

# Vermillion, Yankton, Seek A Brand

By Rob Nielsen  
Press & Dakotan

Community leaders from Yankton and Vermillion gathered for the second time in two months Wednesday to discuss ways to close the 23-mile gap between the two cities and work as one entity in developing everything from workforce to tourism.

The town hall meeting, held at the Vermillion Technology Center, brought together a panel that included Vermillion City Council vice-president Kelsey Collier-Wise; Nate Welch, executive director of the Vermillion Chamber and Development Company (VCDC); Carmen Schramm, executive director of the Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce; and Jesse Bailey, executive director of Big Friend Little Friend Yankton. The

event, as it was in January, was hosted by 1 Million Cups-Yankton founder Ben Hanten.

Hanten said there's a lot the two towns can do if they'd identify with each other.

"My premise on this is, we're 22.7 miles apart — which is a shorter commute than most people in Sioux Falls have these days," Hanten said. "If we started branding these two cities together, we'd have a population base of more than 25,000, we'd have a couple of colleges involved, we'd have powerhouses in medical, manufacturing and recreation and banking. I just think there's a lot of things that, if we just start to identify that we're from the same areas, it puts us at an advantage."

Hanten said one of the most effective ways to sell



Nate Welch, executive director of the Vermillion Chamber and Development Company (VCDC), speaks to a town hall meeting Wednesday, bringing civic and business leaders from Yankton and Vermillion together to discuss collaboration between the two communities.

ROB NIELSEN / PRESS & DAKOTAN

the area would be to establish a brand.

"If we want to say that

we're from the same area, we need to have a moniker to say where we're from,"

he said. "We know where the Twin Cities are. We know where the Quad Cities are. What are we? ... I think people want something they can identify with so we can begin to package these ideas and assets together."

He used the example of two larger Iowa cities that recently linked themselves together developmentally.

"Cedar Rapids and Iowa City are about 40 miles apart and they've managed to brand together," he said. "They call themselves the Creative Corridor and they've found ways to bridge on arts, culture and entertainment."

Welch said branding would be a way of teaching those outside of the Yankton-Vermillion area about the two cities.

"Branding together really is a great idea because, for

one, branding and marketing really is educating," he said. "It's making people aware of it. Sometimes people don't realize how close Yankton is to Vermillion. ..."

"Branding helps to change the thinking of some individuals and saying, '(The distance) is not really that bad.'"

Collier-Wise, who appeared at both town halls, said there's a number of steps to take from here to bring the two communities together.

"There's a lot of contacts being made and that's going to happen organically," Collier-Wise told the Press & Dakotan. "Identifying who we are and really trying to market that is a big step, and also acknowledging the things that we're doing that are really working."

## No Longer an 'Eagle's' Nest, VTC Takes Flight

By Alan Dale  
The Plain Talk

What has been called the Vermillion Technology Center (VTC) since the last mortar was laid and last brick placed, is about to become something if not soar like an eagle.

Originally designed to fit the needs of the software company — Eagle Creek Software Services — the VTC, which is built and owned by the Vermillion Area Chamber & Development Company (VCDC), appears to be moving forward toward being a used facility sooner than later.

According to Nate Welch, executive director of the VCDC, the building, located at 1012 Princeton Street, should have a future

if all goes as planned as a lawsuit between his organization and Eagle Creek remains ongoing.

"The Vermillion Technology Center was designed to meet the specific needs of Eagle Creek, but like other office spaces, can be used for similar commercial office purposes and can be outfitted to meet the needs of other potential tenants," Welch said. "It is a beautiful office building with great amenities and we look forward to utilizing it as a prize tool to help the economic development in Vermillion."

The change in direction was precipitated when Eagle Creek did not move in to the facility as contracted between the company and the VCDC. This led to

the VCDC filing a lawsuit last fall aiming to recoup \$153,640.45 in past rent and other expenses, excluding August rent for the property, which the Eagle Creek did pay according to the county paperwork.

