



Belle Fourche Beacon

PROVIDING LOCAL NEWS FOR BELLE FOURCHE, BUTTE COUNTY and the TRI-STATE TRADE AREA
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School Board Takes In Information

Robbi Longbrake

news@bellefourchebeacon.com

BELLE FOURCHE—The constant input of information helps keep the school board running in an organized fashion, that seemed to be the case at the December 9, Belle Fourche School Board Meeting.

Angela Reder gave a presentation to the school board about Accountability Data to let the board be aware of how the students are doing in the district. She went over the data for the district as a whole and then broke down data and presented it for the elementary, middle school and high school vs the state averages.

In an attempt to demonstrate how transient the population of students in the Belle Fourche school district is, Superintendent Orion Thompson made a display

School Board C5

“Community Hall Fetes 41st Festive Feed”



A large crowd was served Christmas Dinner with all the fixings at the 41st Annual free event 11:00 am to 2:00 pm Wednesday December 25th at the Community Hall. More pictures C2 Courtesy Photos

“Ring in the New Year”

Lt. Governor Larry Rhoden
Special to the Beacon

New Year’s means looking ahead. Growing up on my family ranch, we always looked forward to a long year of hard work. After all, calving season wasn’t too far in the future. We celebrated the holidays; we wished each other “Merry Christmas!” and “Happy New Year!” with smiles, good food, and the enjoyment of each other’s company. And then we got back to work taking care of the land and the animals so that they can feed us and everyone else.

We have important work to get back to in the upcoming year, as well. A new year means that a new legislative session is right around the corner, and we will

get back to work on behalf of the people of South Dakota.

It is in my nature to always look for ways to do even better. New Year’s is a great time to do this. As Benjamin Franklin once said, “Let every new year find you a better man.”

South Dakota is full of truly excellent men and women. Over the last several years, I have been so impressed by how South Dakotans tackle adversity. And through that adversity, we found an opportunity to demonstrate to the nation what adhering to Christian conservative principles can achieve.

We demonstrated to the state, the nation, and the planet what Freedom looks like.



Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden

We’ve built the strongest economy in America, and I hope that we find opportunities to take our state to even greater heights. We’ve become the

Lt. Gov. Contd. A3

Dec. 16th City Council Meeting

Ryder Heitz

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BELLE FOURCHE—The City Council held a meeting on Monday, December 16.

During Community Input, Raymond Allen questioned the need for No Parking signs on Walworth Street and emphasized the need for a speed bump on Dacar Street.

Greg Mondillo with CoNBA gave an update on the success of the fireworks. “The restaurants were all very busy,” he said. Stacey Raisanen then read the

Council a letter from a resident of Rapid City who enjoyed the festivities of the night. “I want to thank you for a lovely firework show,” the letter read. “This was Belle Fourche and surrounding communities coming together.

It was one moment in time filled with good will and the message of the season.”

Hollie Stadler with Economic Development gave an update on the committee’s activities,

Council contd. A6



Stacey Raisanen, Americinn & CONBA representative reads a letter to the council.

5th Grade Class Goes Glow in the Dark Bowling



5th Graders had a blast **Glow in the Dark Bowling** for their Bronc Buck Behavior Reward., Superintendent Thompson joins in on the fun. Thanks to **Purple Pride** for the opportunity to do these fun activities. Additional Photos C5. (Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Schools)

Bryon Keil, aka “Dr. Lube,” Featured in National Oil Change Magazine NOLN**

STURGIS: Belle Fourche native, Bryon Keil, affectionately known as “Dr. Lube,” has been featured in the latest issue of National Oil and Lube News

tion in the automotive service industry. The article showcases Keil’s innovative strategies and dedication to customer service at Speedy Lube in Sturgis,

In the feature titled “Taking a Pulse on Quick Maintenance,” Keil reflects on his transformative journey since he and his wife, Michelle, took over Speedy Lube in 2013.

Facing a struggling business on the brink of closure, the couple implemented significant changes that revitalized the shop. Keil emphasizes his philosophy of focusing on a few core services executed exceptionally well, stating, “If you try to do a lot of things sort-of good, it doesn’t work very good”

Keil’s nickname, “Dr. Lube,” fittingly reflects his commitment to vehicle health and maintenance. He explains the importance of regular oil changes and preventative care to keep engines running smoothly. His background as a chiropractor has equipped him with a unique perspective on

“Dr. Lube” contd. A3



Belle Fourche natives, **Bryan and Michelle (Kvislen) Keil** have excelled at providing quality and dependable service at their **Sturgis Speedy Lube**. Courtesy Photo

A Celebration of Life for Bryan Dean Lessly

Doug Cole

news@bellefourchebeacon.com

Last week’s Beacon contained a story/article about the naming of “Bryan Lessly Day” in Spearfish.

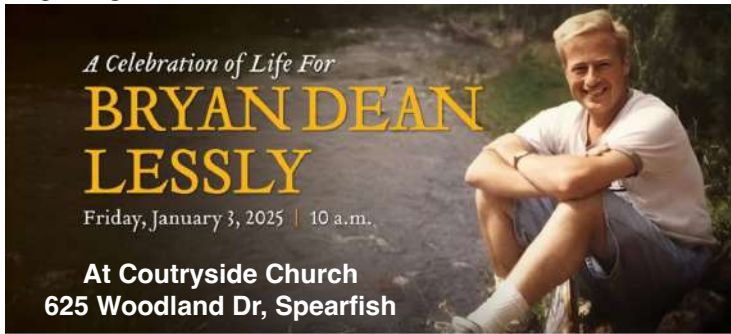
The Beacon is sad to report that Bryan lost his battle with cancer and passed away on Christmas Day, December 25th.

We are deeply saddened by his passing and our world

losing an individual who gave so much to others and asked so little in return.

He, more than anyone else was responsible for the production of the Beacon at its onset. His work was second to none and he will be greatly missed.

