," she said.

Fellow member Jack Brown agreed.

"There's nothing at stake so you can have fun with it," he said.

During the competition, Rhythm in Red members worked as hosts for the other teams and backstage crew.

Brady was one of the hosts.

"It's hard to judge AAA schools versus the A schools because there's so much less people," she said. "Washington has like 60 kids on stage and they have to put extra risers on the back and the sides so they can fit everybody. Then there's like us who have like

30. So talent-wise it's kind of hard to judge because they're so different."

Teams were judged on different aspects of vocals, choreography and overall production.

"You get points for being diverse," Brady said. "A basic set is five songs. You have a guy/girl song then it's just the girls then it's just the guys. Then you all come back together and do a ballad where you just stand there and sing to show off your vocals. We have dance breaks in the middle."

Part of the reason for the length of the competition was the multi-step process each team went through according to Brown.

"They arrive here, get ready, we take them to warm up, they warm up for half hour or so, then they do sound check which is on stage," he said. "Then they perform. After they perform they go to get a critique."

Brown and Brady said the reason for the critique is for the judges to give the teams tips on how to improve their performance.

"Every competition you go to, you can better your show," Brady said.

Rhythm in Red has already completed two competitions and is set for another one over Spring Break in Chicago.

After a morning of performances last Saturday, division results were announced.

Jacob Nikolas, who won best male vocalist, said the award came as a surprise.

"Everybody definitely competed well," he said. "It's hard to tell with so many good groups. We really wanted to do well and then when we did it's



Aberdeen Central's show choir performs during last weekend's Rhythm in Red show at Vermillion High School. The team took second place in the Prep Division while winning best combo in the Class AAA Division.

COURTESY PHOTO

like a relief off your shoulders."

Nikolas' group, Eagle Express from Aberdeen, won several awards including Grand Champion at the end of the night.

Just like other groups, they felt pressure but Nikolas said he has learned how to handle it.

"I've been in varsity sports ever since I was a freshman so pressure has always been a big thing that I've had to deal with," he said. "I say seize the moment and go for it."

Don't hold back because if you hold back, that's not going to help you succeed."

This is Nikolas' first year in Eagle Express.

"It's amazing to be quite honest," he said.

The division awards were as follows:

Prep Division:
2nd place- Aberdeen Central, Special Request
1st place- Sioux Falls Washington, Natural Selection

Class A Division:
2nd place- Elk Point-Jefferson, Momentum
1st place- Groton

Prismatic Sensations

Class AA Division:
1st place- Wahoo, Royalty

Class AAA Division:
2nd place- Sioux Falls Washington, Classic Connection

1st place- Aberdeen Central, Eagle Express
Best Male soloist was awarded to Jacob Nikolas from Central High School in Aberdeen.

Best Female soloist went to Macy Knecht of Groton High School.
Eagle Express from Central High School in

Aberdeen won best combo.

Other final results were as follows:

4th runner up- Natural Selection

3rd runner up- Royalty

2nd runner up- Prismatic Sensations

Best choreography- Eagle Express

Best vocals- Classic Connection

1st runner up- Classic Connection

Grand Champion- Eagle Express

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

Pleasant Valley Township Board of Equalization Meeting

March 16th, 7:00 pm

Brandi Johnson Residence
30630 Frog Creek Rd.
Wakonda, SD 57073

Any appeals MUST be submitted in writing, postmarked no later than March 12, 2015



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