"There's always a natural bitter sweet feeling when you have to stop and pivot to a plan," Welch said. "This building was built with a specific purpose, but just because that plan may have unfortunately changed, this building still provides great opportunity for growth, development and strong businesses to come to Vermillion."

Welch could not comment on if this officially signifies the end of a relationship between the VCDC and Eagle Creek due to the nature

of the ongoing lawsuit. The building has rooms named in recognition of the Vermillion area.

Welch says that they have the, Lewis Wing, the Clark Wing, the Coyote Conference Room and the Missouri Commons room.

"The VTC was finished on time, under budget and is complete," Welch said. "It's move in ready. Bring a desk, a chair and you're ready to get in it. We're going to make sure and let people know that, too."

The VTC played host to its first major event on Tuesday when the VCDC held its annual banquet.

Governor Dennis Daugaard spoke at the banquet which 240 people attended.



This building, located at 1012 Princeton Street in Vermillion, was originally set to be the home of Eagle Creek Software Services Inc. Alas, things changed and it is now known as the Vermillion Technology Center.

ALAN DALE / THE PLAIN TALK

## 'WIRE ME AWAKE' CONFERENCE SET FOR WEDNESDAY

By Christine Feltes  
For the Plain Talk

Entrepreneurship is the primary focus of the upcoming Wire Me Awake conference sponsored by the University of South Dakota, Vermillion's Chamber of Commerce, and Think 29.

The event will be held Wednesday. Same-day registration begins at 12:15 p.m., with the conference commencing at 1 p.m. and ending around 5 p.m. with networking to follow at the Old Lumber Company Grill and Bar.

"We consolidated it to an afternoon so that people

wouldn't have to skip as much work," said Ben Hanten, one of the event's founders and organizers.

Online registration is available at wiremeawake.com. Costs to attend are \$60 for students and \$100 for non-students.

The conference will take place in Aalfs Auditorium in Slagle Hall on the University of South Dakota's campus.

"It puts Vermillion and the University of South Dakota on showcase; they're at the center of a discussion on entrepreneurship," Hanten observed, noting that many attendants travel to attend the event.

"The focus of the Business School is moving towards entrepreneurship."

Some attendants will meet earlier in the day for the i2i (Invent to Innovate) competition, which allows participants to develop and receive feedback on business ideas. Three awards will be granted in three different tracks.

10 local startup business will be presenting what they have accomplished lately, and the conference strives to encourage entrepreneurship in its younger attendants as well as younger businesses.

"We talk all the time about how to keep young

people around here and one of the ways we can do that is by exposing them to people who are already doing really cool things right in their neighborhood so they don't feel that their dream has to be in Minneapolis or some place far away," Hanten stated.

Locals Ashley Rae and Ben Hanten will speak at the conference, as well as Antonio Neves, a nationally recognized leadership speaker and award-winning journalist.

The event, which started in Yankton in 2012, has continued to grow over the last few years with an attendance of 400 expected

for this year. It brings together a diverse audience.

"It's fun to see the conversations that start happening when people from Lincoln, Sioux Falls, Yankton, and Vermillion are all in the same room realizing that they're working on similar stuff just a few hours away," Hanten said. "It's the quality of event that you would expect to find in a much bigger city than Vermillion."

The event also draws more women than similar events in larger cities.

"One thing that makes our conference different is that half, if not more, of the attendants are women,"

Hanten said.

The conference also helps attendants to expand their network, especially in the Vermillion area. It encourages local businesses to thrive.

"What we need probably more than anything in small areas is to get the people connected who should be," Hanten pointed out.

The event also helps to reinvigorate the professionals and students who attend it.

"It provides the recharge that people look for in their work lives and we do that by bringing in some of the business experts who've been there," Hanten said.

## ANIMAL From Page 1A

the joy felt when the community rallies in support of a neighbor's beloved dog.

