

# FOUND

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years ago, while in high school. The organization grew out of his Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) project that won first place at the state and national conventions.

"In 2009, I got the idea of helping people who were struggling with suicide," he said. "Originally we had 50 fans on Facebook. Then it jumped to 500 overnight. It seemed to happen randomly, and we weren't sure why. We thought it had to be because of the FCCLA activity."

"Lost and Found" has received national FCCLA support as well as aid from Smith's USD fraternity, Phi Delta Theta. Smith has received requests to speak before students, including one school in Oklahoma.

The attention hasn't stopped, as news of "Lost and Found" has spread from coast to coast and even overseas.

"Our number of Facebook friends jumped to about 3,600 by last February," he said. "We even have Facebook friends in Great Britain who are following us."

"Lost and Found" doesn't pass religious or moral judgments regarding depression and suicide, Smith said. The organization offers support and creates awareness that people may be suffering from mental illness or a physical condition such as a chemical imbalance, he said.

"Lost and Found" receives donations and other funding, which provides free counseling and medication for those who are suffering from depression or considering suicide.

"We also help with the expense of funerals for those who commit suicide and medical attention for those who attempted it," he said. "More recently, I had a friend's uncle who attempted suicide. Our organization helped with the medical expenses (resulting from the attempt)."

"Lost and Found" reached a milestone when it became a non-profit corporation last fall. Smith received valuable assistance from his father, Mitchell attorney Patrick Smith, who helped the group draft its by-laws and articles of incorporation. The national organization actually came into existence before the USD chapter, which was formed during the past school year.

The organization's next step is a achieving 501(c)3 status so donations are tax deductible, D.J. Smith said. "That's especially important for people who want to donate large amounts," he said, expressing hope of receiving major contributions.

The needs are great across the nation, he said. "Nationally, there are about 30,000 suicides annually. Someone commits suicide every 17 minutes," he said.

South Dakota is not immune from depression and suicide. In fact, studies show South Dakota is among a group of western states with a consistently higher suicide rate than the rest of the country.

Statistics show about 107 people die of suicide in South Dakota every year, calculating to one suicide every three or four days. Of that figure, about 12 teenagers — one a month — die of suicide in South Dakota.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death in South Dakota for people 15-34, regardless of sex or race. The death rate of people ages 15-24 is twice as high in South Dakota as it is on average throughout the United States.

"Lost and Found" national treasurer Erik Muckey, a USD sophomore from Corsica, said college is not the popular image of a carefree life and endless parties. He has seen — and experienced — the pressure felt in a college atmosphere.

"I saw a lot of freshmen who lacked experience in dealing with college. They had problems with everyday life. Even at a smaller university, you felt like you were on your own," he said.

"People were worried about classes, their grades, jobs, social connections and peer pressure. Some had problems with drugs and alcohol or other underlying issues. And then it became even more stressful during finals week."

Besides the USD chapter, "Lost and Found" has received contacts from Nebraska, Michigan and New York schools interested in starting similar programs. Chapters could be started for both high schools and colleges.

"Lost and Found" works with the USD counseling center and advisor Tiffany Kashas, Muckey said. "We are trying to get the word out that we are on campus and there are places to go for help," he said.

Often, students don't think they can admit their depression or suicidal thoughts, Muckey said.

"People think it's shameful, but it's not shameful," he said. "It's a fact of life — people get depressed."

## NIKKI'S FUND

As part of its mission, "Lost and Found" works with Nikki's Fund, a campus-based organization that supports suicide prevention programs and medication needs for USD students.

Nikki's Fund was founded in memory of Nicole Vallie Harris, who committed suicide in 2005. She is the daughter of Janine Harris, manager of the Al Neuharth Media Center on the USD campus.

Janine Harris said she welcomes the formation of "Lost and Found" and its rapid growth.

"These young people are fantastic. Sometimes, students relate better to their peers," she said. "I just want, in any way we can, to get the message out and offer support to people who are struggling. It's not something that people want to talk about."

Young people aren't the only ones struggling with the topic of suicide, Harris said.

"There was a woman I met whose father committed suicide in the 1980s, and she still wasn't able to talk about it," she said. "The poor woman has a lot to carry, a lot of anger."

Smith, the "Lost and Found" president, has attended Nikki's Fund meetings, Harris said.

"We are separate organizations, but we have the same mission and share the same goals. We support each other," she said. "I think 'Lost and Found' is wonderful. I'm so glad to see anything you can do to prevent or reduce suicide or let students know where they can go to get help."

In her position with the Freedom Forum Diversity Institute, Harris works with American Indians in journalism. She sees the high suicide rate among Indians, particularly on the reservations.

Studies show young Indian males die of suicide at four to five times the rate, on average, of young white males in South Dakota.