Arrangements are under the care of Fidler-Isburg Funeral Chapels and Isburg Crematory of Spearfish.



Gift Card Winners

Beacon Staff

news@bellefourchebeacon.com

The first BF Beacon gift card givaway is pleased to announce the first twelve winners.

The gift card givaway is two-fold: 1. To inform readers of the many places in Belle Fourche available for food and your dining pleasure; and 2. To encourage readers to subscribe to the Beacon.

We started with six, but will be adding additional food establishments in the New Year. Subscribe and join in!

December 1st round gift certificate winners were: \$25 Pizza Hut: Bernard & Paula Gregg, Belle & Judy Wilbur, Nisland;

\$50 Branding Iron Valerie & Harvey Garr, Belle & Greg & Lisa Kraajewski, Belle; \$50 Crossroads Dinner & Grille: Kelly Keegan, Belle & Robert & Jan Tysdal Sisk, Newell; \$50 Graps Burgers & Brew; Glen & Patricia Tetrault & Rick & Jolene Nelson, Belle; \$100 Lynn’s Dakotamart; Robert & Drusilla Dye, Alzada & Marcus & Karen Buresh, Belle ; \$100 Lueders Food Center: Ron & Bev Johnson, Vale & Sharon Hoggatt, Spearfish.

All that is needed to be entered is a subscription to the BF Beacon. We strive to provide area news coverage that is of value and interest to the Tri-State area.



Valentine's Day

Love is in the air - and so are savings!

Be one of the first 25 customers to place an order of a Dozen Roses for Valentine's Day and save 10%!

Place your order today!
Call us at 605-892-4626



Most people are feeling merry, but some are feeling blue. All over the world, it's Christmastime. May there be some joy and hope for you.

Some grieve the loss of a loved one. Others have pain of another kind. But Christmas can bring peace and hope because God has you on His mind.

So we hope you feel God's love. We hope your faith is renewed. We hope you feel some hope and joy. May God bless you through and through!

LEVERINGTON FUNERAL HOME OF THE NORTHERN HILLS

From our family to yours –

Merry Christmas!

605.892.3320 LeveringtonFH.com

Mark & Debra Leverington
Owners
Belle Fourche





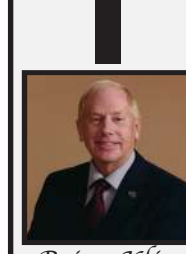
When someone you love becomes a Memory, the memory becomes a Treasure.

-Unknown-

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PEACE OF MIND...and being able to say, "Everything has been taken care of."



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website: klinefuneralchapel.com

Brian Kline
Owner

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JOHN "NICK"
APR. 17, 1943
MAR. 20, 2019
"KEEP ALL FOUR ON THE GROUND"

JACQUELINE "JACKIE"
SEPT. 19, 1945

BELOVED PARENTS OF TAMMY, MARK, LORIE

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Lorraine Vivian Mowrey 91

Lorraine Vivian Mowrey was born on May 27, 1933, in Belle Fourche, SD, to Chauncey Wilkes Mowrey and Lillian Ranghild (Lofgren) Mowrey. She was the fourth of the five Mowrey kids, joining siblings Connie (Cunningham), Viola (Friskey), Conrad Mowrey, and a few years later Linnea (Gottman).

When she was born, Lorraine's family lived in Aladdin WY, but later to around the Black Hills before settling in the Newell/Vale area, where they raised dairy cows. Lorraine often bragged about having to milk cows and haul heavy milk cans every morning before trekking the five miles to school—uphill both ways! Needless to say, she had zero tolerance for whining from her children about doing chores.

She graduated from Newell High School in 1951, serving as president of her senior class, which is probably no surprise to those who knew her. She was a born leader. Lorraine absolutely loved high school. She especially enjoyed the social aspect, participating in plays and choir, and could play the guitar and harmonica like a champ. She also excelled academically.

Lorraine met her husband, Alfred Weimer, when she was 16 and he was 19. She graduated in early May 1951, celebrated her 18th birthday on May 27th, and tied the knot just a week later on June 3rd, 1951.

They kicked off their life together farming on Alfred's parents' farm near Belle Fourche, SD. After some bad luck on the farm, they moved their family of three children to Ritzville Washington in order to operate a Tastee Freeze Drive Inn that was in a prime location on a busy highway going right through town. They worked extremely long days but were actually making a few bucks. A year or so later, they learned that a new interstate highway being built would divert traffic around the town of Ritzville and away from their business. So, they moved back to South Dakota and decided to try the big city life of Rapid City, where they remained.

Lorraine went to work in 1966 after all four children were in school. She held a few jobs before landing at the Pennington County Highway Department, where she was working during the tragic 1972 Rapid City Flood. The County's large, air-conditioned machine shop temporarily served as a morgue for many victims. She often talked about the challenges of helping families identify their loved ones and the heartbreaking stories she heard from survivors of that historic flood.

Lorraine eventually went to work as the manager of the Rapid Valley Water Department, where she stayed



until her retirement in 1998. She accomplished many things in her 20-year career and was very proud of her work merging the Water Department with the Sanitation District to form one entity. Others were working with engineers on new water and sewer projects, working with developers to provide services to new housing projects, locating water and drilling massive wells to accommodate the growth in Rapid Valley, and many other projects too numerous to

mention. For many years, Lorraine was the only female manager of a rural water and sanitation district in the State of South Dakota. She attended many state and national meetings, not only learning but sharing her extensive knowledge and experiences with other rural water and sanitation districts. She loved this job and loved being the boss. She would tell stories of how challenging it was to "hold her own" in such a male-dominated business, but if anyone could do it, Lorraine certainly was the one to take it on.

