

# Thrills and Chills: Zoo Man Comes To Public Library

BY SARAH WETZEL  
For the Plain Talk

Kids screamed, squealed and giggled along with adults at Tuesday's Thrills and Chills library event with Brent Mielke, known as the Zoo Man, and his creepy animal friends who once again came to meet the kids at the Vermillion Public Library.

"Back at the zoo we call this our 'Halloween Peak Week' because I get pretty busy during this week," Mielke said. "A lot of libraries, a lot of schools call me up and say, 'Hey, Zoo Man! Bring your Thrills and Chills show and have some fun with the kids.'"

Mielke made sure to pay homage to the venue by encouraging the kids to not only 'oooh' and 'ahhhh' but to read about what they liked about his show or whatever else they liked to read.

"Since we're at the library I hope you can scare up some books and you can check out all the creepy haunted house books," he said. "When I was younger we used to make forts with leaves. We'd get books from the library and sit in our leaf fort and read. Sometimes mom would let me sit in the leaves past dark and read with a flashlight."

Mielke gave a great Halloween-themed presentation.

"Halloween reminds me of when I was a little guy," he said. "What I remember most was raking the yard most of the month of October and then we'd hide in the leaves and when our neighbor came walking by we'd jump out and scare her. You know what she'd do? Every time we scared her she threw a Snickers bar at us. She must have known we were hiding in the leaves."

The show also featured some of Mielke's 'animal friends,' a snapping turtle, milk snake, bearded dragon and corn snake.

"None of the animals are scary to me," he said showing the snapping turtle. "Animals aren't scary. They're just cool. You don't need to be scared of this guy but you should respect him. I hold him by the tail. It doesn't hurt him to hold him by the tail. The reason I hold him by the tail because that's the end it doesn't bite."

Mielke described how each of the animals would probably celebrate Halloween.

"He doesn't like to eat treats," Mielke said about the snapping turtle. "He likes to do tricks. When he's walking around in the wild a lot of animals respect him because they know he can bite. He's got a tremendous snap. That's how he protects himself. He's just a baby. He's only four years old. By the time he's two hundred years old he'll be as big as one of the green boxes back here. If he comes ringing on your doorbell and says trick or treat you'll have to give him a great big worm or maybe some cat food. He likes cat food. Maybe some crickets or a baby mouse. That's the kind of stuff he likes."

Since there are some snapping turtle species native to South Dakota, there is actually a likelihood that this audience would encounter one so Mielke made sure to give some warnings.

"If you guys are outside next summer and see one of these guys crawling on the ground, don't pick him up because his neck can stick out eight or nine inches and if you're not careful with him, he can bite you," he said. "I had an uncle who lost his toe from a snapping turtle. He went swimming in



SARAH WETZEL/FOR THE PLAIN TALK  
**The Zoo Man brought 'Thrills and Chills' to the Vermillion Public Library this week by introducing some of his creepy crawly animal friends.**

the Minnesota river and a turtle took his toe off. Whatever you do never ever put your finger in front of his mouth."

According to Mielke, snapping turtles are the only species of turtle who can't put his head in his shell.

The webbed feet allow the snapping turtle to spend most of his time in the water and the nostrils on top of its nose let it breathe while mostly submerged.

"Snapping turtles don't usually come out of the water much, especially males but the females come out of the water once a year to lay their eggs," Mielke added.

The snapping turtle was able to make an appearance due to the warmer weather this November.

According to Mielke this particular snapping turtle hibernated seven months last year (October through April) due to the cold winter.

The smaller and colorful milk snake was the Zoo Man's next animal friend drawing some shrieks from the audience, though harmless.

"This snake is said to be the most beautiful snake in the world because of its color," Mielke said. "I know they're not poisonous and if you read your library books you'll know they're not poisonous because you'll know if a snake has red on black that's good luck jack but if the snake has red on yellow then that means it can kill a fellow. There is no red on yellow so we know it's not a coral snake."

Milk snakes can get up to six feet long according to Mielke and would have a very different trick or treat bag than the kids attending the show.

"If this guy goes trick or treating, slithers up to your door and puts his tail up to your doorbell and he rings it, if you come to the door and open it he's going to open his mouth and do you know what he'll say? Nothing," Mielke said. "He doesn't talk. But if he could talk and said trick or treat you know what you would put in his trick or treat bag? Little mice or another little snake or a little lizard."

Snakes can open their mouths up five times as large as their head to swallow these treats according to Mielke.

Thirdly, Mielke brought out a Bearded Dragon from Australia, demonstrating how it basks on top of rocks by allowing it to sit on the head of a few lucky audience members.

Though this lizard was pretty calm,

Mielke said it can move very quickly.

