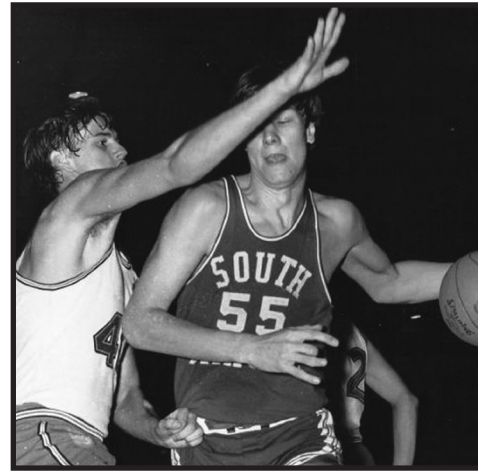


# PLAIN TALK

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## A Presidential Visit

### Obama: 'Saved The Best For Last'

BY BOB MERCER  
State Capitol Bureau

WATERTOWN – President Barack Obama spoke at the Lake Area Technical Institute graduation ceremony Friday evening as his first visit as president to South Dakota.

That he has now visited all 50 states in the nation as president became the punch line for a joke and the theme for tee shirts snapped up by some of those on his detail and some members of the news media that traveled with him.

"I saved the best for last. To the other 49, I hope you take no offense," Obama said.

The president used the trip to deliver a serious message. He called for a community college education to be as "free and universal" as high school is today.

He said closing one federal tax loophole for the rich could cover the expense.

The cost of attending community college in turn could be "zero" for students willing to work at their education, Obama said.

The Democratic president made his remarks while sharing the stage with South Dakota's congressional delegation of three Republicans, whose political party controls Congress.

He noted LATI is one of two community colleges in the nation that have made the top 10 list every year since the start of the Aspen Prize recognizing the nation's top two-year schools.

"This school is leading the way," Obama said.

The ceremony for 720 graduates was held in a full Watertown High School gymnasium.

"I came here because you, the students, inspire me," Obama told the crowd about why he came "to this tiny school in this tiny town."

He called community colleges "vital paths to the middle class for millions of Americans."

The president recognized several students by name including Leanna Waldner, a non-traditional student from Watertown who received a degree in financial services.

"I know there are two little girls here today who are very proud of their mom," Obama said.

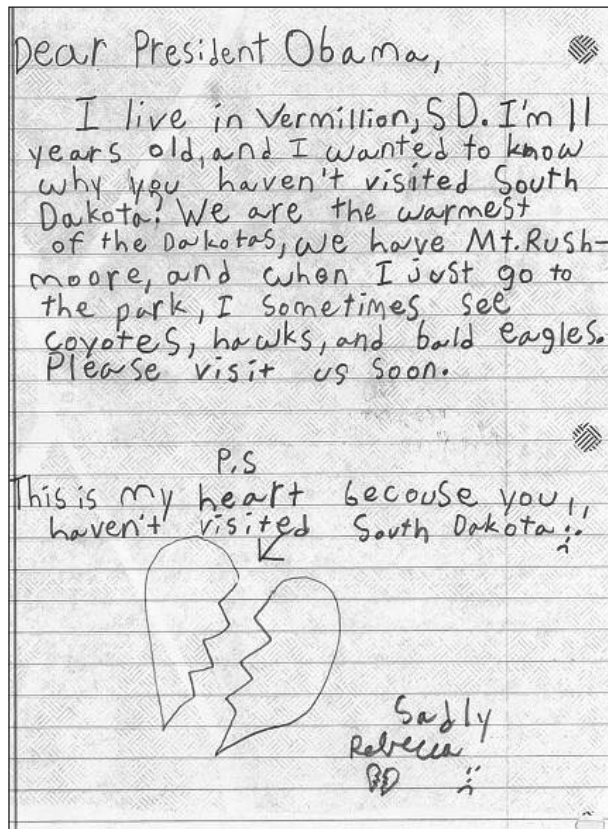


PHOTO: BOB MERCER

President Barack Obama spoke at the Lake Area Technical Institute graduation ceremony Friday evening as his first visit as president to South Dakota. The president used the trip to deliver a serious message. He called for a community college education to be as "free and universal" as high school is today.

## Invitation Accepted: Vermillion Girl Meets President Obama

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE  
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COURTESY IMAGE: THE WHITE HOUSE

The above letter was penned by Vermillion youth Rebecca Kelley, age 11, inviting President Barack Obama to visit the state of South Dakota. Friday, when he visited, he made a point to greet Rebecca and her family, gifting her with candy, a medal and signing her welcome letter.