After retiring, Al and Lorraine enjoyed traveling in their fifth wheel and camping at various spots in the Black Hills. They owned a home in Arizona for 5 or 6 years where they'd spend winters. After selling that home, they built a cabin in the Hills at Brush Creek with their son Len and his wife Deb, where they truly enjoyed living and entertaining family and friends.

Lorraine and Alfred had four kids: Leonard (Deb) Weimer, Lona (Brad) Snell, LeRoy (Kim Marie) Weimer, and LaRae (Michael) Schaff. Sadly, Mom is preceded in death by her husband Alfred, her son Leonard, and her grandson Jeffrey Snell.

In the last five years, Lorraine faced several health challenges but tackled them with strength and resilience. She spent her final two and a half years at Peaceful Pines in assisted living, where she received excellent care and was loved by the wonderful staff there. In the last nine months she was also receiving care from Stillwater Hospice of South Dakota.

A service will be held at Osheim & Schmidt Funeral Home at 1 pm on Monday, October 30th with visitation at 12 noon. A short graveside service will follow at Pine Lawn Memorial Park.

Memorials can be made to Stillwater Hospice of South Dakota.

Please visit Lorraine's online memorial at: www.OsheimSchmidt.com.



Larry G Jackson 82

Larry G Jackson, born October 5, 1942, in Pierre, SD, passed away December 23, 2024, surrounded by loved ones, in Gillette, WY. Larry did well with his life.

He was raised in Presho, SD, where after high school he worked as a carpenter to pay for college. At Dakota Wesleyan University he met the love of his life, Susan. They were married on June 19, 1965. Larry spent 59 ½ years as a devoted husband. Larry worked hard, graduating from Yankton College.

With Susan, he taught in Newcastle for several years. He made friendships with students, faculty and neighbors which endured over 50 years.

Moving the family to Sundance and Gillette, he worked as an insurance agent, and as a coal miner. Larry found joy in hunting and target shooting. Above all else, he treasured time spent with family and friends.

Larry did well by his sons, Jason (Rita) and Jeremy (Pam), giving them love and support, providing for their education, and helping them throughout their adult lives. Larry excelled as a grandfather and great grandfather. Josef, John (Elisabeth), Megan, Brayden, Ashlynn(Dawson), Hayley, Ava and Laney all benefited from his deep love and support. Larry's best friend for most of his life was his brother Gary. Larry was close with his older sister Janese De Geest (Roy). Larry was a devoted son to Leon and Vera Jackson.



All preceded him in death.

In addition to his wife, children and grandchildren, Larry is survived by many extended family members he loved including Mark and Beverly Berdahl and family, Paula and Gordy Binek and family, and Connie Jackson (Gary) and family, and his nephew Ron and family. Larry was a good friend, and is survived by many including Troy Clements, Bob Baer, Rick Lauer, and George Whalen and his family.

Larry was blessed with great medical care and forged relationships with many. The family will always be grateful for the excellent care he received throughout his journey. Larry did well with life in the only measure that matters. He tried to treat people with decency and demonstrated a deep dedication to those he loved. He faced his death with bravery and acceptance and concern for his family. Larry was a man of faith who prayed and believed in God.

His memory will live on in the hearts of those who knew him.

Cremation arrangements were under the care of Isburg Crematory of Spearfish, SD Online condolences may be written at www.fidler-isburg-funeralchapels.com



John C. Morgan 59

John C. Morgan, age 59 of Belle Fourche, died Thursday, December 26, 2024 at Monument Health Rapid City Hospital.

Services will be held in his home state of New Jersey at a later date. Arrangements are with Leverington Funeral Home of the Northern Hills in Belle Fourche. Friends may leave written condolences at www.LeveringtonFH.com

John Clayton Morgan was born December 30, 1964 in New Jersey. He was the son of John W. and Diane

(Galati) Morgan. He was preceded in death by his father this past November.

John is survived by his children, Dylan and Amanda of New Jersey; mother, Diane of Belle Fourche; siblings, Dawn (Brent) Brosnahan of Spearfish, Mark of Belle Fourche, Jane Summers of Belle Fourche, and Jill (Paul) Mikelson of Prairie du Chein WI; several nieces and nephews.



Bud Longbrake 62

September 6, 1962 - December 20, 2024

Funeral service for Bud Longbrake, 62, of Dupree was held at 11:00 AM, Saturday, December 28, 2024, at the Dupree School Gymnasium. A prayer service was held at 7:00 PM, Friday, December 27, 2024, at the Dupree School Gymnasium. Bud passed away Friday, December 20, 2024, at the IHS Hospital in Eagle Butte. Kesling Funeral Home of Mobridge is charge of arrangements.

Emmett Dunn (Bud) Longbrake was born on September 6, 1962 in Eagle Butte, South Dakota to Delbert F. (Pete) and Faye A. (Nordvold) Longbrake. He was met on the ranch on Ash Creek by older brothers Delbert W. and Jesse J. They would be followed by a sister Charlie to complete the family.

His early life on Ash Creek was filled with riding horses to check cows, later riding colts, and going to rodeo's with Pete and Faye. The Knight families were the closest neighbors and a lot of time was spent there as well playing War, riding, playing in the hay and getting chewed out because the hay was all messed up, and practicing riding steers or anything else they could. The Till and Bendigo families were also close friends and free time was pretty rowdy. During the months that plums and chokecherries were ripe there was plenty of baking soda used to remove the black residue on teeth.

When Pete got more into raising bucking horses all the kids learned how to run them to get them in. Bud also learned about running horses in a pickup! That was pretty wild but Bud held on and later got a motorcycle and continued his wild ride in life. There were lots of horses for Bud to get on for practice. The entire area of Ash Creek seemed to be raising bucking horses and it was quite the scene when people turned out to practice riding bronc's or cutting studs.

When he was about 12 he went to work/live with the Cliff and Inga Birkeland family and that brought in another family as part of the overall family in Bud's life.

