

COMMUNITY NEWS

Best Western Vermillion Inn receives award

The Best Western Vermillion Inn has received the Best Western Director's Award for outstanding quality standards.

The award recognizes Best Western hotels scoring in the top 20 percent of more than 2,100 North American properties in cleanliness and maintenance. Hotels must also meet Best Western's requirements for design and high customer service scores to qualify for the distinction.

"The Director's Award is an important symbol of success," said owner Joe Eckert. "This award confirms the Best Western Vermillion Inn's commitment to providing quality accommodations for our guests."

The Best Western Vermillion Inn is located at 701 W. Cherry St.

Blood drive at Wal-Mart Dec. 7

With the holidays fast approaching, it is important to remember those in need, especially hospital patients in need of blood. Blood donors can help prevent a blood shortage during the holidays by making an appointment to donate.

Plan to give your life-saving gift at the next Wal-Mart Vermillion Blood Drive. The blood drive will take place on Friday, Dec. 7, from 9-11:30 a.m. in the Bloodmobile at Wal-Mart, 1207 Princeton St.

For more information or to schedule an appointment to donate, contact LifeServe Blood Center at (800) 287-4903 or visit www.lifeservebloodcenter.org.

'Counterinsurgency' program planned

The W.O. Farber Center for Civic Leadership at the University of South Dakota will present the program, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan: A Rifle Company in Imam Sahib," by Capt. Christopher L. Mercado, a 2004 distinguished military graduate of USD, at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 28 at Farber Hall inside Old Main.

Mercado has served three years in combat, recently returning from north Afghanistan where he served as a rifle company commander. He led counterinsurgency operations in Imam Sahib and Dast-e Archi Districts of Kunduz Province. Prior to that deployment, Mercado managed the reconstruction and development of Panjshir Province in Afghanistan while serving on the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team. Previously deployed to Iraq, Mercado served as a combat advisor to the Iraqi Army in central Baghdad for 15 months.

Since earning his commission in the United States Army in 2004, Mercado has served as an anti-armor platoon leader, company commander in B Company and Headquarters & Headquarters Company, and as an operations officer with the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment assisting in the development of plans and training for future combat deployment. He has earned several military awards and decorations, including the Bronze Star, Ranger Tab, Combat Infantryman's Badge, Parachutist's Badge, Army Achievement Medal (five awards), National Defense Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Service Medal (two awards), Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Iraqi Campaign Medal. A native of San Antonio, TX, Mercado is married with two children.

For more information about the W.O. Farber Center for Civic Leadership or this event, which is free and open to the public, contact the Farber Center at (605) 677-5702 or e-mail at Farber.Center@usd.edu.

USD musicians shine at competition

Four musicians from the University of South Dakota showcased their talents at the South Dakota Music Teachers Association (SDMTA) Conference at Spearfish, Nov. 1-2.

Adrian Ries of Elk Point, a senior piano performance major and a student of Professor Susan Keith Gray, D.M.A., was a first place performer in the MTNA Steinway & Sons Young Artist Piano Competition, which is held in conjunction with the SDMTA. Ries qualified for regionals to be held in Lawrence, KS, in January.

Laura Bertschinger, a graduate student in vocal performance, finished in second place in the MTNA Young Artist Voice Competition. A Creighton, NE, native, Bertschinger is the alternate for the January regional competition in Kansas. She is a student of Voice Professor Tracelyn Gesteland, D.M.A.

Blake Proehl, a sophomore piano performance major from Parkston, received first place in the SDMTA collegiate piano competition while Jared Mogen, a junior music education major from Sioux Falls, received honorable mention honors in the SDMTA sponsored voice competition. Proehl is a student of Professor Susan Keith Gray while Mogen studies with Brandon Hendrickson, D.M.A., assistant professor of voice.

The SDMTA Conference featured students from USD, South Dakota State University, Augustana College, Black Hills State University and the University of Sioux Falls. SDMTA was founded in 1955 by a group of educators across the state to improve the standards of teaching music and is an affiliate of Music Teachers National Association. Members teach piano, organ, voice, strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion to individuals or to small groups. Any music professional or college music student is invited to join.

