

PLAIN TALK



PAGE 6

Volume 129 Issue 37
USPS 657-720

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2015



PROVIDING ORIGINAL CONTENT SINCE 1884 | WWW.PLAINTALK.NET

75¢

Sturgis Fire Impacts Local Business

Valiant Vineyards Wine Bar At Full Throttle Saloon A Total Loss

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE
shauna.marlette@plaintalk.net

As news of Monday night's fire at the Full Throttle Saloon in Sturgis spread, people across the state, nation and the world reacted, however its impact hit very close to home. The wine bar at the Full Throttle Saloon is owned by Eldon and Sherry Nygaard of Vermillion.

In a phone interview Tuesday with the Vermillion Plain Talk, Eldon Nygaard said the wine bar, like much of the rest of the compound, is a total loss.

"All that is left standing are the six poles that look like burnt matchsticks," Nygaard said. "It is believed the fire started in the main bar. Because the main bar housed such a large amount of distilled spirits – the Full Throttle has a distillery license – and a huge amount of alcohol, as well as the natural gas tanks used for heating and cooking, the fire was very intense and had a huge amount of heat."



Nygaard

The saloon was often billed as the "world's largest biker bar." Nygaard said compounding the fire was the sheer amount of fuel available to burn.

"The boardwalk was all dry, old wood," he said. "All combined, the fire was so hot that the fire melted the steel I-beams and they all curved down. The bridges, which Mike (Ballard, owner of Full Throttle Saloon) had salvaged, didn't have any chance of being saved. The only structures that are undamaged are the office building, which wasn't connected and was a metal building, and a few of the cabins that had been built to be rented out."

While the fire was first reported near midnight, Nygaard said that it could have been smoldering for a while until it hit the fuel it needed to grow.

"Because the bar closed at 8 p.m. (Monday) night, we are not sure how long it had been burning," Nygaard said. "But the ATF, County Sheriff and all of the fire departments are working to figure out how it started and when."

According to The Associated Press, the adjoining distillery contained 500 gallons of grain alcohol, which may have stoked the blaze.

Shawn Barrows, Sturgis' assistant fire chief, said firefighters attempted to get inside the bar but heavy heat and smoke forced them to battle the blaze from the outside in heavy winds, the AP reported.

"We tried making access through the west side walk-in doors, but they were locked," Barrows told the Rapid City Journal. "We came around to the front-side garage doors on the north side of the building and cut a hole in it to make entry to the building."

Nygaard said he has not had a chance to talk to Ballard as he was returning to South Dakota from the Full Throttle S'loonshine Distillery in Trimble, Tennessee, where the pair had been Saturday and Sunday.



COURTESY PHOTO: ELDON NYGAARD

The Valiant Vineyards Wine Bar located in the Full Throttle Saloon Complex was destroyed by fire late Monday night when a blaze roared through the Sturgis landmark. Nygaard who visited the site on Tuesday said all that are left are the six poles that used to hold the wine bar and those look like "match sticks."

Learning To Appreciate The River

BY SARAH WETZEL
For the Plain Talk



SHAUNA MARLETTE/FOR THE PLAIN TALK
Sixth graders from Vermillion, Irene-Wakonda, Centerville and Gayville-Volin areas gathered in Clay County Park Wednesday for a day of celebration and education. Pictured the students are making origami boats to send down the river.

Sixth graders from Vermillion, Irene-Wakonda, Centerville and Gayville-Volin areas gathered in Clay County Park Wednesday for a day of celebration and education.

After an introductory program, the sixth-graders went through 7 activity areas focusing on 7 distinct experiences in art, science, history and boating.

The students wrote haiku poetry, created images of nature, learn about local birds and animals, experimented with the meandering nature of this section of the Missouri River with hands-on modules in the National Park Service's Stream Table and Mobile Ranger Station, watched how pollution happens in an aquifer, practiced water safety and rescue, and folded and decorated their own handmade origami boats.

Grace Freeman, a Vermillion resident, is one of the founders of the event.

"A long time ago we lived in Montana and on the river they do this with 4,000 4th graders over a week," she said. "They set up teepees and there's an educational session. The night before they do they do this river appreciation night with commu-

nity members and they give awards to the people that have been really instrumental in preserving the natural beauty of the river."

So inspired was Freeman of this event that upon returning to Vermillion, she recruited Nancy Carlsen and Cindy Kirkeby to assist in creating a similar event for Vermillion.

"They in a weak moment said they would help," Freeman remembered. "It's what it is because of our three different personalities. Nancy does the maps. She does all this layout and organization. Cindy does our spreadsheets and we all divide the phone calling and the connections to help make it all come together."

Many volunteers made the event possible according to Freeman including her husband, Harry along with several of his students from the University of South Dakota and even a few from Vermillion High School.

"We have all these camps and because Vermillion has such a great artist community the arts council sponsors these two to come, the poet and the art teacher," Freeman said. "Later we have the drum group

RIVER | PAGE 6

High School Students Set To Serve The Community



COURTESY PHOTO

Vermillion High School Students are preparing to once again give back to the community during homecoming week. Pictured is a project completed last year.

BY SARAH WETZEL
For the Plain Talk

Homecoming week for the kids at Vermillion High School is not only a week of celebration but also of service to their community.

"We take one day out of the homecoming week and all of our students volunteer somewhere in the community," said Lenni Billberg, Head Track and Field Coach and teacher of US history, Psychology, Russian History, Sociology, and Cold War History. "I think we're at 380 this year is our number and they all go out. I arrange for places at organizations in Vermillion, with elderly people, home-bound people. You name it, I guess we do it."

The service project will take place on September 23 this year and suggestions on possible projects for the high schoolers are welcome.

"Because it's our seventh year we're kind of out there and people know about us but people can call us at the high school," Billberg said. "They can email me, they can call me. Then we set things up with time if it's morning or afternoon."

Suggestions come from the high school students, as well.

SERVE | PAGE 3

FIRE FIGHTER DEDICATION



SHAUNA MARLETTE/FOR THE PLAIN TALK

Vermillion Fire Chief Shawn Draper completed the pinning ceremony for new Vermillion Volunteer Fire Fighters Blaine Schoellerman and Matthew Wannamaker at Tuesday's City Council meeting. Draper said being a fire fighter takes bravery, but none more so than making the choice to volunteer.