

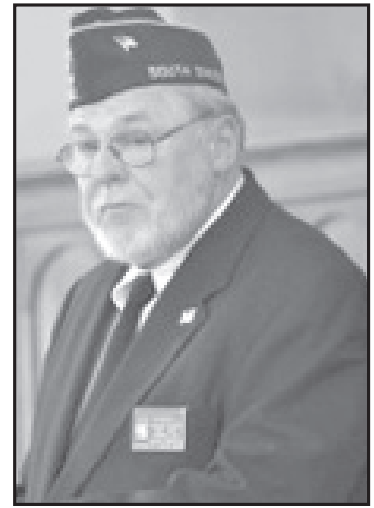
Meet Clay County Commissioner: Leo Powell

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Vermillion native and Vietnam Vet Leo Powell is no stranger to community involvement. Powell has been a Clay County Commissioner for 10 years. As far as being commissioner is concerned, Powell said it's certainly interesting. "I work with the departments and build a budget based on what the public wants and balance that budget," he said. Along with lots of financial issues, Powell said they watch over the county bridges, roads and ditches. "There's Clay Creek ditch which is a joint ditch with Clay County and Yankton County," he said. "Then there are some registered lateral ditches that are between Gayville and Vermillion that we meet as joint boards to make sure that those are clean and drained to the taxpayers' expectations." "Along with that we advertise for bids for different contractors and look things over to make sure everything meets expectations," Powell continued. "Most of them are pretty reasonable and easy to get along with." Powell grew up on a farm just south of the Vermillion airport. "When I got out of high school I went into the service as a telephone lineman," he said. "When I came out of the service, farming wasn't very good and I went to work with Clay Union Electric in January of 1971 and went to a vocational program through the GI Bill. I did a lot of electricity. It was exciting." Powell finished his career with Union Electric in 2012 and is currently retired.

But being retired does not mean Powell is not active in the community. "I suppose it's been somewhere about the mid-90's I started to get involved in community service," he said. "I was appointed to the City Planning Commission then I was appointed to the County Planning Zoning Board. After that I was city councilman for the central ward for three years and then I ran for commissioner ten years ago and won. My intent is to run one more time." Even during his career, Powell said he made time for the city of Vermillion. "It takes a lot of time and it was difficult when I was still working but my employer felt it was good to be active in the community so I was allowed to use my vacation time for those projects," he said. "It worked out good." Powell has collected quite a resume of community experiences. "I actually made a list one time and it really surprised me," he said. "I'm a member of the VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars), the Disabled American Veterans, a member of the American Legion, a member of the Honor Guard for the VFW that serves for funerals for veterans in the community. There's actually quite a few other things." The only time Powell said he has left South Dakota was when he served in the Vietnam war, first in Germany and then spent 14 months in Vietnam itself. "It was a tough way to grow up," he said. "I got an education and it wasn't exactly what I wanted. I don't like to elaborate on these things. It's just not a fun thing to have gone through." Powell is not the only one in his family involved in the community.

"My wife is the county treasurer," he said. "We've both been as active in things as we can." Powell and his wife raised two sons in Vermillion. One still lives in Vermillion and one is currently in Sioux Falls. In Powell's more active years, he said he would go fishing and do archery. "I'm a little old to be climbing trees now," he said. If there's one thing Powell is passionate about, it is people participating in their community. "People will start to complain about something and I'll start explaining it to them and they understand it and they're fine. When I ask them, 'Did you read about it in the paper? Did you hear what the governor said in his address?' And they'll always say 'No I'm too busy for that.' For somebody like me I find that extremely hard to accept." "That's probably why I do as much community service as I do," Powell said. "I want to be an active part of the community." There's a lot going on in Vermillion, according to Powell. When you get involved you meet a lot of people and have a lot of great opportunities.



Seventeen students including eighth-grader Wyatt, fifth-grader Landon and second-grader Lainey competed in last Saturday's FunFair, a chance to test their piano skills for judges.