In 1987 Bud married Lona Wishard and together they had Jay and Kayla. Together they started their own ranch southwest of Dupree. Bud was later able to incorporate his Grandma Mary Longbrake's place. Lona and the kids traveled around with Bud when he rodeoed as much as they could but they also kept the ranch together. There are lots of memories the family shares but the most outstanding ones are when Bud won the first, second, short go, and the average in the bronc riding in Cheyenne in 1999. Also the 2002



winter Olympiad was an exciting once in a family history event. His mom was able to attend and she was always talking about it. The several NFR trips and winning the average was a highlight of the family history as well. That part of Bud's life is documented in a separate area but Bud was more than just riding bronc's. It was hard to come up with a few people to be his pall bears and honorary pall bearers because he knew and loved so many people the family couldn't condense the number to just a few people to mention. Bud had a way of making a person feel like you were his best friend and the family couldn't list everyone.

Bud was a family man and was very proud of his kids and grandkids. He would take horses to local rodeos and watch his grandkids rodeo or he'd take them hunting and fishing a lot. There was so much in his life it's hard to get it into one small page. He will be greatly missed by his daughter Kayla and her daughter Hailee. His son Jay and his family of Jakki, Jaxon, Kayzli, Jaydunn, Kayclynn, and Kali. Lona Longbrake. Special friend Darla Woodward. Mother Faye Longbrake. Siblings Delbert (Mona), Jesse (Cindy), Charlie (Harlan), Aunts June (Don) Gray, Nan Savoy, Mary Jo Garreau, Uncles Blaine and Jerry Nordvold, Beverly Longbrake, Judy Longbrake, and many nieces and nephews and cousins.

Bud is preceded in death by Father-In-Law Tom Wishard, Father Pete Longbrake. Sydney and Rose Nordvold, Delbert and Mary Longbrake and several aunts and uncles and cousins.

Bronc Riding Nation-- "Bud Longbrake was a cowboy in every sense of the word. He was a rider and stockman, a father, grandfather, and steward of the land. He was a savvy breeder and artful at reading and providing what any individual bucking horse needed to be the best. He was a teacher, a friend, possessed vision and compassion – Bud was the perfect balance of tough and tender."

Bud's Rodeo History
SDRA Indian Rodeo's
Won the NRCA bronc riding 1983 and 1987
Won on the following PRCA rodeo's
Houston, Ellensburg, Pendleton, Redding, & Cheyenne- He was the first person to win the first go, second go, short go, and the average in the bronc riding.



Roots Grow Deep and Strong # 29 “Taking Inventory of Closet Antiques”



Meg English

Last week when I wrote about Christmas feasts, I recalled the antique roasting pan that belonged to my grandmother’s grandmother. My grandmother was born in 1900, and there’s no telling how old the roasting pan might be. It’s still in my possession, where it takes up shelf space in the closet. More space than I would like to give up.

If well-worn, scratched, stained, and dented antique cookware has aesthetic or

monetary value, there’s some justification for keeping it. Maybe, but not likely.

Hiding it in the closet is a way of keeping it hidden to avoid justifying it for a while longer yet.

Remarkably, the antique roasting pan has survived two extensive downsizing purges in the last couple of years. Getting rid of a functional item that had has a history and personality just seemed wrong.

I asked the granddaughters if one of them like to own the roasting pan one day. The tacit message from their collective silence was resoundingly clear. ‘Thanks, but no thanks. We love you but you’re getting weird. Do you need medication?’

Teaunah kindly offered a thoughtful suggestion. “Maybe you should keep it Grandma. You might want to roast a few dozen turkeys, make and freeze gallons of turkey soup and spend a lot of your spare time

stir pan drippings for homemade gravy.”

Not so much, Teaunah. However, thank you for the suggestion.

The value of possessions is not always utilitarian.

“You can’t take it with you.” Is a familiar adage of our times and yes, and keeping things that seem superfluous must be justified. It’s a blessing and a curse that we have the choices of so many things to part with or keep.

Ultimately one is forced to decide which ‘treasures’ need to find new homes. One must be able to justify which treasures are truly treasures and be prepared to articulate and defend the reasons.

Or maybe not.

The roasting pan is a repository of memory and meaning. It brings to life vignettes of holidays past, of my practical grandmother who rarely bought new clothes for herself, but was always generous when the collection plate in church came around, especially if the collection was for treats for

the Sunday School kids.

She liked professional baseball, but more so watching the boys in the park across the street play pick-up games. She was proud of her Norwegian heritage and Lutheran upbringing. She labored over a magnificent garden in summer. She loved the sun, winter in Arizona, desert heat and playing golf.

She deplored alcohol. Presumably, alcohol had something to do with the death of her father when she was just 18. A successful businessman and distinguished horseman, he was shot and killed following a poker game in the spring of 1918.

There is a newspaper article, also in my possession, about the event, but so much is left out of the story, it’s impossible to have an exact account of the details. My grandmother never, ever spoke of this tragedy.

The antique roasting pan is a treasure because it has a story to tell. Stories are important because they identify the source of one’s values, personalities.

They provide a sense of family and cultural belonging.

I had the good fortune of knowing each one of my four grandparents well into my own adulthood. To an extent I have inherited, learned or adopted many of their characteristics and values. A few treasures, such as the roasting pan are handy to keep on hand as primary

One should keep in mind that cleaning closets is perfunctory work. It’s easy to avoid because it’s not only hard work, but potentially emotionally and psychologically challenging too. I have come close to finding a new home for the antique roasting pan, but meanwhile it still has value as a reminder of personal roots that might otherwise be forgotten.

Maybe this explains the appeal of a store like Saturday on State Street in Belle Fourche. The store specializes in selling memories. Knowing that I’m not alone in understanding the importance of the stories our antique treasures have to share.