Harris has scheduled a Sept. 7 campus visit by Eric Marcus, author of the book, "Why Suicide?" She is also attempting to organize a panel discussion featuring Marcus, suicide survivors and family members who are left behind after a suicide.

Harris welcomes working with "Lost and Found" as well as churches and community organizations.

"We're not here to judge," she said. "People are opening up, and the Vermillion community has shown its support. It's overwhelming."

## CHARTING THE FUTURE

In many ways, Smith said he welcomes the summer break. He spent 40 hours a week during the school year on "Lost and Found" on top of his classes and his student government and fraternity activities.

Smith and the other "Lost and Found" members are using the summer to plan the organization's future. Should Smith remain national president, he plans to give up the USD position.

But some things won't change. The USD chapter wants to continue holding weekly meetings, which have drawn 20 to 30 students. The board wants to work more with churches and community resources.

And "Lost and Found" will stick with its three main themes: pay it forward, others are struggling and you're not alone, and help is possible.

Both Smith and Muckey said "Lost and Found" has changed their lives. However, Smith said he feels mixed emotions.

"I am frustrated because there is so much more to do, and we have only so many hands to do it," he said. "I am determined to get there (and reach our goal). I am proud that there are so many people who have come together. And I'm a little scared."

A political science and English double major, Smith said he doesn't fit the stereotypical psychology or sociology major working with depression and suicide. However, he feels a calling to "Lost and Found" as his life's work.

"I have been driven to tears by the stories I have seen. It's a matter of pay it forward," he said. "I want this to be the rest of my life, to grow and help people who want to change the world."

# Girls State begins May 30

The W.O. Farber Center for Civic Leadership at The University of South Dakota will host the 65th American Legion Auxiliary Girls State program, May 30-June 4.

The South Dakota American Legion Auxiliary selected 436 girls from across the state based on scholastic achievement, leadership skills and interest in government. The annual event is designed to teach female high school juniors about civic

participation and in honor of the 65th anniversary, the week is being dedicated to the past Girls State governors. Emily Firman Pieper, 1994 Girls State governor from Flandreau, is the keynote speaker for the inauguration of the new Girls State governor at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, June 3 in Slagle Auditorium. Prior to the inauguration, the Girls State chorus will present a patriotic concert.

# GOLF

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legitimate chance of winning, otherwise you're not in the competition," Hogen said. "That's where we were hoping to be so it was a good way to finish. After winning last year, we're still happy with this season, we had a good season."

As the tournament's host, Hogen said he enjoys showing off the nice course.

"It's good for us — I have a staff (at The Bluffs) that's great, they always know what's going on. Mark does a great job with the outside and it's in great shape, especially with all the rain we've been dealing with," he said.

Hogen also said he likes the community aspect that comes with hosting the state tournament.

"It's fun to see the community get involved and really, I think out of all the tournaments we've been to, this was the most spectators I've seen at a state tournament ever, which is nice," Hogen said.

Gaughenbaugh said she's knows there will be differences next year at the Division I college level, but she's prepared for the challenge.

"I'm really excited to play for USD next year," she said. "I've got to get a few kinks out first, but I'll be ready for it."

Coyotes' head coach Nick Hovden said he has high hopes for Gaughenbaugh's career in Vermillion.

"We're very excited to have Kylie join our young, up and coming Division I golf program. She brings a great golf game to the

program," he said. "I don't think she'll have a problem transitioning (from high school to college). Her length off the tee will definitely help her out. I do know that not only on the course is she a great player, but off the course she's a tremendous student and we're really looking forward to both."

Parkston finished the tournament as runner-up, 20 strokes behind SFC. Vermillion edged Canton by one stroke to take third place with a score of 714 and the C-Hawks took fourth with 715.

The All-Tournament Team included the top six golfers - Gaughenbaugh, Wynja, Logan Wagner of Parkston, Talia Peters of Wagner, Lead-Deadwood's Elise Nichols and Dakota Valley's Shyler Funck.

Lead-Deadwood's Mikayla Gallagher earned some of the spotlight as well, as she was the tournament's only player to hit a hole-in-one on Hole 12 of the second day.

## FINAL ROUND, TUESDAY, THE BLUFFS GOLF COURSE, VERMILLION

TEAM SCORES: S.F. Christian 655, Parkston 675, Vermillion 714, Canton 715, Lead-Deadwood 719, Hot Springs 724, Dell Rapids 731, Elk Point-Jefferson 745, Mobridge-Pollock 755, Madison 776, Aberdeen Roncalli 784, Chamberlain 830, Belle Fourche 833, Custer 869

## INDIVIDUAL

172 — Ellen Brown, Kelly Amundson  
182 — Kenzie Huska,  
188 — Brooke Schwasinger,  
211 — Allison Heine,

improved upon."