USD law team reaches region semifinals

The University of South Dakota School of Law hosted Region 14 of the New York City Bar's 63rd Annual National Moot Court Competition at the Minnehaha County Courthouse in Sioux Falls Nov. 8-9. Drake University School of Law won Region 14 defeating a team from the University of Minnesota Law School.

USD law students PJ Painter of Buffalo, SD, Adam Shiffermiller of Omaha, NE, and Morgan Peck of Sioux Falls lost in the regional semifinals to the eventual champions from Drake. Another team from USD comprised of Tony Lamb of Lacona, IA, Kristi Jones of Columbus, NE and Kelsey Parker of Rapid City lost in the quarterfinals of the competition that featured teams from University of Iowa, Drake University, University of Minnesota, Hamline University, University of St. Thomas, and William Mitchell College of Law.

More than 60 lawyers and judges judged rounds during the competition. The final round was judged by Judge Roger Willman, 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals; Judge Lawrence Piersol, U.S. District Court, South Dakota; and state Supreme Court Judge Glen Severson. A luncheon for the judges was held on Nov. 8 to provide an overview of the competition problem. The luncheon and other aspects of the regional competition were funded by the Sioux Falls law firm Woods, Fuller, Shultz & Smith.

The nationally-recognized competition began in 1950 and is run by the Young Lawyers Committee of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York and co-sponsored by the American College of Trial Lawyers. Fifteen regional sponsors administer the regional rounds in November under the Committee's supervision. The first and second place teams from each region advance to the National Finals, Jan. 28-31, 2013, in New York City.

Wreath decorating contest, Tree of Lights announced

Dakota Hospital Foundation (DHF) announces the 2012 Wreath Decorating Contest. Community members are invited to submit a live or artificial wreath (up to 26 inches in diameter) decorated to your personal style or theme of choice.

Decorated wreaths must be submitted with a completed Wreath Contest registration form on Wednesday, Dec. 5 from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Special arrangements may be made for an earlier drop-off.

All wreaths entered will be auctioned at the Dakota Hospital Foundation Tree of Lights Open House and Wreath Auction being held on Thursday, Dec. 6. All proceeds will assist in funding the new Sanford Arts program at Sanford Vermillion.

Tree of Lights

The Tree of Lights program in its sixth year provides community members with the opportunity to purchase a light in memory of, in honor of, or as a special holiday greeting to friends, coworkers and loved ones.

Lights purchased may serve as a unique holiday gift. A special holiday ornament card is sent to intended recipients.

The four-story evergreen located at the corner of Main and Plum streets at Sanford Vermillion has been designated

for the Tree of Lights display and will remain lit throughout the holiday season.

The Tree of Lights Open House will take place at the Al Neuharth Media Center in the Concourse and Freedom Forum Conference Room. The evening will feature a lovely variety of hors d'oeuvres and refreshments beginning at 5 p.m. with the Wreath Auction starting at 6 p.m.

"Attendance at our annual holiday celebration has continued to grow each year. We are especially excited about the second year for the Wreath Contest," said Linda Kogel, DHF Board member.

"We had a nice variety of entries last year and look forward to this year's participation with the additional option to decorate an artificial wreath," Kogel said.

Wreaths will be judged on several criteria including originality/creativity, arrangement, theme, and "WOW" factor.

Prizes will be awarded in three categories: Best of Show, Best Individual entry and Best Business/Organization entry. Additional prizes may be awarded

For more information on the Tree of Lights & Wreath Contest/Auction project, visit sanfordvermillion.org.

RAND Corporation releases results of sobriety study

Attorney General Marty Jackley announced last week that the RAND Corporation has published their study of the South Dakota 24/7 Sobriety Program.

The study was funded by the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to evaluate the program's effectiveness on improving public safety.

