

Beacom school students get in line for Buffett

On Friday, Oct. 17, nearly two dozen students from the Beacom School of Business at the University of South Dakota met with billionaire investor Warren Buffett at the Berkshire Hathaway Offices in Omaha, Neb. They also dined with Buffett at his favorite lunch site, Piccolo Pete's, before touring

Borsheim's Jewelry and the Oriental Trading Company. While it's difficult for some of the world's shrewdest investors to meet with Buffett regularly, USD students have been meeting with Buffett almost annually as an opportunity for business majors to ask questions and learn from

one of the world's richest people. The trip was organized by the USD Student Chapter of the Financial Management Association. "USD business students have enjoyed the opportunity to travel to Omaha, meet with Mr. Buffett, and tour Berkshire-

owned companies several times during the past decade," stated Angeline Lavin, Ph.D., C.F.A., professor of finance and director of USD's M.B.A. and M.P.A. programs. "I am confident that the nearly 200 USD business students who have benefited from this opportunity would identify

the two hour Q&A with Mr. Buffett as one of the highlights of their college career." In addition to students from USD meeting with Buffett, schools attending a 90-minute question and answer session with Buffett included Cornell University, University of Missouri,

Washington University (St. Louis, Mo.), St. Louis University and the University of Nebraska-Omaha. "Meeting Warren Buffett was great," said Nick Willan of Vermillion. "He is very down to earth, has realistic expectations, and is very insightful." - Courtesy of USD News

Heikes Family Farm provides fresh produce for locals, wins award

By Katie Clausen
For the Plain Talk

Sam Heikes greets each patron to his farm on a sunny Saturday morning. His daughter Heidi is eager to help customers and help them find what they're looking for. Shareholders of their farm browse squash, potatoes, greens, and herbs.

"This is now the third year of my CSA," Heikes said. "Right now we've got a 12.5 acre garden, and about 125 share holders."

Heikes runs Heikes Family Farm, a local CSA and retail outlet north of Vermillion. The farm has a vast variety of berries, greens, vegetables, herbs, and orchard crops. Heikes is focused on helping families eat healthier.

"Today's consumers in the US, that want higher quality food, are focusing on organically grown or naturally grown or sustainably grown because they believe that to be more healthy," Heikes said. "And in fact it is."

A CSA, short for Community Supported Agriculture, is a method of food sourcing gaining popularity across the U.S. Patrons purchase a yearly share in the farm, and then receive fresh produce all year. Prices vary depending on the size of CSA a patron wishes to use.

"Between the commercial shares that I have, to Minerva's and RED and restaurants in Sioux City and Sioux Falls, and the family shares, we are probably feeding about 800 people," Heikes said.

Having shareholders helps the farm make improvements so they can guarantee produce in the future. Recently the farm acquired a new well for irrigation purposes, and greenhouse which helps extend the growing season.

"Right now we're harvesting greens from lettuce, spinach and arugula, from the greenhouse," Heikes said. "That adds another month and a half in the fall and we get production out of there a month and a half earlier in the spring."

For those interested in fresh produce, there is no shortage of options at the Heikes farm.

"A share that people buy is for a year, and that share will get them 32 weeks of fresh produce," Heikes said. "Early in the spring it's mostly greens, as is later in the fall, but during our peak times we have a large amount of produce."

Each year the Heikes farm plants over 50 different varieties of fruits and vegetables.

Nutrition is important to Heikes, and what local produce does for the family is his passion.

"We have local produce that really tastes good. The really tastes good part has to do with the nutrient density that plants get out of good healthy soil," Heikes said. "It all goes back to the soil. It all goes back to the balance of microorganisms."

Aside from the health benefits CSA members utilize from the farm, the environment is also being managed in a healthy way. Heikes uses natural fertilizer, respectful tillage practices, and diverse crops to keep the environment in the ecologically fit balance needed to be the best steward of the land and of the produce.

The recent recipient of an award in Washington, DC, Sam Heikes' focus on sustainability is clear.

Heikes was the 2014 recipient of the Farmer and Rancher Pollinator of the Year award, given by the North American Pollinator Protection Group.

"We met the undersecretary of agriculture, the undersecretary of EPA, the president of the National Beekeepers Association, people of influence," Heikes

said. "And here we were just Heidi and I from a little farm in South Dakota."

Heikes has dedicated a portion of the property to plant diverse grass and legume species that are conducive to bees.

"Yes, we won this award, but it's much bigger than that," said Heikes. "It's about the health of our pollinators. If they're in trouble, we're in trouble."

Heikes is right, bee numbers are currently in decline. According to the USDA, bees are responsible for more than \$15 billion dollars worth of agricultural production, and over 130 crops species.

