

Lucky Trailblazers brings unique interest to 4-H club options

By Katie Clausen
For the Plain Talk

For Kim Nelson, leading the 4-H group the Lucky Trailblazers is personal.

"I really enjoy horseback riding, and I try to go as often as I can," Nelson said. "Sometimes I go every day."

Nelson volunteers with the Lucky Trailblazers 4-H group, a horse focused 4-H group for local Clay County youth.

"It's engaging and it makes members responsible," Nelson said. "It makes them proud of their accomplishments."

Nelson works with youth who are interested in taking horsemanship to the next level. Currently a group of seven members, the Lucky Trailblazers invite anyone with access to horses to join their club. Trailblazer youth compete in the Clay County Horse Show with the hope of moving up to the state horse show, each third week of July.

"Most of our activities are from early spring to summer," Nelson said. "We usually practice at the rodeo grounds."

Being part of the Trailblazers takes work and drive, and can also be challenging.

"If you get a new horse, you have

to help them learn the ins and outs," Nelson said. "We practice once a week."

Sometimes there are operational challenges as well, like the rodeo grounds being too muddy to ride in.

"We have had to ask to ride a people's personal places because of rodeo ground conditions," Nelson said. "It would be nice if we could have better facilities-like an indoor arena."

Events practiced are varied and not limited. Showmanship, equitation classes, reining, western riding, trail performance and barrels and poles are some of the different skills that members practice and perform at competitions.

"In the past we have had some members even do jumping and driving," Nelson said. "We even have a member working on breakaway roping."

Nelson's own children participated in the Lucky Trailblazers, and she is quick to point out how much working with animals helps build character and work ethic.

"It made my children better horseman," Nelson said. "Learning to take care of their animals, it takes dedication."

Lucky Trailblazers practice once a week. But beyond working with their horses, the group members adhere to

other 4-H community actions as well.

"In the group there is a lot of camaraderie and it helps the kids get together with members who have like interests in addition to other activities, which I promote," Nelson said.

Lucky Trailblazers aren't all work and no play, however. And sometimes horsemanship skills spill over into real world scenarios as well.

"It depends on the year but sometimes we do trail rides," Nelson said. "It brings the kids together and they can share their problems and solutions with each other."

Lucky Trailblazers chip in plenty of time and effort towards volunteerism. They have gathered food donations for the Humane Society and DoubleHP, a horse rescue located near Sioux Falls. In addition to being stewards of animal welfare, they have spent time raising food for the food pantry, made Valentine's Day cards for senior citizens, gathered Thanksgiving meal items for families, and even provided Christmas presents to families in need.

4-H is focused on helping youth character development and life skills.

"It helps them jumpstart into other things," Nelson said. "Anyone with access to horses is welcome to join us."

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The Vermillion High School and Middle School Robotics teams competed last Saturday at the SDSU BEST Robotics Competition at the Swiftel Event Center in Brookings. They competed against 20 high and middle school teams from the state, Minnesota, and Iowa, including teams from Brookings, Watertown, Aberdeen, Harrisburg, Sioux Falls, Mitchell and Madison. The theme was 'wind-energy' and the teams had to transport wind turbine and resemble them on the playing field with the use of robots. In the Robotics-Only competition Vermillion High School placed 1st in the seeding, semifinal, and final rounds, while Vermillion Middle School took second in the seeding rounds and third in the final rounds while competing against high school teams. In the BEST competition there were 15 teams that competed including VHS which took fifth place. The competition is based on the criteria of company organization, engineering notebook, marketing presentation, exhibit booth, spirit and sportsmanship. Both teams qualified to compete in the Northern Plains BEST Regional Championship in Fargo, North Dakota, on Dec. 4-6 at the Fargo Civic Center. They will compete against students from several other states. The team will be soliciting the support of local companies to sponsor. The Robotics program has been existence since December and First Bank and Trust sponsored the purchase of the team's first robotics equipment. It was formed after a need arose for robotics and thus the team grew out of the Clay County 4-H organization. Robotics is the branch of mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and computer science that deals with the design, construction, operation, and application of robots, as well as computer systems for their control, sensory feedback, and information processing. The JV team, top, consisted of (left to right), Jacob Rettig, Wyatt Knutson, and Roger Rolfe. Christian Rettig is not pictured. The varsity team, above, was Emily Rolfe, Tim Sereda, Ethan Simmons, and Stian Olson.