"We are pleased to receive RAND's study on our 24/7 Sobriety Program," said Jackley. "We were confident that the study would reflect the 24/7 Program's positive effect on repeat alcohol violators. The study results indicate a notable reduction in DUI and domestic violence. These results will hopefully aid in convincing Congress and other stakeholders that the 24/7

Sobriety Program significantly reduces repeat alcohol violations and may in turn open the door for future highway safety and other funding prospects."

RAND found that in examining the first six years of the South Dakota 24/7 Sobriety Program that frequent alcohol testing with swift and moderate sanctions for those caught using alcohol reduced county-level repeat DUI arrests by 12 percent and domestic violence arrests by 9 percent.

Furthermore, there was suggestive evidence of a decline in traffic crashes involving men aged 18-40.

To review the RAND Corporation study, visit <http://www.rand.org/health/feature/24-7.html>.

Mini-conference links SDSU research, economic development

The links between South Dakota State University research and economic development will be strengthened at a special event on the SDSU campus.

The "University Driven Economic Development Mini-Conference" will bring together state economic development leaders and SDSU researchers Wednesday, Nov. 28, at Room 262 of the University Student Union. The event is co-sponsored by SDSU's Teaching Learning Center and the Office of the Vice President for Research.

"Connecting university research to economic development is a key part of our land-grant heritage at SDSU," said Vice President for Research Kevin Kephart. "This event will bring us all a better awareness of the ways research can help the state meet its economic development challenges."

The event begins at 1:30 p.m. with a welcome from President David L. Chicoine and Kephart.

A presentation about state priorities for economic development will follow at 1:40 p.m. Presenters include Will Aylor, director, SDSU Technology Transfer Office; Paul Turman, vice president for research and economic

development, South Dakota Board of Regents; and Pat Costello, commissioner, Governor's Office of Economic Development.

A 2:30 p.m. question and answer session with faculty engaged in technology commercialization will include associate professor Om Perumal of pharmaceutical sciences, associate professor Qi. Hua Fan of electrical engineering and computer science, associate professor Karl Glover of plant science and professor Bill Gibbons of biology and microbiology.

At 3:45 p.m. a panel will discuss navigating rules, regulations and opportunities. Panel members include SDSU Research Compliance Coordinator Norm Braaten, Aylor, Mark Luecke of South Dakota Innovation Partners and Dwaine Chapel, executive director of the South Dakota Research Park.

There is no charge for the event, which is open to the public. Pre-registration is required at <http://surveys.questionpro.com/a/TakeSurvey?id=3302371>.

Questions can be directed to Kevin Sackreiter, director, Teaching Learning Center at (605) 688-6413.

SBA introduces online portal for award nominations

A new online portal has been launched by the U.S. Small Business Administration to accept nominations for its 2013 National Small Business Week Awards, including the annual Small Business Person of the Year award.

The dedicated web portal, accessible at <http://nationalsmallbusinessweek.sba.gov/>, will make it easier to submit and track submissions of nominees for Small Business Week 2013, and is now actively accepting nominations of noteworthy small businesses.

Since 1963, National Small Business Week has recognized the outstanding achievements of America's small businesses for their contributions to their local communities, and to our nation's economy. In 2013, the 50th year celebration will honor the nation's 27 million small businesses.

SBA Awards given in celebration of National Small Business Week include the following awards:

- National Small Business Person of the Year (chosen from among state award winners from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Guam)

- Phoenix Awards

(recognizing outstanding accomplishments during disaster recovery)

- Small Business Prime Contractor of the Year

- Small Business Subcontractor of the Year
- The Dwight D. Eisenhower Award for Excellence (recognizes large prime contractors who have used small businesses as suppliers and contractors)

- SBA 8(a) Graduate of the Year (for recent graduates of the SBA's 8(a) contracting program)

- Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Excellence and Innovation Award (nominations of SBA-funded SBDC Service Centers)

- Women's Business Center (WBCs) of Excellence Award (nominations of SBA-funded WBCs)

- Veterans Business Outreach Center Excellence in Service Award (nominations of SBA-funded Veterans Business Outreach Centers)

In addition to the portal, nominations can also be sent directly to SBA District Offices, which can be located online at <http://www.sba.gov/about-offices-list/2>. All nominations must be submitted or postmarked to the SBA by Jan. 3, 2013.