Noem said one of the goals of the Education and Workforce Committee is to find a way to better assess schools and students.

"I'm a big proponent of a growth model and not comparing kids to other kids in other classes from other years, but assessing that child from when they started the year to when they ended the year, and what progress did that child make," she said.

Consolidation of programs to increase efficiency and savings also is underway.

"The secretary of education was in front of our committee not too long ago, and he was talking about the fact that he had taken 39 programs, and consolidated them down into 11 programs, and that that was a really good streamline," Noem said. "They were just programs that, as they were developed and put out there, they were much like the one that was there before."

According to Noem, there currently are 80 different programs in the Department of Education that deal with teacher quality alone.

"It's pretty hard to make the argument that (the system) can't get more efficient," she said.

# JUDGE

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not qualified to be a judge," Rusch said.

"The governor makes the selection but is required by law to select only from those candidates who were found to be qualified by the Judicial Qualifications Commission. She will then be up for election in the next judicial election in 2014."

Gering was interviewed separately by the Judicial Qualifications Committee and Daugaard before the governor announced his choice of the new judge.

Daugaard said he chose Gering for both her background and talents.

"I am pleased that Cheryle has agreed to become a circuit judge," the governor said. "Her many years of legal experience, as well as her diligence, common sense and even temperament, will serve the citizens well in southeastern South Dakota."

Gering said she appreciated the faith in her.

"I am grateful that the governor chose to appoint me to the circuit court," she said.

"I'm sure many qualified and deserving candidates applied for the position. I'll do my best to serve the people of the state of

South Dakota."

Rusch expressed confidence in his successor.

"I am certain that Judge Gering will do an excellent job," he said. "She grew up in northern Yankton County, so she is familiar with the area."

The First Judicial Circuit includes Aurora, Bon Homme, Brule, Buffalo, Charles Mix, Clay, Davison, Douglas, Hanson, Hutchinson, McCook, Turner, Union and Yankton counties.

The southeast corner of the circuit will see some shuffling, Rusch said. Circuit Judge Steven Jensen of Elk Point will take over as presiding judge, and assignments will change for other judges.

"Judge Gering has indicated that she would rather have her duty station in Yankton than in Vermillion, as mine was," Rusch said. "This will mean there will be one circuit judge in Elk Point and two in Yankton. However, she will be traveling to handle court cases in Vermillion and some of the cases in Elk Point."

"I have also authorized Magistrate Judge (Tami) Bern to move her duty station from Yankton to Vermillion so there will be a judge available there if needed for search warrants and things like that."

Gering said she may serve elsewhere in the circuit if needed, such as when a judge is on vacation, has a conflict of interest in a case or needs help

with a caseload. As a circuit judge, she could be asked to sit on the South Dakota Supreme Court if a justice cannot hear a case.

Gering foresees a natural transition from arguing in front of the court to hearing the cases.

"Though (as a lawyer) I am the advocate for one person, I am always aware of the other side and what the position is," she said. "As judge, I have to be aware of both sides. I'm not the advocate of one or the other. I hear both arguments."

She sees two primary assets that she brings to the bench.

"My trial experiences bring significant benefits in handling much of what a judge does in the courtroom, whether it's the trial setting or pre-trial," she said. "I have also had a very eclectic practice, very little criminal but a very wide variety of civil cases."

Gering also brings a familiarity of the area to her judgeship.

"My parents farmed on the northern edge of Yankton County. I went to school in Menno, and then 12 years ago, when I was married, we moved to Freeman," she said. "I think it really gave me the common sense and the (practicality) that I have brought to my practice and now to the bench."

Gering will be sworn into office at Yankton at a date to be determined. In the meantime,

she is closing her private practice and turning clients' files over to her partners.

"I have said several times, and I also heard from the governor, that right now you do have a foot in both worlds," she said of the transition. "As far as leaving my partners, there's very mixed emotions. They are extraordinary attorneys. If I hadn't been selected for this judgeship, I would have stayed here (at the firm) until I retired."

"It's sad to leave, but I'm excited for the opportunity," she added.

Gering holds no intentions of resting on her laurels as a judge.

"Every time I walk into a courtroom, I have butterflies, no matter what," she said. "Ellsworth Evans, one of our founding partners, told me, 'If you're not nervous, you're probably not prepared.' You have to be ready for every eventuality."

Gering has already received a warm welcome from other judges. "The South Dakota judiciary is very approachable," she said.

However, she knows that she has big shoes to fill.

"I have a lot of respect for Judge Rusch," she said. "It's going to be quite a challenge for me (to replace him) and a lot to live up to."

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Check today's issue for the solution to the puzzle.