

Junior Achievement of SD receives national honor

Junior Achievement of South Dakota is the recipient of the Junior Achievement USA® Platinum Summit Award, one of the nonprofit organization's highest honors.

It is given by the National Office to local JA operations that have reached outstanding success in financial health, management effectiveness, and program quality and growth.

JA of South Dakota was recognized for this accomplishment recently at the Junior Achievement National Leadership Conference held in Orlando, FL. This was the 18th

year that JA of South Dakota has received the Summit Award.

"These Summit Award winners represent the best Junior Achievement has to offer. They play a key role in helping JA empower young people to own their economic success," said Jack E. Kosakowski, president and CEO of Junior Achievement USA.

"Summit Award winners set the standard by which Junior Achievement's success is measured at the local level. Their commitment and dedication to young people are reflected in achieving this honor," Kosakowski said.

Pulpit Reflections:

Stopping 'legalized murder'

By Deacon Denny Davis
St. Agnes Parish

Sunday, Nov. 3, was the 31st Sunday of ordinary time in the church. We read from the Gospel of Luke about the story of the chief tax collector, Zacchaeus, who went out on a limb (the Jews hated tax collectors) to find Jesus and like all of us, Jesus offers to come to his house, which is to say Jesus enters his heart, and Zacchaeus says yes. This transforms Zacchaeus to do justice to those he has wronged. (LK. 20:27-38)

At the beginning of 2013 I was asked and accepted the work of director of South Dakotans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (SDADP). Our intention is to repeal the death penalty from South Dakota law.

The execution of a human being is, in my

opinion, legalized murder. It is taking the life of a person who has taken a life of another. The death penalty is not about what the person who committed the crime has done. The death penalty is about what we do as citizens and as Christians. It's in my struggle to follow the lord that I agreed to take on this task.

The Old Testament reading from this same Sunday was from the Book of Wisdom:

"You have mercy on everything because you can do everything. You overlook all of our sins. You love everything that you have made. If you had hated it, why would you have made it? How can a thing remain in existence unless you want it to or be preserved had it not been called forth

by you? You spare all things because all things are yours, oh Lord, lover of life. Your imperishable spirit is in everything." (Wis. 11:22-12:2)

Sister Helen Prejean, the author of "Dead Man Walking" says, "We are better than the worst thing we have ever done."

Like Jesus, this reading from the book of Wisdom shows us a God of mercy, compassion, and love even for the worst of sinners. Who are we to say who should live or die? Only God has that right. Wouldn't we be more true to our faith by giving the worst of criminals a life in prison sentence to give them a chance to be reconciled rather than killing them?

Zacchaeus was a criminal in the eyes of the Jews and Jesus gave him another chance. I think we

would not only be better Christians but better citizen of South Dakota, too.

St. Luke in the last verse of the Gospel says: "The son of man has come to search out and save what was lost." Can we then, who are called to Discipleship, do any less?

In January of 2014 at the next session of the South Dakota Legislature, we will present a death penalty repeal bill. I hope that all who read this will join us in this effort and write your Representatives in the House and Senate as well as the governor. The state is killing in our name and in our name may our voices be heard to stop this violence.

If you have any questions you can e-mail me at dlynndad@hotmail.com.

Rounds, Daugaard used foreign-investor visa system to fund SD projects

By Bob Mercer
State Capitol Bureau

Use of the federal EB-5 visa program for attracting foreign investors to South Dakota was done by the current administration of Gov. Dennis Daugaard as well as the previous administration of Gov. Mike Rounds.

The Daugaard administration approved four projects in the past two years for a recruiter to seek foreign EB-5 investors. The approval letters were released Monday. The most recent was dated July 23.

That latest approval came just two months before the Daugaard administration severed its contract with the long-time recruiter, South Dakota Regional Center at Aberdeen.

SDRC had been used for years by the Rounds and Daugaard administration for all EB-5 administration and marketing on behalf of state government.

The EB-5 program allows foreign investors who pay \$500,000 apiece to receive permanent visas to live in the United States if federal qualifications are met. A regional center for EB-5 purposes must receive federal approval.

Examples of South Dakota projects funded at least partially through EB-5 investments in the past decade include numerous dairies; the

Northern Beef Packers plant at Aberdeen; the Dakota Provisions turkey processing plant at Huron; the Deadwood Mountain Grand hotel, casino and event center; the NextEra Energy Resources wind farm in Day County; the Deer Creek generation plant of Basin Electric Power Cooperative in Brookings County; and the Iberdrola Resources wind farm known as Buffalo Ridge II in Brookings and Deuel counties.

The NextEra, Iberdrola and latest version of Dakota Provisions projects were approved in 2012 for recruitment of EB-5 investors. Dakota Provisions also received EB-5 investments during the Rounds administration.

