

Clarity needed in duck stamp contest

In case you hadn't heard, 6-year-old Madison Grimm of Burbank recently won the 2013 Federal Junior Duck Stamp Contest.

Then, she had the first place award taken away when questions arose about whether she properly followed contest rules.

A firestorm (at least in some media circles) ensued. Eventually, Madison was once again declared the contest winner.

After national attention began to focus on Madison in mid-April and spilled over into early May, this issue now seems to be settled. The report of Madison's being re-awarded her first place honor in this week's *Plain Talk* is likely the last news report we'll see about this.

Some disturbing things surfaced as this all played out. And the source of the controversy – the question of whether the rules were correctly followed – still hasn't been properly addressed.

Madison, the daughter of Adam and Janet Grimm of rural Burbank, learned April 19 that she won the annual duck stamp contest, then was told April 26 that she had been disqualified amid questions of how she had done her painting.

On May 2, that decision was reversed.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a statement that day saying Madison had been reinstated as the winner after further analysis of the contest rules.

"Following the contest, concerns were raised about the authenticity of the work," the statement said. "The service disqualified the artwork last week. Since that time, the service has continued to evaluate its decision and has decided to reinstate the original winner."

The Fish and Wildlife Service said in its statement that its decision to reinstate Madison as the winner "was made in recognition of the fact that her work was judged the winner during a fair and open public contest."

"The service respects the decision of the contest judges and apologizes for any distress this process may have caused the top-placing artists and their families, teachers and friends," the agency said.

It would appear that the people that run the Junior Duck Stamp Contest might have concluded that the easiest way to solve this mess was to give the award back to Madison.

Madison used an unpublished photo of a duck that her father supplied as a

reference for her painting. She also used a technique called a graphite transfer, in which an artist applies a pencil lead to a print of the photo to create an outline for a painting. Both are legal, and both are accepted and common among artists, said

BETWEEN THE LINES



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Robert Lesino, who was chief of the Federal Duck Stamp Program from 1993 until 2001 and defended Madison.

We must question, however, whether Lesino's conclusions can be easily accepted with the rules written the way they are currently.

Those rules state, in part, "Design entries must be the contestant's original, hand-illustrated creation and may not be traced or copied from published photographs or other artists' works."

Adding to the controversy is last year's junior duck stamp winner, Christine Clayton, now 18, of Sidney, OH. She told the *Argus Leader* last month, shortly after Madison's award was taken back, that she also used the graphite transfer method, again with an unpublished photo by Adam Grimm, to assist her in creating her winning entry.

Laurie Shaffer, current chief of the federal duck stamp program, had defended the decision to disqualify in a letter, dated April 29, that she sent to Madison's parents. She added that "the clarity of language in the rules is in question and we will be working to refine them so there is less ambiguity."

This is one of those situations where relying on one's hunches – you know, if it "quacks like a duck, it must be a duck" isn't sufficient.

We hope the contest awards will go at least one step, and perhaps several steps further, and consider revising the rules of the contest so that they are easier to understand by all participants, and contain some ironclad statements that truly define what can and cannot be done, and what practices would disqualify an artist.

More clarity to the rules is indeed needed, and we hope as Madison grows as an artist, we'll be publishing more stories about her winning more contests – without controversy.



Damon: Do not read this if you...

Don't read this if you brush your teeth in the shower and don't let the water run until it's cold or hot enough. Stop here if you're recycling water in half-empty water bottles, coolers of melted ice and when it rains.

For all of you who have not begun to even occasionally conserve water, may I have attention, please?

Some years ago, when my husband and I were in the Canadian Rockies on our way from Banff to Jasper, Alberta, we stopped at the Athabasca Glacier. This glacier is part of the Columbia Ice Field, once a huge mass of ice that covered most of Western Canada's mountains.

However, it has receded almost a mile and has lost more than half of its volume. Today, the melting ice gushes constantly from this glacier, forming a rapidly flowing river – a startling reality for us to witness first-hand.

That's not all. Scientists say the planet's glaciers are at the lowest levels in thousands of years. Glacier melting is considered one of the worst threats to the world's water supply because it increases the risk of sudden avalanches of rocks and soil, threatening billions of people around the world who depend on melt water from glaciers to survive.

On a larger scale, the U.N.'s Food and Agriculture Organization recommends "integrated water resources management, such as water harvesting, use of non-conventional water, modernization of irrigation systems, on-farm water management, water-quality management, agriculture-wetlands interactions and drought-impact mitigation," among other

MY STORY YOUR STORY



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Take shorter showers. And while you're in the shower, why not brush your teeth and catch water in a bucket and reuse it to flush the toilet and water your plants.

For baths, plug the tub first, and then fill it. Bathe toddlers together. Fix leaking toilets and replace older toilets with water-efficient models.

In the kitchen, don't let the water run when thawing food and washing fruits, vegetables and dishes. That vitamin-rich water you used to cook vegetables? Reuse it in soup. Compost fruit and vegetable food waste, instead of running the garbage disposal. Daily designate only one glass or bottle for drinking water.

When you're rinsing fruits and vegetables, cleaning out fish tanks, emptying dehumidifiers and emptying pools, recycle all of that water on the garden.

Insulate hot water pipes for more immediate hot water. Set cooling systems

water conservation efforts.

But there are little acts of conservation we all can do to protect this precious natural

Each person taking one or more of these easy money-saving and water-conserving measures could save hundreds of gallons each month...

Turn off water when you're brushing teeth and washing your hair.

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and water softeners for a minimum refills. Turn off faucets tightly and teach the children and grandchildren to do the same.