Winners of the Small Business Person of the Year awards and winners in the other award categories will be invited to Washington, D.C., to compete for national titles and to attend National Small Business Week events in 2013.

Christmas trees adorn Capitol hallways in Pierre

PIERRE — Christmas trees will begin to fill South Dakota Capitol hallways later this month for the annual Christmas at the Capitol holiday display.

The 2012 theme is "Joyous Sounds of Christmas."

More than 90 Christmas trees were decorated Nov. 17-18 by members of schools, churches, communities, and civic groups from across the state.

Thousands of guests visit the South Dakota State Capitol each year to view the decorated trees.

The display will continue through Wednesday, Dec. 26.

Display hours for the public will be 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. CST each day.

The two-story South Dakota tree specially featured this year in the Capitol rotunda was donated by Josh and Mary Arntz of Pierre. It is a blue spruce that is about 35-feet tall. The tree will be decorated by Girls Scouts - Dakota Horizons, who are celebrating their 100th anniversary.

In addition to the trees, many other parts of the Capitol will be decorated for the holiday season, including the Grand Marble Staircase and the Capitol grounds.

Governor: Make safety a priority this holiday season

Gov. Dennis Daugaard is asking South Dakotans to make safety a priority as they travel during the Thanksgiving period and upcoming holiday season.

"Thanksgiving is a wonderful time for family members to gather, enjoy each other's company and share the blessings of the holiday," the governor said. "It's also imperative for each of us to keep safety in mind as we travel to those happy get-

togethers."

Traffic is heavier than normal during holiday periods, presenting drivers with numerous distractions, Daugaard said.

Weather this time of year can change rapidly. The governor advises motorists to carry winter survival kits, tell friends or family about travel plans and check safetravelusa.com prior to leaving for holiday gatherings.

OBITUARIES

Payton Hand

Payton Nichole Hand, 12, of Elk Point, South Dakota, left footprints in our hearts when she earned her angel wings November 12, 2012, at the Sanford Children's Hospital in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Payton was a fighter until the end during her long and courageous battle with leukemia.

A visitation will be held on Thursday, November 15, 2012, from 5:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m., with a prayer service beginning at 7:00 p.m., at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Elk Point, South Dakota.

A funeral service will be held on Friday, November 16, 2012, at 10:00 a.m., at Immanuel Lutheran Church with Pastor Erik Olson officiating. Since Payton's favorite color was purple, please feel free to wear purple in honor of her.

Payton was born September 26, 2000, in Sioux City, Iowa, to Donald Hand and Amy (Wohler) Koepp. Payton was a vivacious young girl that loved life every day, no matter what challenges the day brought. She always had an infectious smile on her face as well as a silly joke to share.

Payton's heart was always full of love, especially when it came to her love for animals, friends, and family. She attended school in Vermillion, South Dakota, and was well known in the Elk Point-

Jefferson schools where her brothers attended after her diagnosis. Payton is survived by her mother, Amy Koepp, of Elk Point;

her father, Donald Hand of Cherokee, Iowa; her step-father, James Koepp of Elk Point; her brothers, Austin Hand and Chance Koepp of Elk Point; her nana and papa, Doug and Tammy Wohler of Elk Point; her grandparents, Dawne and Wes Coffee of Richland, South Dakota; her grandparents, Scott and Cindy Koepp of South Sioux City, Nebraska; her great-aunt, Lori Jerred of Vermillion; and her great-grandma, Betty Spicer of Sioux Falls.

Payton is joining heaven with her great-grandpa, Lee Spicer; her great-great-grandma, Tootie Spicer; her great-great-grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Polchow; her great-uncle, Lorin Wohler; her aunt, Kimmy Koepp; and her great-grandma, Rose Isom.

Services have been entrusted to Kober Funeral Home of Elk Point, South Dakota.

Condolences may be posted online at www.koberfuneralhome.com.



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