The latest project to receive state approval was Dakota Natural Meats, a proposed pork-processing plant. Its location hasn't been announced.

Incorporation papers show its organizers are three men from Flushing, New York.

The business arrangement between SDRC and state government took effect in December 2009 and was supposed to run through June 30, 2014.

A specific reason wasn't given publicly for the September termination of the SDRC contract.

Asked Monday about

how approval for recruitment could be given for a project in July and the recruiting contract cut off two months later, Daugaard spokesman Tony Venhuizen said: "I cannot comment at this time."

SDRC president Joop Bollen of Aberdeen traveled the world promoting EB-5 investments in South Dakota.

The four project requests in 2012 and 2013 came from Bollen via SDRC and were approved by Pat Costello, state commissioner of economic development.

The contract required that SDRC receive state approval before seeking EB-5 investments for a project. Costello cancelled the contract Sept. 19.

Bollen has been involved in international trade matters from Aberdeen since at least 1995, when he formed a non-profit corporation with Northern State University officials.

He formed SDRC in 2008 to serve as the EB-5 agent for South Dakota, after South Dakota received federal approvals for expanded uses of the EB-5 investments.

South Dakota's recruitment of EB-5 investors has received much more public attention in recent months, following the financial failure of the Northern Beef Packers

project at Aberdeen and the gunshot death last month of Richard Benda.

Benda was secretary of tourism and state development from 2006 through 2010 in the Rounds administration.

Benda was heavily involved in expansion of the use of the EB-5 program in South Dakota and in the beef plant. He signed the contract with Bollen for SDRC to run the EB-5 program for state government.

Benda and Bollen sometimes traveled together on recruiting trips. Benda wasn't retained by Daugaard after he became governor

in 2011.

Daugaard disclosed last week that state and federal investigations have been underway regarding misconduct involving the state development office prior to his administration.

Daugaard ordered an internal review as well. He was lieutenant governor under Rounds.

Authorities haven't revealed any specifics about the investigations.

Details haven't been released yet regarding the investigation into Benda's death.

His body was found Oct. 22 at the farm of his sister and her husband

near Lake Andes, where he was said to have been pheasant hunting while they were away during the weekend.

Bollen and a group of Chinese investors recruited through a Chinese agent for the Northern Beef project engaged in a lawsuit against each other in 2011 and settled in 2012. The Chinese investors were the second wave recruited for the project. The recruiter claimed to be owed as much as \$10 million by Bollen. The first group were Korean investors.

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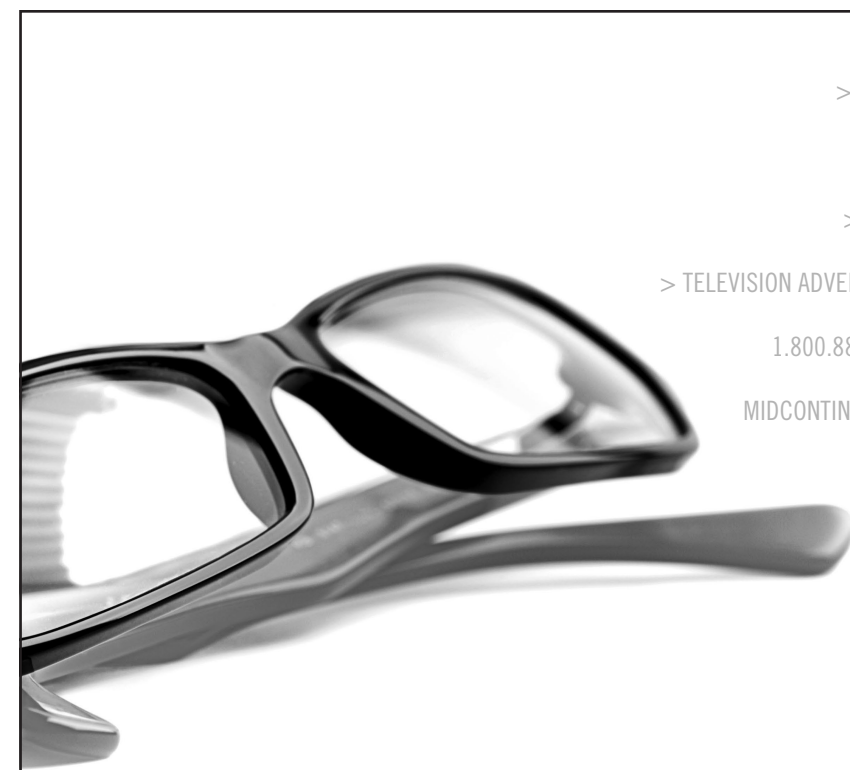
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