For 11-year old Rebecca Kelley of Vermillion, little did she know that a letter penned to President Barack Obama inviting him to visit South Dakota, would not only give her the opportunity to meet the President, it would also put her in the national spotlight.

In her letter, Rebecca drew a picture of a broken heart and wrote "This is my heart because you haven't visited South Dakota."

Late last week, the White House tweeted a picture of the letter urging him to visit South Dakota saying, "We are the warmest of the Dakotas, we have Mt. Rushmore, and when I just go to the park I sometimes see coyotes, hawks, and bald eagles."

President Obama visited South Dakota last Friday for the first time during his presidency, and according to the White House, 11-year-old Rebecca's "heart can finally mend."

During his trip, President Obama visited the Lake Area Tech Community College in Watertown to deliver a commencement address to a crowd of about 4,300.

However, for Rebecca, what happened following the commencement ceremony was what was most memorable.

President Obama, made a point to find Rebecca and her family at the airport in Watertown prior to leaving the state.

"Astounded, there is no way to describe that feeling," said Rebecca, about meeting the President.

She also was given a few gifts to remember the moment by.

## Being Prepared Is Key To Spring Weather Safety

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE  
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According to Clay County Emergency Management (CCEM) director Layne Stewart, one purchase could do more to protect your family in the case of severe weather than any other plan made: a weather radio.

"The biggest thing you can do to protect your family is purchase a weather radio," Stewart said. "Even in the emergency response world, the warnings come out on those radios at the same time they come across teletype. So, Joe or JoAnn Citizen will get the information at the exact same time that I or law enforcement does. So, they are going to be a step ahead of the ball game by eliminating the middle man."

In an effort to help educate Vermillion residents on storm preparedness and safety, Clay County Emergency Management is hosting a Severe Weather Awareness class, this Thursday (May 14) in the Vermillion High School Auditorium starting at 7 p.m.

Stewart said this free event will be an informative, educational and entertaining presentation by Todd Heitkamp of the US National Weather Service out of Sioux Falls.

"Todd has it divided up into two sections," Stewart said. "The first half is the science of the storms. How they form, why they form. When they say wind shear, what does that look like. The second half is more entertaining. He tends to show the 'what not to do' kind of videos along with other things."

"The science of storms sounds dry, but if you have any interest at all it is going to open your eyes on how these storms form. What to look for: you can tell if a storm is developing, maturing or dying and what threats are associated with it. It is just a really good learning opportunity and for safety awareness."

Looking forward to the

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## USD Holds 128th Spring Commencement Ceremony

BY JAMES COOPER  
Vermillion Plain Talk

VERMILLION — It may sound cliché, but as The University of South Dakota (USD) held its 128th annual spring commencement exercises Saturday, the question that continued to be asked by everyone was, "What happens next?"

The subject of the future has always been tough for anyone to discuss with certainty, but with such a wide variety of pursuits available to people these days, that subject can be exceptionally difficult to breach.

When asked about his future plans, Lincoln Havranek, who received a master of music degree, said, "Now that I've graduated, I plan on attending the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and pursue my [doctorate of musical arts] in saxophone performance."

Lincoln's mother, Laurie, was on hand to add her take on her son's current achievements and plans. In a discussion about whether or not she had ever thought of Lincoln reaching this

point in his education, she said, "Not at all! When Lincoln was in high school, he hated school. He couldn't wait to get out and do something else."

Laurie added she was "...very proud of Lincoln and his decision to continue his education."

In the case of someone who has reached their terminal degree, the future can seem more or less definite, as the educational ceiling has been reached.

Christopher Stockdale, a new doctor of education, said, "I'm applying for administrative positions in curriculum and instruction, to put to use the skills I've learned at USD."

Christopher's wife, Connie, graduated as well with a bachelor of arts in communication sciences and disorders. Her goal is to obtain a master's degree in early childhood education.

Together, the couple agreed they are set to "head out on [their] next adventure."

It was pointed out at the beginning of the commencement that each student who graduated that



COURTESY PHOTO: USD MEDIA RELATIONS

The University of South Dakota conferred degrees upon 1,400 graduates at the 128th Spring Commencement Saturday at the DakotaDome. Tom Gallagher, alumnus and international financial and policy advisor, received an honorary degree as Doctor of Humane Letters.

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