Speaking of kids, when they want to run under the sprinkler, set it up where the lawn needs watering. While you're outside, adjust lawn mowers to a higher setting - taller grass shades roots and holds soil moisture better. Water lawns, gardens in the morning or evening. Plant perennials in the fall when less watering is needed. Spread a layer of organic mulch around outdoor plants to retain moisture.

Aerate the lawn annually so water can reach the roots, instead of running off. Adjust sprinklers to avoid watering the house, sidewalk or street. Use a broom instead of a hose to clean driveways, sidewalk and siding.

When washing the car, use a hose nozzle with a turn-off lever or commercial car washes that recycle water.

Suggest ways your employer can save water at work. Support projects that use reclaimed waste water for irrigation and industrial uses.

Encourage your schools and local government to develop and promote water conservation. While staying in a hotel or even at home, reuse towels. Look for the EPA Water Sense Label for products certified in water conservation.

Last but not least, please share these water-saving tips with family, friends, neighbors and strangers.

I thank you kindly and so will future generations.

Sources: www.waterusewisely.com, www.celsius.com.

PLAIN TALK POLL RESULTS

Do you believe this spring's unusual weather, including snow on May 1 in Vermillion, is a sign of man-influenced climate change?

No 49
Yes 39

Total Votes 88

To participate in the Plain Talk's weekly poll, log on to plaintalk.net.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Plain Talk encourages its readers to write letters to the editor, and it asks that a few simple guidelines be followed.

Please limit letters to 300 words or less. Letters should deal with a single subject, be of general interest and state a specific point of view. Letters are edited with brevity, clarity and newspaper style in mind.

In the sense of fairness and professionalism, the Plain Talk will accept no letters attacking private individuals or businesses.

Specific individuals or entities addressed in letters may be given the opportunity to read the letter prior to publication and be allowed to answer the letter in the same issue.

Only signed letters with writer's full name, address and daytime phone number for verification will be accepted. Please mail to: Letters to the Editor, 201 W. Cherry St., Vermillion, SD 57069, drop off at 201 W. Cherry in Vermillion, fax to 624-4696 or e-mail to david.lias@plaintalk.net.

SD EDITORIAL ROUNDUP

Capital Journal, Pierre, April 26, 2013

Lawmakers should not ask state to pay for their memberships in conservative group

Heard any really bad ideas lately from the South Dakota Legislature? We have.

The Legislature's Executive Board, dominated by Republicans, decided this week that the state treasury should pay the \$100 memberships for all 105 South Dakota legislators in an organization called the American Legislative Exchange Council, and also foot the bill for unlimited out-of-state trips to ALEC events by state lawmakers who serve on ALEC committees.

That's an issue because ALEC – described on its own Web site as "a nonpartisan membership association for conservative state lawmakers" – is not nonpartisan in the sense that an organization such as the National Conference of State Legislatures is.

There is widespread criticism of ALEC from watchdog groups and Democratic-leaning groups who say the organization gets much of its funding from corporations that stand to benefit from the model legislation that ALEC presents to state lawmakers.

It may be that ALEC truly tries to be nonpartisan, but part of what people are objecting to is that this group might allow the

unseen hand of the corporations to influence what goes on in our states.

Only imagine how incensed Republicans would be if we had a Democratic-dominated Legislature and those lawmakers decided to pay memberships to a left-leaning group and travel to conferences where lawmakers could get research help and discuss model legislation on, say, labor and the environment and business regulation. What if that group called itself "a nonpartisan membership association for liberal state lawmakers," would that raise concerns? Would we pay for our lawmakers' memberships in that organization and fund committee members' travel to its events?

Well, we have exactly that situation on the other side of the aisle.

If corporations want to whisper sweet nothings in the ears of South Dakota legislators, let them come to Pierre and follow the process our Legislature has set in place for lobbying. Or at the very least, let's conserve some state funds and let the so-called conservative lawmakers pay their own membership bills. Don't ask the state to pay for it, because that makes a mockery of conservative ideology.

South Dakotans should not foot the bill so that our lawmakers can go off and flirt with ALEC.

The Associated Press

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Vermillion School District is losing a very precious jewel at the conclusion of the current school year. Librarian Anne Dunham will be retiring after 17 wonderful years. Ms. Dunham will leave her mark on our school in an abundance of ways: As a quality asset to the faculty who worked well with all the teachers and administrators; as the librarian primarily responsible for every school in the district (K-12) by the end of her career; and as a trusted, caring and knowledgeable role model who honed her craft brilliantly.

More than any of these attributes, however, Ms. Dunham has two specific qualities that, in combination, make her the truly unique and superb librarian that she is. First, Mrs. Dunham has a passion for literature which can be seen on her face as it lights up whether she is talking about a literary classic or the newest teen paranormal romance series. Secondly, Ms. Dunham has a genuine love, care, and interest for each individual student who walks into her library. Taken together, these two qualities enable Ms. Dunham to find a book or a genre for each

student, and to create a love of reading that broadens and enriches that person's life. She touches her students' heads as well as their hearts.

In the age of Netflix, wireless Internet, eBooks, Kindles, and the like, it is a rapidly disappearing treasure to have a librarian like Ms. Dunham who generates a safe and comfortable environment in which every student can learn to be excited about reading. She will be dearly missed. However, as a former student of Ms. Dunham's, as well as one who has taken (and continues to take) literary advice from her since my early childhood, I can say with great certainty that her legacy is firmly in place because the seeds she has cultivated in her students will continue to blossom in our lives each and every time one of us picks up a good book.

Neil Gaiman said, "Google can bring you back 100,000 answers; a librarian can bring you back the right one." Thank you, Anne, for the thousands of informed and loving answers you have brought back to your students over the past 17 years.

Respectfully,
Annie Roche
Denver, CO

Vermillion

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