INFORMATION AND PHOTOS COURTESY OF SUSAN ROLFES, COACH/MENTOR OF THE VERMILLION HIGH SCHOOL ROBOTICS TEAM

CENTER FOR DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY TO HOST GRAND OPENING AT USD

The University of South Dakota will celebrate the grand opening of its Center for Diversity and Community at noon on Wednesday, Nov. 5 at the Muenster University Center, room 219.

Lamont Sellers, director of the Center for Diversity

and Community, and Kimberly Grieve, Ph.D., dean of students at USD, will host this inaugural event on behalf of the campus community. USD President James W. Abbott, Provost Jim Moran, Grieve, Student Government Association President Tyler Tordsen and Sellers will all speak briefly at the ceremony. A reception with food

and music will follow. Student organizations occupying an office in the center are Tiospaye, Spectrum, African Students Association, the Union of African American Students, Muslim Students Association, Asian American Student Association, Latino Student Organization, the Association for the

Advancement of Women's Rights and the International Club.

For more information about the Center for Diversity and Community as well as the open house and reception at the Muenster University Center, please contact Sellers at Lamont.Sellers@usd.edu or call (605) 677-7248.

USD student directors bring laughs to Vermillion

By Sarah Wetzel,
For the Plain Talk

USD students presented two one-act plays last weekend in performances that were open to the public.

"Usually every fall we have a one-act directing class and I was the instructor this year," said Callie Hisek, professor in the theater department. "Ryan Fortney was the one that signed up for the class so he was the student I worked with the most. Taylor's a second year and he was offered another slot to do a show and he of course jumped right into it."

"This year they were short on students in the directing class so they asked if I would come in as a director for the one acts so there was more than one," said Taylor Clemens, second-year directing student. "I wanted the experience."

"We got a great response from the audience that came and saw it," Hisek said. "They were talking about how it was a great night, they were talking about funny moments that happened in one or both of the shows. There was a lot of energy after the audience left and they left with smiles so it was nice to see."

Clemens noticed the positive reaction of the audience as well.

"I directed 'variations on the death of Trotsky' by David Ives," he said. "It went really well. We had a pretty good crowd every night and they were very responsive to the plays."

According to Hisek, the

production was run fairly close to the way it would in the professional world.

"Ryan and I were meeting during classes," she said. "Doing the one act was part of our class and this was his major assignment. I also was considered the producer of the one acts so we had production meetings."

Though Hisek acted as instructor, she said she tried to give the student directors as much room as possible to run the show on their own.

"I tried to oversee things but I wanted to make sure the students were really driving it," she said. "I was there just giving my two cents and I would come into rehearsals with Ryan and give him feedback about what I'm noticing for the show, how he's working with the actors, things like that, and if there was an issue that came up we could talk about it. I worked with Ryan kind of talking him through the audition process. We also respected the directors' choices that they made."

The effort turned out to be worth it.

"I think [the plays] turned out really well," Hisek said. "I was really proud of the work the

students did. I love watching the growth of the students themselves whether it was the actors or the directors because for some of them it was their first time to act in front of the department or the public."

While this was not Clemens' first time as a director, directing a comedy was newer territory for him.

"In the short period I've had so far that I've directed, I haven't done a lot of comedies so I wanted to try and find a comedy that I liked," he said. "I'd read some plays by David Ives before and liked his stuff. I tried to focus on that especially with some physical acting getting the actors to move, developing the vocabulary with that and helping myself develop as a director expand the different types of plays I can do."

According to Clemens, there is a big difference between being an actor and being a director.

"As an actor you kind of focus on the one character and their immediate relationships to people," he said. "As the director you really have to focus on the production as a whole. You have to know things in

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