"A healthy bee population is absolutely critical. From the very beginning we have placed emphasis on pollinator habitat and doing everything possible for the health of our bees."

Secretary of Agriculture, Tom Vilsack has also spoken publicly on the bee crisis.

"American agricultural production relies on having a healthy honey bee population," Secretary Vilsack said. "In recent years, factors such as diseases, parasites, pesticides or habitat loss have contributed to a significant decline in the honey bee population."

What Heikes is doing, however, is no small feat. He's using sustainable farming practices to ensure the health of the organisms, such as pollinators, healthy in our landscape. While not certified organic, Heikes believes in organic practices. Without using chemicals such as fungicides, insecticides, and herbicides the farm is more focused on old fashioned farm labor.



Sam Heikes, left, and his daughter, Heidi, greet customers on a Saturday morning.

KATIE CLAUSEN / FOR THE PLAIN TALK

"It's more work than I ever thought it would be," Heikes said. "But I really enjoy it."

Heikes plans on expanding the operation to poultry and possibly livestock in the future. The farm is also planning on putting up a second greenhouse, and establishing more fruit trees.

"We polled our shareholders and they asked for peaches," Heikes said. "So we plan on doing more peaches, apples, and even some lavender."

Expansion plans aren't just limited to produce, however.

"Eventually I'd like to have some chickens, and I also have restaurants asking for pheasant," Heikes said. "I'd like to have finished lamb from here."

Vermillion residents interested in joining the Heikes Family Farm CSA can see their website at heikesfamilyfarm.com, or call 605-222-3949. More shares are available. The farm recently hosted over 100 kindergarten students to pick pumpkins as part of an interest in education.

"We want our CSA to be successful, it isn't just a business, it's a community," Heikes said.

Surveys provide USD biology grad student with research insight into declining bird species

When you study the habits of nocturnal birds that nest on gravel patches during a few months each summer, you head to where they often make their temporary home—the flat rooftops of institutional buildings. That's just where University of South Dakota biology graduate student Gretchen Newberry went this June and July when she set out to research the Common Nighthawk.

In Vermillion, that often meant Newberry spent much of her time surveying the roofs around the USD campus to find the medium-sized, mottled gray-and-white bird. "The majority of nighthawks in this town are on our campus," said Newberry, a native of Minneapolis, Minn. "They like flat, gravel rooftops so I scouted out buildings where I had seen them fly at dusk."

Three buildings presented the best opportunities for nest locations: I.D. Weeks Library, Al Neuharth Media Center and Richardson Residential Hall. With permission from the university, and with a facilities management representative in tow, Newberry documented 12 nests and recorded temperature and other weather variables. She said this data will lead to a better understanding of the behavior of the Common Nighthawk and the effect of climate change on the species' numbers. Newberry, who works in the lab of biology professor David Swanson, also documented nests and adult birds found in area grasslands and in other urban sites such as Yankton and Elk Point.

The Common Nighthawk is one of the most frequently seen of the nightjar family of birds, but their nearly nocturnal habits and the ability to camouflage themselves within their surroundings make them difficult to count in popular bird surveys. In the summer, this bird species is found throughout nearly all of North America and they migrate deep into South America in the winter months. Their numbers appear to be dwindling, however. According to the North American Breeding Bird Survey, populations have declined 59 percent from 1966 to 2010.

Researchers believe a loss of breeding habitat and a decline in the flying insects that make up their food source have contributed to the drop in numbers. Newberry is also interested in how rising temperatures associated with climate change will also affect the Common Nighthawk.

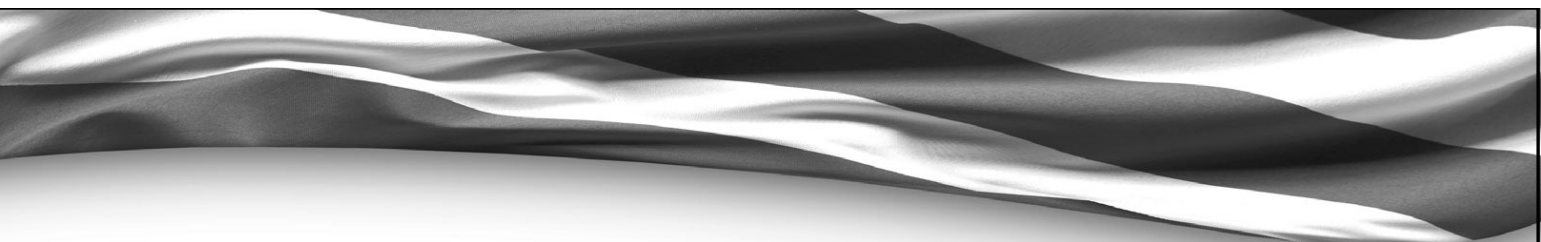
- Courtesy of USD News

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