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# PLAIN TALK

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**INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

- 100 Days of heat.....page 02
- For the record.....page 03
- SDPB Emmy nominations.....page 07

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## Local performers prepare to share stage with opera icon Ramey

By Parker Knox

Twelve Vermillion/USD performers will be on the stage of the Washington Pavilion in Sioux Falls next week alongside one of the world's most renowned operatic talents when Mozart's "The Magic Flute" is presented by Sounds of South Dakota, Inc.

Organized 10 years ago to enhance professional music opportunities for South Dakota performers and audiences without having to travel to metropolitan areas, Sounds of South Dakota, Inc. is bonding with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra to bring opera icon Samuel Ramey to Sioux Falls for performances of the Mozart classic at 7:30 p.m. Sept. 15 and 2:30 p.m. Sept. 16.

Ramey has been a fixture at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, the San Francisco Opera and such European venues as La Scala, Covent Garden, the Paris Opera and the Vienna State Opera. He never in his storied career has performed the role of Sarastro until the Sioux Falls performance.

The opportunity of a lifetime to share the stage of the Mary Sommervold Hall at the pavilion with the likes of Ramey has local opera performers giddy with excitement.

Dr. Brandon Hendrickson, voice/opera professor at USD said, "Getting to be a part of this exceptional production is very special for me because I get to share the stage with one of the greatest singers and performers of our time."

Hendrickson, who has the leading role of Papageno in "The Magic Flute," said he will do his best not to be star-struck in Ramey's presence, "but you can bet I will be getting my picture taken with him."

"I cannot stress how big of a deal it is having him so near," Hendrickson added. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance for people in our community to see and hear one of the most internationally acclaimed artists of our time."

Papageno is one of Hendrickson's favorite roles. "He provides much of the comic relief in the opera," he said. "I find something new and quirky to incorporate into the character each time I am presented the opportunity to perform this fantastic role."

Dr. Tracelyn Gesteland, another USD voice/opera professor, who will play the lead role of Zweite Dame, is likewise thrilled personally to share the stage with Ramey, but she is also anticipating performing with a cast that includes her husband, colleagues from around the state and several of her own USD students.

The Sioux Falls production is a first in several ways, Gesteland explained. "It is the first time a local opera company has produced a fully-staged, fully-costumed opera on the Mary Sommervold Hall main stage," she said. Besides being Ramey's first time ever in the Sarastro role, it will be the first time the South Dakota Symphony will use the pit to play a show at the pavilion.

"Audiences will hear music of the highest quality and be entertained by one of the most beloved fairytale operas of all time," Gesteland added. "Local people can have a big-city

## It's a snap

## County launches portal to provide access to property info

By Travis Gulbrandson

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Clay County residents now have the option of accessing a wide variety of property valuation information online, through both a free and subscription service.

On Aug. 1, Clay County's Beacon portal was launched, giving interested persons the opportunity to access data whenever they want.

"It gives access to that information 24 hours a day, seven days a week," said Gene Lunn, Clay County's director of equalization. "When you think about appraisers and realtors, they're working on Saturdays and Sundays at all times of the day trying to get things done. In the past, they either had to stop in our office or call us between eight and five, Monday through Friday."

"Now they're able to do it at their time and their convenience, be able to download and print off the information, and have it right there at their (disposal)," he said.

The Web site can be accessed at [beacon.shneidercorp.com](http://beacon.shneidercorp.com). Browsers then

must hit the "show all states" option, click the drop-down menu to go to South Dakota, and then choose Clay County.

A wide variety of information will be available to both subscribers and non-subscribers alike.

"You can actually search by name, by address and by parcel identification," Lunn said.

"When you get on that free site, you'll see a parcel number, an address, a legal description, the owner, evaluation and what the taxes are."

In addition to this data, subscribers also will have access to the land size, when the residence was built, the square footage, what type of house is on the property and what kind of improvements have been made to it, such as garages and decks.

Subscribers also will have access to transfers, when the property was last sold, the county's photos and a sketch of the property, Lunn said.

"That's typically what appraisers, realtors, insurance companies and other financial institutions are looking for," he said. "It's basically all the information that we have within our office, with the

Quarterback Kyle Weiss prepares to march the Tanagers down the field in the DakotaDome Friday, Aug. 31 as Vermillion played its first home game of the season against the South Sioux City Cardinals. Read all about the game inside.

(Photo by David Lias)

exception of things that are confidential by South Dakota state statute."

The subscription rate is \$300 per year for up to eight people in an organization, with a progressive increase for additional users.

According to a press release, the subscription payments that are accumulated will provide the county with the ability to pay the monthly fees associated with the site.

Lunn said the county has not received any user feedback through the Web site itself, but they have had conversations with realtors and appraisers who have used the service.

"It's been very positive," he said. "It appears that it's going to be very helpful in their day-to-day business dealings. ..."

"I look at it as being very beneficial," he said. "I believe it meets a need in Clay County for getting this public information to the citizens."

For more information regarding Web site subscriptions, visit the assessor's office in the Clay County Courthouse, or call (605) 677-7140.

## City council approves budget ordinance

By Travis Gulbrandson

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The Vermillion City Council approved a budget ordinance to provide for next year's operations and discussed some of the projects involved at their regular meeting Monday night.

City Manager John Prescott presented a budget to the City Council at the Aug. 6 meeting, after which time the council reviewed the proposal and submitted revisions to Appropriations Ordinance No.

1286.

According to a document supplied to council members, the revisions increased the appropriation from reserve to the general fund from \$202,822 to \$215,396.

Prescott said a number of projects will be completed next year using these funds, along with annual maintenance and repair work in various departments.

"There's funding included to replace the carpet and paint in the meeting room at the fire station," Prescott said. "That's

certainly well-used by the community, and we're happy to have that facility available, but after about 12 years that room is ready for some new paint and carpet."

Prescott said the city and county will be jointly funding a project to provide a third work station at the local emergency communication center.

He added that 2nd penny funding also will provide equipment for the police and fire departments, a new boiler at the National Guard Armory and a new restroom facility at the

Prentis Park baseball field.

Annual funding also will be provided to the Vermillion Public Library, as well as funds for the ongoing renovation.

"The budget does reflect what our best guess is with respect to completing the library addition renovation," Prescott said. "That, for us, spans two budget years, so there is additional funding provided in 2013."

Prescott thanked the