"They're very fast," he said. "He can outrun everybody in this room. He can out-climb anybody in this room. If you get too close to him and he doesn't like you he uses his tail as a weapon. When he hatched out of his egg he liked to eat crickets and he still likes to eat crickets. That's mainly what he eats."

The bearded dragon has many defense mechanisms according to Mielke.

"He's got very, very sharp claws so he can climb up on a rock or cactus or tree," he said. "When he gets startled the first thing he's going to do is open his mouth. Then he blows up his mouth and holds the air inside and blows himself up so he gets really big. Then the spikes on the side of his head stand out and get really sharp. That makes it really hard for other animals to eat him."

Lastly, the Zoo Man introduced his friend, the corn snake, an orange and white snake about three feet long.

"A lot of people call him a Halloween snake because of his color," Mielke said. "A corn snake is the friendliest snake in the world. If he had hands he'd go 'Hi! How are ya?'"

Mielke demonstrated how friendly the snake was by draping it around a few audience members as a necklace, beard, moustache and mask.

"Like all snakes they shed their skin every 21 days," he shared. "When he sheds his old skin is left there and he has bright new skin. He's also known as one of the fastest snakes in the world."

Though imitation is a form of flattery, in the corn snake's case, it's a method of survival.

"If an animal wants to attack them in the wild they shake their tail and it rustles leaves and twigs and it sounds just like a rattlesnake," Mielke said. "If that doesn't scare the attacker, he'll lift up his tail and shake it and squirt black goo at them. It smells bad and tastes even worse. He's considered as man's best friend because it can decrease the mice population by about a million mice per year. Not that he eats a million mice but he eats enough females that they don't reproduce."

For more information on the Zoo Man visit his Facebook page, 'Zoo Man Attractions.'

For information on library events visit [vermillionpubliclibrary.org](http://vermillionpubliclibrary.org).

## Bowers, SESDAC, Inc. Employee Of The Month

Moses Bowers, Direct Support Professional, was selected as the SESDAC, Inc. October, 2015 Employee of the Month. Moses has been a part of our organization since November, 2013.

Moses was nominated for the award by his fellow co-workers, based on his dedication to his job and the people he supports.

Co-workers had the following compliments written in their nominations for Moses... "Moses is one of the most important people we have at Cedar. He makes everyone's days run much smoother. I can't say enough about how he tirelessly works throughout the night and is always smiling and happy up until the time he leaves in the AM."

Moses and his family currently reside in Vermillion.



Bowers

## Vermillion Woman Co-Stars In Movie On Vets', Family Issues

Rachel Sorensen's acting experiences ranging from an extra to stand-in for television and movies has led her to a co-starring role in *Unsung: The Forgotten*, an independent film spotlighting the all-too-real issues families of combat veterans face back home.

Sorensen moved from Vermillion, South Dakota to Atlanta, Georgia in fall 2013 and within three months began acting and stand-in work. She has played on more than 50 productions for such programs and motion pictures as *The Walking Dead*, *Selma*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *Vacation*, *Ant-Man*, and *Captain America: Civil War*. She has worked as stand-in on several TV shows and movies.

After taking a lead role in a short film (Russ Howitzer: Cavalier) for Atlanta's 48-Hour Film Project shot in June, Sorensen played a principal role in another short film, *Northfield*, shot this month. She was cast in a supporting role in the TV show *A Haunting* (shot in September), before her lead role in *Unsung: The Forgotten*, the filming of which takes place next month (November). She is listed on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb); just search "Rachel Sorensen."

## Sioux Empire Farm Show

### Livestock Entry Deadline Nov. 15

Purebred cattle entries for the 2016 Sioux Empire Farm Show must be postmarked by Nov. 15, 2015. The 62nd Annual Sioux Empire Farm Show, sponsored by the Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, will be held Tuesday, Jan. 26-Saturday, Jan. 30, 2016.

Six breeds will be shown at the 2016 show. The Angus and Simmental breeds will show and sell Wednesday; Hereford, Limousin, Red Angus and Charolais breeds will show and sell Thursday. The champion bull and female from each of the breeds will stand on Supreme Row until Friday, Jan. 29 when they will be judged. The winners will be presented to the general public attending the Mayor's Round-Up & Sale of Champions later that evening at the Best Western PLUS Ramkota Exhibit Hall. The \$12,000 Supreme Row purse is sponsored by the Tri-State Neighbor as the gold sponsor, Wells Fargo Bank South Dakota, N.A. as the silver sponsor and Campbell Supply Co. as the bronze sponsor. The purse is divided between the sellers and buyers of the Supreme Champion bull and female over all breeds.

The 63rd Annual Sioux Empire Farm Show will be held at the W. H. Lyon Fairgrounds Expo Building, Sioux Falls Arena, Sioux Falls Convention Center and the Denny Sanford PREMIER Center. The Sioux Empire Farm Show features livestock shows and sales and commercial exhibits. Admission is free. All livestock events will be held at the W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds.

