



'One' Wheel Up On Life

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

Whoever thinks that two is always better than one has obviously never tried unicycling as Ella, 10, has.

Ella stated that she actually likes unicycling better than riding her bike.

"It's more fun and it helps you practice your balance," she said. "Sometimes I ride it to school but then all my friends expect me to ride my unicycle to school every day."

Ella enjoys sharing her talent with her friends who often attempt to ride her unicycle.

"My friends thought it was cool," she said. "They wanted to keep trying and they keep asking me to help them whenever they come over to my house."

Ella is the only unicyclist in her circle of friends and family which, she said, can feel a bit awkward.

Ella did say she knew other unicyclists before her family moved to Vermillion from Rapid City where her unicycling journey began.

"My dad took me to the Y once and he showed me a class once and I just started," she said. "They just did it in the basketball court. There were other kids unicycling and the teacher had a whole bunch of unicycles. They had different levels. Level one is just learning how to ride around. Level two was more advanced. I think they taught you how to go back and forth and just stay in one spot."

Ella described the instruction she received in the unicycling classes.

"They said to first start on the wall and go back and forth and keep trying and trying," she said. Trying, she pointed out, includes falling. "They said to fall backwards," she said. "I naturally did that. If you fall forward then you have to just fall on the ground. The unicycle just slides by itself across the floor."

After learning how to get on the unicycle, Ella said it took a few months for her to be able to ride.

"I just practiced at the classes once a week because



SARAH WETZEL / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Ella, 10, has learned that as far as unicycling goes a lot of practice goes a long way.

I didn't have my own unicycle," she said.

Ella said she felt grateful for the instruction which made the learning process more efficient than if she had learned by herself.

"I probably would have fallen off a lot more," she said. "I probably wouldn't do like they told me to get on and fall off safely."

Since moving to Vermillion, Ella has acquired her own unicycle which she regularly practices and continues to learn new tricks including riding forward and through a hula hoop.

"I can also swirl the hula hoop on my arm while I'm riding," she said. "I was trying to go backwards. That's about it. I just hold onto the fence and try to back up."

In future years, Ella hopes she improves enough to do more impressive stunts.

"My unicycle teacher set up obstacle courses and they had to do it like rolling across beams and jumping over things," she said. "I'd like to be able to do that. I tried juggling before with two pinecones. It didn't work out too well."

Like most great ideas, Ella said her tricks usually begin as mere accidents.

"Usually it's because I mess up and I think that would be a cool trick so I try it," she said. "I might be on

my unicycle and do a really sharp turn and then I'll do it again and just keep practicing it. Once you practice a lot it gets really easy."

Ella shared her steps of learning to unicycle.

"Get in the corner and put your arms around the fence and one foot on the unicycle and just step on," she said. "Grab the fence and just try to move your feet forward a little bit. If you fall try to fall backwards and land on your feet. Grab your unicycle and try again."

Unicycling and bicycling actually have a lot of similarities according to Ella.

"It's the same because you have to learn how to control the pedals," she said. "It requires balance for both of them. On the bike you have to learn how to control the handlebars. On the unicycle you have to learn how to have your hands free."

Ella shared a message to anyone who thinks they could never unicycle.

"If you put your mind on it then you can do it," she said. "It's quite easy after you practice a lot."

Aside from unicycling, Ella enjoys rollerblading, sewing, cooking, art, reading, and writing. She also plays the violin and wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up.

Demolition Derby Offers A 'Smashing' Good Time

By Elyse Brightman
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The Clay County Fair Board is hoping to kick off summer with a smash.

For the first time, the fair board is offering a spring demolition derby at the Clay County Fairgrounds planned for Friday, May 1.

"This is the first time we've done it in May. We usually have it during the fair, and we will have it during the fair, but we thought we'd try one in the spring," said Jessica Kennedy of the Clay County Fair Board.

The derby will host three classes—stocks, no welds and compacts—and they are hoping to get 10-20 entries per class.

"Since we've never done this before, we don't know how many people there will be this time," Kennedy said. "It's early this year. This is the first Demo Derby in South Dakota for the year, so the big thing is who

is ready for it." Judges will be brought in to keep score, as well as announcers to provide commentary.

"They keep track of who can run still or not," Kennedy said. "If your car is not really capable of ramming into somebody any more, because you've been hit so many times, you get taken out. They have sticks on the sides of their cars and once they're out they have to break them."

The scheduled start time is 7 p.m. with gates opening at 6 p.m. Entries are being accepted up to the start of the event.

Concessions will be available and a beer garden is offered to spectators 21 years old and over.

"It's kind of just a kick off to summer," Kennedy said. "Something for families to get out and do on a Friday night."

For official rules and entry form visit claycountyfair.net or call 605-677-7111.

'The Tender Land' To Be Presented By USD Opera

By Sarah Wetzel
For the Plain Talk

If anyone in Vermillion has been looking for a chance to attend a reputable and accessible opera, they will have their chance this weekend.

University of South Dakota School of Music will present two performances of Aaron Copeland's opera, 'The Tender Land,' one on Saturday at 7:30 p.m. and the other Sunday at 3 p.m.

Tickets will go on sale one hour before each show which will be performed in Aalfs Auditorium in Slagle Hall on the USD campus.