<https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=saturday%20on%20state%20street%20belle%20fourche>

VIEWPOINT | This is the year to cut property taxes

Rep. Tony Venhuizen
www.thedakotascout.com

As a state representative, I hear more from my constituents about property taxes than any other issue. Over the past 10 years, property tax paid by homeowners has gone up 60 percent, much faster than other property taxes.

That’s why I’m sponsoring legislation this session to deliver major property tax relief to homeowners.

I’m pleased to be joined by Sen. Randy Deibert, the prime sponsor in the Senate, and by Sen. Amber Hulse and Reps. Trish Ladner and Tim Goodwin. We will be inviting more legislative sponsors as well.

Our plan will reduce property taxes by an average of 35 percent for homeowners in the state. This means a homeowner will save \$416.70 for every \$100,000 of value on their home. For example, a \$300,000 house would see over \$1,200 in property tax savings.

I understand that some may be concerned about how we will pay for such significant tax relief. Our plan will generate the needed revenue by raising the state sales tax from 4.2 percent to 5 percent. This will generate approximately \$280 million, all of which will be committed to property tax relief. This small sales tax increase would add 3 cents to a \$4 loaf of bread or less than \$3 to \$300 worth of groceries. This is a small price to pay for the significant property tax relief that South Dakotans will experience.

Cutting property taxes on homes is the best way to help South Dakotans. 100 percent of the property tax reduction will benefit South Dakotans, while a significant portion of the sales tax is paid by visitors to our state from other states or countries. That makes this plan is an overall tax cut for South Dakotans.

The property tax cut will make homes more affordable for young people looking to plant roots here. It will allow seniors on fixed incomes to avoid the pinch of ever-increasing taxes. This



Rep. Tony Venhuizen
major reduction in homeowner property taxes will make South Dakota an even more attractive place to live and raise a family.

Our plan will achieve 35 percent property tax relief for homeowners by setting the levy for owner-occupied homes to \$0 for general and special education; those two levies together currently total \$4.167 per \$1,000 of property value.

The new sales tax revenue will go into the state funding formula for schools to replace the property tax revenue.

This is the same mechanism that Gov. Bill Janklow used to cut property taxes 30 percent in the 1990s; he also relied new state revenue to supplant local property tax in the school funding formula.

We are proposing a simple approach to address a single issue: homeowner property taxes. This is not a plan to increase or decrease school funding, or to address county funding challenges, or to rework the property tax system for ag land or for rental housing.

Those are important issues too, but we are focusing on what we view as the most important issue to our constituents.

We hope our constituents and our fellow legislators will join us in this important effort. This is the year for major property tax relief for South Dakotans.

Tony Venhuizen represents District 13 in Sioux Falls..

Lt. Gov. from A1
the freest state in a nation built on the principle of Freedom. But defending the Freedom of our people is not work that ever ends. We need to work hard to protect our rights and look for leaders who understand where those rights come from – from God. And we should honor those who fought and died to defend the Freedoms which we are blessed with.

It is an awesome charge to carry Freedom on to the next generation, and South Dakotans are well equipped to do it.

I hope that every South Dakotan took time to celebrate with friends and family this holiday season. I hope that your time together was special and full of

memories, and I hope that the new year brings plenty more for you to celebrate. As we kick off 2025, I hope that you find ways to make your families, your communities, and our state stronger than ever before.

Our people have built a state that I am proud to call home. I have been honored to serve them in a position of leadership alongside Governor Noem. I am blessed with the opportunity to continue serving South Dakotans in this new year. If you ever have any ideas for how we can make South Dakota even stronger in the days and years to come, please do not hesitate to reach out.

God bless you all, and Happy New Year!

Upcoming events,
for more information call:
605-892-2676

Jan 1 - Art Exhibit 10AM @ The Bright Gallery
Jan 2 - 4 Tri State Museum closed for cleaning
Jan 4 - Kids Snowshoeing Class in Deadwood 10AM
Jan 5 - Resolution Run 1:30PM Hermann Park
Jan 6 - City Council Meeting 6PM

2025 Chamber Events: Job Fair Jan 17, Annual Banquet Feb 28, Casino Night March 22, Riverfest June 7, Ag Day Sept TBD, Polar Express Dec TBD

Be sure to LIKE and FOLLOW us on social media for all the information or visit our website

SCOUTING REPORT | Spanish mass in Pierre

Jonathan Ellis & Austin Goss
www.thedakotascout.com

Spanish Catholic masses have been a part of the state’s two largest communities for a long time, but they’re a newer addition in central South Dakota.

Enter the monthly Spanish mass given at St. John’s the Evangelist Catholic Church in Fort Pierre, a first of its kind in central South Dakota. They started their Spanish speaking mass around the fall earlier this year, given on the last Sunday evening of each month, and have seen a steady increase in the number of Spanish speakers attending, but also in the number of primarily English speakers, intrigued by the new addition that hasn’t been a regular occurrence in the area.

for South American Catholics – attendance was on the higher end of that spectrum.

Father Janusz Korban, who came to St. John’s earlier this year from Faith, used to deliver the Spanish mass in Rapid City at the beginning of his career. He started the Hispanic Minis-

try Task Force in the Black Hills region in 2008.

“I am impressed with the size of the Latino community in the Pierre area,” Korban said. “They love to have mass in their own language, they also provide good music. Hopefully it will continue to grow.”



Attendance has varied between about 30 and 60 people. For the Our Lady of Guadalupe Mass on Dec. 12 – a popular holiday especially

“Dr. Lube” from A1 health—both for people and their vehicles.

The article also highlights how Speedy Lube has adapted to local events like the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, which significantly impacts the community and local businesses.

Keil prioritizes maintaining a clean and welcoming environment for customers, fostering trust and loyalty within the community. He

proudly acknowledges his dedicated team, saying, “We have a good crew now, which is great. They’re a good group of guys”.