The Agri-Business Division of the Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce sponsors the show. For livestock entry information contact Cindy Christensen at (605) 373-2016 or email [cchristensen@siouxfalls.com](mailto:cchristensen@siouxfalls.com). For more information about the show, visit [www.siouxempirefarmshow.org](http://www.siouxempirefarmshow.org).

## USD Foundation Elects New Leaders, Members

Newly elected leaders of the University of South Dakota Foundation Board of Directors are Lorraine Hart, USD '73, chair and Robert Hollingsworth, USD '91, vice-chair. Now a full-time community volunteer, Hart retired in 2006 after 22 years with Ameriprise Financial, most recently as vice president for investments. Hollingsworth is a partner at Deloitte and Touche LLP.

Three new members joined the Foundation board: Joel Portice, USD '87, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. is chief executive officer at Intermedix Corp.; Ryan Taylor, USD '95, '99, Sioux Falls, S.D., is an attorney/partner with Cutler Law Firm LLP; Wagner, Sylvia Wagner, USD '71, Lees Summit, Mo., was an executive vice president with Assurant Employee Benefits prior to retirement.

## USD Sanford School of Medicine Names New Basic Biomedical Sciences Dean

William G. Mayhan has been named dean of the division of Basic Biomedical Sciences at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine.

Mayhan, Ph.D., an Omaha, Nebraska native, received his B.S. degree from Creighton University and his doctorate from the University of Nebraska. He completed his post-doctoral training at the University of Iowa and subsequently joined the faculty there. Mayhan returned to the University of Nebraska Medical Center's Department of Cellular and Integrative Physiology in 1989, rising to become full professor and vice-chair. He received the Outstanding Research and Creative Activity award from UNMC, which is the highest award given to a faculty member within the University of Nebraska system.

Mayhan comes to USD from Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, Shreveport, where he was head of the Department of Cellular Biology and Anatomy. He has received continuous research support from the National Institutes of Health since 1983, and he has served on study sections for various organizations.

Mayhan will take over in March.

## Aware

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protection if it is needed," Sullivan said. "We can talk about setting up code words. Where if you are not able to call 911 if you are in a dangerous situation you can call a friend and use the code word to let them know you need help."

Sullivan said many in domestic abuse situations do not want to get an order of protection, for several reasons, but the primary one being having to face the person committing the abuse in open court. She said it is humiliating for the victim and it is a highly stressful situation that comes with many misconceptions.

"An order of protection is not used to get back at the perpetrator," she said. "It is very difficult to do, to face your abuser, and in many situations it may

not help. But we can help them in our office. Because it is a civil matter it doesn't require a lawyer to file the paperwork. We can help you fill it out and talk through the different issues with you."

Sullivan added that domestic abuse is a crime.

"If you were to see someone breaking into your neighbor's car or house you would call 9-1-1, right?" she asked. "Why would it be any different if you see someone being abused. Pick up the phone call 9-1-1 tell them the situation. At the very least they will do a well person check-up. If we don't speak up about the abuse going on, it will never stop. We need to speak up and say no more."

She added that if you have a friend or family member that is in abusive situation there are three things you should say to them.

"I believe you," is the first thing you should say,"

Sullivan said. "You didn't deserve this," and "It's not your fault." Because many victims believe they are at fault for the abuse. No matter what it was, you could have cooked him his favorite meal of meatloaf, green beans and mashed potatoes, and he would find something wrong with it. It could be as simple as there was not enough butter on the potatoes or maybe you used peas instead of green beans. An abuser can find any excuse to abuse you. It is not about what you did or didn't do, it is about the perpetrator trying to maintain all control in the relationship."

Sullivan said she wishes should could wrap up all the victims of domestic abuse in a blanket and comfort them, the most

important thing is for them to gain confidence in themselves so they can get out of the situation and survive on their own.

She also noted that while she is the only person on staff at Safe Options Services, she does rely on volunteers to help.

"It can be helping organize books, helping get kits ready, helping with paperwork," she said. "We are not going to put you in harm's way."

She also said donations are always accepted.

If you or someone you love is in a domestic violence situation Sullivan said she is on-call 24 hours-a-day.

"Please if you need help just call our hotline at 605-624-5311," she said.

### Human Services Program Specialist I

Pierre, SD

The Division of Developmental Disabilities strives to ensure that people with ID/DD receive the supports needed to live and work in South Dakota communities. This may be an opportunity for you to continue the growth and development of state-of-the-art services supporting people to live in home and community-based settings. This position works to ensure people with ID/DD are provided with choices to be active participants and contributing members of their communities.

This position will close on 11/5/15. For more information or to apply, please go to <http://bhr.sd.gov/workforus> and reference Job ID #5469 or contact any South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation Local Office.

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