"Copeland is known for being the American composer so there's some beautiful American Folk music in this opera," said director Tracelyn Gesteland. "Some people actually refer to it as a folk opera."

For those worried about understanding and being able to relate to the opera, Gesteland said never fear.

"The story is in English," she said. "It's accessible especially for this area particularly because it takes place in the Midwest on a farm in the 1930's."

There is much to be enjoyed in this production especially for members of this community according to Gesteland.

"These are melodies you could leave singing," she said. "There's a big square dancing hoedown number with adult dancers but there's also children from the community. There's also a big rousing chorus number in it. This is going to be done with orchestra. I think there will be a lot of layers to it that will keep people interested in it."

Though there are certain operas out there that set a negative stereotype, Gesteland said 'The Tender Land' is not one of them.

"This is in English, it's under two hours and it's not the fat lady in the horned hat standing there for four hours," she said. "It's an accessible and enjoyable art form. I'd like people to



COURTESY PHOTO

The University of South Dakota School of Music is set to present Aaron Copeland's opera 'The Tender Land' with performances set for Saturday at 7 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. Pictured are the leads Seth Pierce (Martin) and Hannah Lambertz (Laurie).

realize that opera isn't a snooty high-brow art form and it's really appealing to the masses. I think if people would come they would realize how close to musical theatre it really is."

No preparation is needed to enjoy the show.

"I feel like if you read the synopsis you know how the whole story unfolds," Gesteland said. "Sometimes it's nicer just to come in and be surprised. Because it's in English I don't think you have to do any advanced preparation for it. It kind of speaks for itself. There are also supertitles above the stage so if you don't catch some of it you can read it as it comes along."

Also common to most productions, 'Tender Land' comes with an inspiring message according to Gesteland.

"Realizing that life is a cycle," she said. "The only thing constant is change. We can all relate to that. We see all these characters handle a major event in their family and what it does to each individual family member. It's completely relatable. I have a student right now who's going through this exact thing."

For more information visit www.usd.edu/fine-arts/music/opera or contact the school of music at 605-677-5274.

Remodel

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the ceiling and update all lighting fixtures. The entire facility will be painted. All asbestos will be removed from the HVAC and plumbing tunnels. The chemistry and biology labs will be updated with new plumbing and fixtures. The fire alarm system will be updated. Also, all restrooms will be updated to meet ADA compliance issues.

Froke said that the school district is utilizing several local subcontractors and that the site superintendent will be Vermillion resident Marty Gilbertson.

Because the demolition of the HVAC systems has begun, Froke said it may be necessary for students and staff alike to wear layers in order to be comfortable throughout the day.

However, the work on the classrooms won't begin until May 21.

"We dismiss school on May 20 this year," Froke said. "We have hired 10 students who are going to come in the following two days,

maybe that Saturday if necessary, to move all the desks, tables and equipment from the classrooms out to our new CTE building."

He said this is causing teachers to have to prepare for the end of the school year a bit differently than normal, but that they are taking advantage of the opportunity to treat it as a spring cleaning, of a sort.

"We have two dumpsters behind the school and they have already filled it once," Froke said.

Froke added that as a classroom is completed throughout the summer, the students will then move the items back.

"School is scheduled to return on August 19," Froke said. "At that point all of the classroom area work will be completed, although work on the HVAC system is schedule to go into October. However, the air conditioning is scheduled to be completed by Aug. 14."

"By working with Johnson Controls, the school board, school staff and administration have come together to complete this project in a manner where students will be least affected throughout the project. However, the result will be a very bright, clean, healthy learning environment when all the work is complete."

Second Annual USD March Of Dimes Held In Vermillion



ELYSE BRIGHTMAN/FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Charlie Coyote greeted walkers along the March of Dimes, march for babies event Thursday, April 23. The event was organized by students in USD's the Golden Key Honor Society

By Elyse Brightman
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The University of South Dakota (USD) hosted its second annual March of Dimes event Thursday April, 23.

"This is a march for babies. We have six march for babies across the state," said Carla Thielbar, senior community director for the March of Dimes. "This one is run by the students at USD, so it's a campus walk."

The event is organized by students in USD's the Golden Key Honor Society and this year's march saw some changes from last year.

"We decided to do it on a Thursday night this year because more people would be on campus versus last year when they did it on a

Saturday," aid Miranda Ruitter, a member of the Golden Key and an organizer for the event. "This year we also made it into a 5k. Last year it was just a mile around campus."

This is one of six march for babies events held across South Dakota. Teams typically begin fundraising in January, though some start as early as November. Participation for the event is free, but walkers can donate as much or as little as they choose.

"Our mission is to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality," said Thielbar. "We do that through a variety of ways. We have community programs that help fund organizations that are looking to improve birth outcomes.

We've got national research. We do continuing education for healthcare workers. We advocate on a state and national level."

The walk began on the Muenster University Center east lawn and took walkers around the USD campus ending back on the east lawn. Walkers were greeted at the

finish line by high-fives from the school's mascot Charlie Coyote.

Thielbar said at least 100 people walked or ran in this year's event.

"We really count on March for Babies to be able to help those moms and babies across the state of South Dakota," she said.

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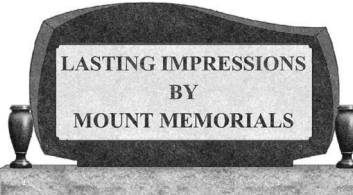
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