In addition to offering quick oil changes, Speedy Lube has formed partnerships with local businesses, such as an auto detailing company that operates from one of their stalls.

This collaboration has proven mutually beneficial by attracting more customers to both businesses.

Keil’s recognition in NOLN underscores his innovative approach to the quick lube industry and his unwavering commitment to excellence in customer service.

For more information about Speedy Lube or to schedule an appointment, visit www.speedylubesturgis.com or contact Bryon Keil directly.

Article can be found at: https://issuu.com/docs/67b83fea1fe1b331e477c0ead0b1c0c1?fr=x-KAE9_zU1NQ

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The 2024-2025 Poetry on the Road Tour set to return

Special to the Beacon

Fostering Creativity

The South Dakota State Poetry Society (SDSPS), with support from the South Dakota Humanities Council and local sponsors, has crafted these events to nurture the creation and appreciation of poetry throughout the state. Whether you're a seasoned wordsmith or simply enjoy the variety of poetry, these gatherings promise an enriching experience for all.

Tour Dates and Locations

Mark your calendars for these upcoming Poetry on the Road events:

- Brookings at the Festival of Books on September 20, 8:30 p.m.
- Kyle at the Oglala Lakota College on September 26, 4:30 p.m.
- Rapid City at Dahl Art Center on October 10, 6 p.m.
- Sioux Falls at Full Circle Book Coop on November 14, 7 p.m.
- Faulkton at Faulk Public Library on November 18, 6:30 p.m.
- Aberdeen at the Red Rooster Coffee Shop on November 21, 6 p.m.
- Spearfish at the Spearfish Senior Center on January 10, 1 p.m.
- Belle Fourche at the Tri-

Prepare for a poetic journey across the state!

The 2024-2025 Poetry on the Road tour is set to return and share its blend of poetry and community across South Dakota.

A Celebration of Verse

Poetry enthusiasts and curious newcomers alike are invited to join a talented ensemble of poets, bringing the magic of words to a town near you. From September 2024 through April 2025, the South Dakota State Poetry Society (SDSPS) presents Poetry on the Road. This exciting program offers an opportunity to immerse yourself in the world of poetry, share your own poems, and connect with fellow poetry lovers.

Event Highlights

Each two-hour gathering features:

- Readings by South Dakota's Poet Laureate, Bruce Roseland, and other SDSPS member poets
- An open mic session for attendees to showcase their original works
- Light refreshments and a chance to mingle with accomplished poets and other like-minded individuals



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many years of service.**

Holiday Cheer and Creativity at The Bright Gallery

Special to the Beacon

Belle Fourche, SD – The Bright Gallery hosted its very first art class on Thursday, December 12th, welcoming 15 participants for a fun and creative experience.

A big thank you goes to Robin Barden, DSS of Northern Hills Training Center, Spearfish, for helping coordinate the group and making the event possible.

The class was led by Ari Albright a local visual artist and arts-in-health educator, who purchased the former Emmanuel Baptist Church in June to create a space for both living and sharing art.

This first event marks the start of art classes for seniors, homeschoolers (K–12), and people of all abilities at The Bright Gallery.

“We had such a great time on Thursday,” said Albright. “The space is perfect for up to 15 participants, and I focus on

teaching the basics of art—the Elements of Art and Principles of Design—using the same materials and techniques I use in my own studio.

We also take breaks to chat, which is such a big part of feeling connected while we create.”

The class showed how art can bring people together while giving them a chance to explore their creative side. The relaxed, friendly environment made it a special experience for everyone involved.

The Bright Gallery plans to hold more classes in Spring 2025, depending on the level of interest and support from community grants.

For now, the gallery is excited to continue growing as a place where art and community come together.

For updates on future classes or to learn how you can support The Bright Gallery, please contact arialbright@thebright-gallery.com.



Ari teaching complementary colors. Guidance and connection in every moment. Courtesy Photo

BOYS & GIRLS BASKETBALL 2024-2025 SEASON			
January 7	Tuesday	6:00 PM	Hulett Girls vs Sundance
January 7	Tuesday	7:30 PM	Hulett Boys vs Sundance
January 9	Thursday	6:00 PM	Hulett Girls vs Moorcroft
January 9	Thursday	7:30 PM	Hulett Boys vs Moorcroft
January 10	Friday	4:30 PM	Hulett Girls vs Midwest
January 10	Friday	6:00 PM	Hulett Boys vs Midwest
January 11	Saturday	10:00 AM	Sundance Boys vs Wright
January 11	Saturday	1:00 PM	Belle Fourche Girls vs Douglas
January 11	Saturday	2:30 PM	Belle Fourche Boys vs Douglas
January 14	Tuesday	TBA	WEST RIVER TOURNEY
January 16	Thursday	TBA	WEST RIVER TOURNEY
January 17	Friday	TBA	WEST RIVER TOURNEY
January 18	Saturday	TBA	WEST RIVER TOURNEY
January 21	Tuesday	5:30 PM	Belle Fourche Girls vs Hill City
January 21	Tuesday	7:00 PM	Belle Fourche Boys vs Hill City
January 24	Friday	6:00 PM	Wright Girls vs Sundance
January 24	Friday	7:30 PM	Wright Boys vs Sundance
January 25	Saturday	2:00 PM	Sundance Girls vs Big Horn
January 25	Saturday	3:30 PM	Sundance Boys vs Big Horn
January 28	Tuesday	4:00 PM	Moorcroft Girls vs Lead
January 28	Tuesday	6:00 PM	Moorcroft Boys vs Lead

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Picture submitted by David Moline Aladdin, Wy In **Memory of Chris Fox**. Courtesy Photo

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Trouble in ‘prepper’ paradise: Bunker residents raise financial, safety concerns at Igloo, SD site



More than 500 above-ground concrete bunkers and 100 miles of unpaved roads are part of the **Vivos xPoint** residential complex, shown on Oct. 4, 2024, near Igloo, S.D. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

The former U.S. Army depot in South Dakota that once housed military munitions now hosts people looking to live off the grid. But a News Watch investigation has revealed problems at the bunker complex.