COURTESY PHOTO

Piano Good Play

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Seventeen piano students from the area participated in the first ever Piano FunFair last Saturday in the Warren M. Lee Center for the Fine Arts on the University of South Dakota campus. The event was based on a similar event sponsored by the Omaha Piano Teachers. "It was fun," said Wyatt, 14. "I liked the judges. They were nice. We got free food out of it. It was really well directed. Terry Walters directed it and she's my teacher." Walters tried to create a carnival-type atmosphere for the students as they were tested on various fundamental piano skills and theory. "We had to do scales, arpeggios, four cadences and inversions and we had to perform a song from memory," said fifth-grader Landon. "You had to do sight reading and a test for major and minor chords and a theory test." Though there was plenty of fun to be had, the students all had their favorite part of the day. "I liked doing the award ceremony when you got the ribbons," Landon said. "I passed the level because to pass the level you need three tens and you get a big ribbon. This is the first one that I've ever done." Landon commented that he would love to do the event again next year. Lainey, second grade, liked doing ear training. Wyatt explained what was involved with that. "They played a key and we had to decide if it was major or minor," he said. For Lainey, the hardest part was sight-reading. According to her, there's no real way to prepare for it. Landon has developed a strategy for sight-reading which he excelled in Saturday. "I got a perfect 10," he said. "They give you a sheet of paper and you can look at it for a while and then I play my fingering and how I do it beforehand so I know what key it's in and stuff."

As far as nerves go, Landon also has a strategy. "I take a deep breath," he said. Wyatt also received a perfect score on sight-reading. "Play it on your lap before you go in there," he suggested. Wyatt said he can even hear the music in his head a little bit by doing this making it easier to play on sight. There are a lot of musical terms that might seem strange to a non-musician but these kids know their stuff. "There were a lot of different things like scales and arpeggios and cadences," Lainey said. "A cadence is a chord and then another chord and then another chord." "A scale you play all the notes in the key and an arpeggio you only play three notes but in different octaves," Wyatt said. "The hardest part is probably when I had to play my song from memory," Wyatt said. "I played Scott Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag." Wyatt was one of three students who received perfect scores in all the categories and received a trophy.

"Piano is fun and I enjoy doing it," he said. Wyatt has been playing for four years and plans to continue with it at least through high school. His favorite music to play, he said, is rock music by bands like the Beatles. Wyatt also plays trumpet as well which he says helps him with sight reading. Landon also enjoys playing the piano. "I started in second grade and I'm a fifth grader now," he said. "I think it's fun to do." Landon's favorite part about the piano is playing at his lessons. "My teacher's really nice," he said. "She gives you tips on what to do for the fingering to make it easier." Landon said he wouldn't be opposed to being a music teacher himself in the future. "My dad's a music teacher," he said. "He plays piano. I also play the drums. I'm in fifth grade band." For an Extended Version of this Story visit www.plaintalk.net Though Landon has fun with the drums he said he likes the piano better because of the fact that you

can play actual notes on the piano. "I don't really know what my favorite piece is," Landon said. "I'm playing Amazing Grace now. That's pretty fun to do." Lainey also enjoys her time tickling the ivories and has been doing so for two years. "I've been playing since I was five, in kindergarten," she said. "At the end it makes really cool music." This end result, Lainey said, makes the practicing all worth it, though she doesn't mind practicing herself. "I like all of it," she said when asked about her favorite part about playing the piano. Lainey would like to learn how to play faster songs and looks to her brother for inspiration and motivation which is how she got started. "My brother was playing and I wanted to do it too," she said.

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Vermillion American Legion Post #1 and Legion Auxiliary announce the selection of delegates for Boys & Girls State 2015. Girls chosen to represent Vermillion are Katie Brockvelt, Elizabeth Butler, Morgan Fuller, Sydney Furry, Anna Hackemer, Katie Kost, Kylee Retzluff, Kayla Stammer. The boys chosen are Kaleb Blue, Blake Gilkyson, Cody Kronaizl, Alec Leber, Tristan Meadows, Jonathan Rosales, Matt Ouellette, Paul Schwasinger. Jeremiah Johnson is being sponsored by the Alsen Legion. These young people have demonstrated very definite leadership skills in their school and community activities and each has earned a scholastic ranking that places them in the upper third of their class. "During the selection process, all delegates demonstrated outstanding qualifications in character, honesty, service, and initiative," said Ray Hofman, South Dakota Boys & Girls State will run from June 1 to June 6, 2015 and will be held on the campus of Northern State University for the boys and University of South Dakota for the girls. Donations from the Civic Council, Eagles Club, Knights of Columbus, Lions, Rotary, Rebekah Lodge, Odd Fellows Lodge, Masons, Incense Lodge and the VFW have helped sponsor the students. FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please call Ray Hofman at 624-6457 or by email using rhofman@vyn.midco.net COURTESY PHOTO

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