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PLAIN TALK

Volume 127, Issue 20
 USPS 657-720



**Friday,
 May 18,
 2012**

75¢



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INSIDE:

- ▲ Everhart celebrates Guthrie Saturday, **Page 02**
- ▲ 'King of the Banjo' collection at NMM, **Page 18**

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Thanks to the efforts of parents, volunteers, instructors, and especially the participating youth, the Vermillion Area Dance Organization presented a very successful spring recital Sunday in the VHS Performing Arts Center. Pictured are Kayla Andersen, (back) Hannah Gruhn, Payton Peterson, Trinity Goeman, (behind Trinity is Alexis Anders), Ella Wittmus, (behind is Payton Halverson), and Elaina Taggart. See more photos of the recital, with the theme "Dance! Dreams Really Do Come True," at plaintalk.spotted.net.

(Photo by David Lias)

Howe: More industry will reduce local poverty

By Travis Gulbrandson

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According to recent census data, Clay County has a poverty rate of 23 percent.

For this to change, Vermillion has to diversify its industry mix, said Steve Howe, director of the Vermillion Area Chamber of Commerce & Development Company.

"Being a single-industry community is not working real well for us if you look at our numbers," Howe said. "Three hundred fifty (families) needing housing assistance, 22 percent in poverty, 70 percent of the workforce in organizations like Masaba (are) coming from outside. Those aren't rosy numbers for Vermillion to grow."

The poverty level is "not necessarily" an issue resulting from Vermillion's high student population, Howe said.

"That's an argument that I get often,

that it's because we're a college town," he said.

"Well, it is because we're a college town, but it has nothing to do with the students. It has to do with the fact that we're a single-industry town."

Howe said that the poverty levels of other South Dakota cities that serve as locations for state-run institutions are either at or below the average of 14-15 percent.

"If the presence of a university was the primary reason for our poverty rates to be high, that would be the case with the other state institution communities. And it's not," he said.

"The reason ours are higher is because of the lack of industry diversity.

"If you're not working at the university, for the most part you're working for the retail and service industries that ultimately serve the university," he said. "Those are the career paths that pay very little. They pay in that poverty range."

Jolley School will serve free meals to youth this summer

By David Lias

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The fall ritual of the beginning of classes in the Vermillion School District marked more than the beginning of a nine-month stretch of exposing local students to classroom time, assignments and extra-curricular activities.

It also guaranteed that every student had the opportunity to receive a nutritious, hot lunch every school day.

The school year is about the end. Classrooms throughout the district will soon be empty.

At Jolley Elementary, however, a hot lunch will continue to

be served soon after the last day of school. To any child. At no cost.

"Since our elementary percentage of free and reduced (school lunches) is over 50 percent, we qualify to offer the food service in the summer," said Sheila Beermann, the school district's business manager. "Once we qualify, and have over 50 percent, then we can offer this program.

"Our trend in the elementary has been that we have seen that percentage go up," she said.

The midday meals will be served at Jolley Elementary, 224

■ **FOOD**, Page 08

The leading employers in the city are the University of South Dakota, followed by Stream Global Services and Sanford Hospital. Masaba and Polaris are big employers, as well.

However, many of these employees come from out of town, Howe said.

"We haven't traditionally developed

these (businesses) ... and now that we are starting to get some of those businesses, we are dependent upon outside labor in order to serve their needs," he said.

This is true for the industry-based employers, as well as the university, he said.

"If you think about the kind of spouse they're going to have, you're going to have another highly-educated spouse," he said. "And Vermillion just doesn't offer that type of job opportunities for that trailing spouse."

■ **HOWE**, Page 08

Organization names Missouri River among nation's most-endangered

By Travis Gulbrandson

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The Missouri River has been named number four on a list of the most-endangered rivers in the nation.

The announcement was made when American Rivers – an organization that works to restore rivers and streams in the United States – unveiled its annual list Tuesday.

"(The river is) a national treasure, and deserves to have some restoration and recovery work done on it to make it even better for recreation, healthier for fish and wildlife, and more beneficial to the people that live and work in the Missouri River Basin," Paul Lepisto, regional conservation coordinator of The Izaak Walton League of America said at a press conference in Clay County Park.

The main reason the Missouri is on the list is

"(The river is) a national treasure, and deserves to have some restoration and recovery work done on it to make it even better for recreation, healthier for fish and wildlife, and more beneficial to the people that live and work in the Missouri River Basin."

PAUL LEPISTO

"outdated flood management" which may lead to a threat on public safety, said Jim Redmund of the Iowa chapter of the Sierra Club.

"The American Rivers chose the Missouri not so much because of the floods of 2011 as the way that our political leaders are responding with simple solutions to a complex set of river issues," he said.

For example, a bill is now circulating through Congress that proposes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers manage the reservoirs to control a flood the size of the 2011 runoff.

"(The Corps) determined

that even if you increased floodwater storage 30 percent, you would just take the top off of the flood of 2011," Redmund said. "You'd still have 100,000 cubic feet per second, and that flow would last at least until November."

Clay County resident and county commissioner Jerry Wilson said the area was able to avoid much of the damage of last year's flood because it's wider here, and relatively free-flowing.

It also has a connection with the floodplain, Redmund added.

"South of here, from Ponca

and Sioux City south, we don't have that," he said. "So here is a model for how a greater portion of the river could serve its functions if it were allowed to operate as this section of the river has."

Wilson said the main negative effect of the 2011 flood was that "there was widespread, unpermitted bank stabilization, some of it with unpermitted materials."

These materials included such items as concrete, rocks and rebar, he said.

Local citizens and governments need to keep pressure on the Corps to require individual permits for the bankline stabilization that occurred immediately prior to the flood, Wilson said.

"These permits should require either the removal of inappropriate materials, or that (affected areas) be re-covered

■ **RIVER**, Page 08

THROUGH THE ROOF



A fire that destroyed the Annar and Marilyn Pettersen home at 516 E. 316th Street north of Vermillion early Friday morning kept members of the Vermillion Fire Department busy for much of the day. Firefighters, in fact, had to be called back to the fire scene at approximately 3 p.m. that afternoon to cool down a hot spot. Clay County Sheriff Andy Howe said the fire was reported by the Pettersens at 4:36 a.m. Smoke detectors woke the couple, the only residents of the house, in time for them to escape. The house was engulfed in flames by the time firemen arrived. Assistance was provided by the Gayville and Elk Point fire departments. The cause of the blaze has not yet been determined.

(Photo courtesy of Dana Nelson)