Bart Pfankuch
sdnewswatch.org

IGLOO, S.D. – A former military munitions site with concrete bunkers now used as residences has become the source of numerous lawsuits, several complaints to the South Dakota Attorney General’s Office, a near-fatal shooting and now an FBI inquiry, a News Watch investigation has found.

The former Black Hills Army Depot munitions storage facility was developed in 2016 into the Vivos xPoint bunker complex that is now a residential community marketed largely to so-called preppers or survivalists. More than 500 above-ground concrete bunkers are marketed for lease to those who are worried about a potential national or global disaster or who want to live mostly off-the-grid in a remote area 8 miles south of Edgemont in southwestern South Dakota.

The concrete bunkers, which look like earthen igloos, are covered with sod to maintain a constant temperature for the military’s conventional and chemical munitions stored on site from 1942 to 1967. The town of Igloo was often home to more than 5,000 people during that span, including a young Tom Brokaw, a South Dakota native and former NBC anchor. The base and town are now abandoned.

The owner and operator of Vivos xPoint, California businessman Robert K. Vicino, told News Watch that he has had great success in leasing more than 200 of the bunkers so far and that the project is highly successful and profitable.

Vicino also said the bunker complex has evolved into a thriving community of like-minded people, most of whom are happy to live there and support one another while realizing their dream of a self-sustainable lifestyle in an area relatively safe from disasters or potential ills that could endanger society and the world.

But a different version of life at Vivos xPoint has emerged in recent months, especially for some of the few dozen individuals and families who make or have made the bunker complex their permanent home.

Over the past four months, News Watch has interviewed more than a dozen people, reviewed hundreds of pages of court records, examined emails and internal Vivos communications, filed three open-records requests and visited the Vivos site to understand the unrest that exists within the community.

At least 16 lawsuits or legal actions have been filed either by residents or former residents against Vivos management or by Vicino, Vivos or its subcontractors against former residents and property neighbors. Five formal complaints against Vivos have been filed with the Consumer Protection Division of the South Dakota Attorney General’s Office. At least two former residents said they have been interviewed by FBI agents.

Some legal filings relate to evictions or claims of illegal eviction, a demand for return of monies paid to Vivos or requests for legal protection orders. In one complaint to the state, a resident said Vivos has broken promises to build numerous amenities and has not fulfilled contractual obligations to provide adequate security and basic services, for which they pay a separate monthly fee. All four residents interviewed by News Watch during an October visit to the site carried handguns for protection.

Vicino attributed the lawsuits and complaints about himself and Vivos to “bad apples” who reside at Vivos xPoint and who may have “their own agenda.” “There is a group of disgruntled (people), they call themselves the pioneers, and you know, they seem to have nothing better to do but to complain,” Vicino said.

He added that if residents follow the terms of the lease and the property rules and regulations, no legal action will result. “I know all the gripes. ... But you cannot respond to unreasonable gripes,” he said. “I can point to hundreds of others that will say, ‘Yeah, we love it. We love what you’re doing and how you’re doing it.’”

According to records in the South Dakota Secretary of State’s Office, Vicino is the owner or director of two businesses, Vivos Construction and Vivos xPoint Investment Group. A third business, Vivos xPoint, is owned by a company called Fractional Villas that lists Vicino’s home address in Del Mar, California, as its physical address.

News Watch conducted a nearly two-hour interview with Vicino in November, and follow-up questions posed by News Watch were answered by Vicino in writing in December through the offices of his Spearfish attorney, Eric Schlimgen. Resident of ‘bunker’ community are tenants, not property owners

Vivos uses a 99-year lease agreement, so residents do not legally own their bunkers. People who take possession of a bunker pay Vivos an up-front lease fee of up to \$55,000 and \$3,000 for water service. They also pay monthly “common area fees” of \$111 and an annual \$1,124 “ground rent fee” to live in a bunker or have it ready for them when needed, according to a January 2024 Vivos memo. Lessees sign a 14-page lease and eight-page list of community rules, and those who don’t pay or violate the rules can be evicted. One rule states that Vivos residents are forbidden from talking to the media about the bunker complex or the company under the threat of fines or possible eviction.

Custer attorney J. Scott James, who is litigating several lawsuits related to Vivos, said evicted residents can lose the lease monies paid as well as any financial equity or the value of improvements made to their bunkers, which can then be leased again by Vivos. A lawsuit filed by James on behalf of former resident Daniel Sindorf alleges that Vivos misrepresented facts to illegally evict Sindorf. In an eviction notice, Vivos claims that Sindorf pointed a gun at a person, thereby violating his lease.

Sindorf’s lawsuit claims that Sindorf pulled his gun only to prepare for a possible attack by “dangerous dogs” owned by Vivos subcontractor Shear “J.R.”



David Streeter, on Oct. 4, 2024, in front of his former Igloo, S.D., bunker in the Vivos xPoint complex where he shot a Vivos subcontractor he said threatened him and his family. Streeter was not criminally charged in the shooting. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