Often, pets are considered members of the family unit. They are a part of the day to day routine and their reciprocated affection is what makes the effort worth it. The pet-owner relationship is often symbiotic and cyclical.

When a pet become lost, it can be devastating for a family. Pooling resources, family members may drive or walk their neighborhoods in search of their lost animal, alert the police department of their situation, and more recently turn to social media.

"I think it's one of the fastest and easiest ways to get the word out," Dugan said. "I was impressed."

Dugan's daughter eventually located Reid the Pekinese, but not until after they had posted an alert to an online Facebook forum that he had been missing. The outpour of responses and help was impressive.

Vermillion resident Sidney Mount was also conscious of the power of social media when it comes to bringing attention to an animal that may be lost and missing home.

"Most people have it," Mount said of the social media site, Facebook. "Most of Vermillion is on the Vermillion Online Rummage site so it seem more fitting and faster than posting something in the paper."

Mount posted a few photos of a cat she found wandering a neighborhood. She recognized that it seemed too friendly to be a cat who lived without much human interaction. The owner, Laura Learning, was beyond impressed by the neighborly support she received in regards to the small pet.

"I have two little kids and Oscar was gone for a week," Learning said. "I posted online and within half an hour I had a hit and that gave me hope."

It didn't take long for Learning to get solid leads on where Oscar may have been.

"By that afternoon we had six or seven hits within the

area," Learning said. He was returned to us by 4:00 that same day. I wish I would have posted sooner."

For Learning, who is new to Vermillion, posting online on social media blossomed into a firsthand experience on how friendly and community oriented Vermillion can be.

"It was amazing the comradery I felt," Learning said. "I just moved here back in August so I don't know many people in the area."

Learning, along with many other pet owners, have acknowledged that pets become part of the unit of beings that makes up a household. Social media being able to help find a pet is a new phenomenon, but very powerful.

"They just become part of your family," Learning said. "It's amazing, it made me feel really good. It's just evolved with Facebook, you don't post flyers on poles anymore."

When things go wrong with animals in our lives, there are options we have to help right wrongs and fix problems within the pet community. Often, contact animal control or law enforcement is a last resort.

"When you hear the word 'pound' it just sounds negative," Learning said. "I don't know what it all entails, involving animal control. I don't think they're going to take as much time as my neighbor would."

Learning never ended up contacting animal control, and as it turns out, many residents refrain from contacting the authorities in regards to lost pets because of reservations they have about the outcome.

"My experience was amazing," Learning said. "I wish I would have posted sooner."

Sarah Ames also posted on social media about her beloved pet. Unfortunately for her family, the outcome was not as good. A resident near the 12th street hill, Ames is worried other animals, or even people, may meet the same fate her dog did.

"I put flowers by the road where our dog died to remind drivers to slow down," Ames said. "There is no sidewalk there and joggers and bikers use that road because it is an outlet to the trail."

Ames took to the website to thank the person who

removed their beloved pet from the roadway, and also to warn others of how important it is to watch for both pets, and people.

"A lot of people jog on this road, and our dog was not the first to die on it," Ames said. "There is another animal crossing at the bottom of the hill."

Ames, like many pet owners, would like to see more community involvement when it comes to dog and cat ownership in Vermillion. Ames adopted her dog from a shelter as a way to provide an animal in need of a loving family. Overall, posting about the incident on social media worked well for Ames.

"I was so pleased at all the

support Vermillion gave as far as the community. So many people said they looked for the dog's body and kept asking if anyone got it," Ames said. "Many people told me how sorry there were. I found out another woman's dog was hit by a car and was lucky enough to live the same day as ours. Everyone checked on her also and the vet nursed her dog through the night."

Next week, we will be looking at the second phase of caring for our animals in Vermillion, via the people who work hard to prevent neglect and abuse of pets, and help regulate animals that may be a danger to themselves or others.

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