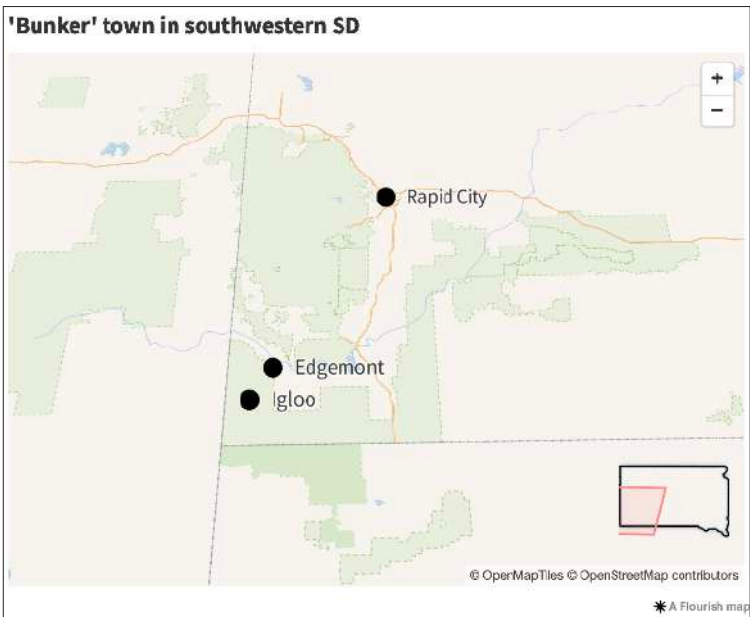
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This Oct. 4, 2024, photo shows the TV room in a finished bunker within the Vivos xPoint survivalist community at Igloo, S.D. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

Rodriguez and did not point it at a person.

The lawsuit demands that Sindorf and his wife be refunded the majority of the \$35,000 they paid up front to lease a bunker for 99 years and for the monthly fees that were supposed to go toward amenities and services the lawsuit alleges were never provided.

“Plaintiff (Vivos) accepted the common area fees, but failed to complete its obligations ... specifically there was no evidence of potable water, and no trash removal was ever done as described, and no security was provided as described,” Sindorf’s lawsuit states.

Vicino said in an email that there is no provision in the lease signed by Sindorf and others that allows for a return of prorated lease funds. Vivos is fighting the Sindorf counter-lawsuit in state court. James said a trial on the case in January will challenge the legality of some elements of the Vivos xPoint lease.

Former bunker resident Brandon Elliott said he was

illegally evicted by Vivos, which then leased his bunker to a new resident after he made \$15,000 in improvements.

“There have been many people in my situation,” Elliott said. “As soon as there’s a problem and they complain, they get pushed out illegally and their bunkers are resold.”

Vicino said that bunker residents who leave Vivos xPoint are allowed to re-lease their bunkers to someone else, and they are free to remove any improvements made prior to leaving.

James is representing at least three former residents of Vivos xPoint in civil actions related to the bunker complex and actions by Vicino and his company. “A lot of these people paid between \$35,000 to \$50,000 for what Vivos calls a 99-year lease on these bunkers. And if it’s truly a 99-year lease, and you’re evicting my client in year three or four, and they’ve prepaid 95 years of lease money, then you should have to give it back, at least a prorated amount,” James

Contd. A6 Igloo



Wayne Corriea, shown outside his Igloo, S.D., bunker on Oct. 4, 2024, has lived at **Vivos xPoint** for five years and once worked for complex owner Robert Vicino. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

Show Up

by Belle LaVenue



Here's a great New Year's Resolution: Get involved with Fine Arts in our community! The Belle Fourche Area Community Theater Annual Meeting on January 25th is a great time to find out about ways to join theater productions. BFACT offers opportunities for actors, set builders, costume designers, lights & sound technicians, and tech crew backstage. Check out the BFACT season shows listed below! The local Fine Arts Boosters group is always looking for help with school events and fundraising for youth arts in the community. They will soon gather performers together for the annual local variety show. Singers, musicians, actors, and acts of all kinds are welcome. Watch for more details in next week's column! The school One Act cast is also hard at work in practices, preparing for their upcoming contest at the end of January. More details to follow about the cast list & FREE community performance of their show.

Your presence at all the upcoming events is much appreciated, so don't forget to add all these upcoming fine arts events to your calendars!

January 20: BFMS Band Concert @ the BF Rec Center Theater, 6:30 PM

January 25th: BFACT Annual Meeting @ 1 PM at Venue 519

Maybe YOU know what SHOW is UP next? Share your fine arts tidbits and upcoming events at bellelavenue@gmail.com. I especially love the **juicy backstage dish and green room gossip!** Mark your calendars, friends, so you don't forget to Show Up!

Community Calendar

Belle Silver Lining Lunch Program

Every day of the week

11:00 am – 1:00pm Belle Silver Lining Senior Center; 828 Kingsbury St 605-892-6285

Belle Silver Lining is open so come and enjoy a different lunch menu Monday thru Friday.

\$7 suggested donation.

Belle Silver Lining Thrift Store

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AA Meetings

Meetings are held on

Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturdays at 8pm at 806 6th Ave, Belle Fourche.

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Regular Meeting: Meeting will be Saturday, at 10 AM.

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From A1 **City Council** highlighting several success stories for the community this year. These included progress on housing developments, infrastructure improvements in the business and rail park, and the completion of 7 homes by NeighborWorks Dakota Home Resources, with plans for 8-10 more in 2025. Stadler discussed the organization's marketing efforts, a Federal Rail Administration Grant for rail expansion, and an update on the Leadership Belle Fourche program which has 12 community members participating. She invited the council to attend the Economic Development Annual Meeting on January 9 and the Board of Directors Meeting on December 18. Regular agenda included the acknowledgement of the Fire & Iron Station 118 fundraising meat raffle starting Saturday, January 4, 2025, and continuing every

other Saturday through April of 2025 at The Outlaw. Proceeds will benefit the Belle Fourche Volunteer Fire Department and Auxiliary. The informational section of the meeting included a reminder of the Special Year End Council Meeting to be held Monday, December 30 at 5 p.m. Mayor Schmidt asked to remember those we've lost over the past year. Councilperson Elliot asked about the progress for the broadcast warning signs and was informed they are in and will be up soon. The Council then went into Executive Session, returning with the approval of Tanner Hughes' termination from employment as Maintenance Technician I for the City of Belle Fourche. The first City Council meeting of the new year will be January 6 at 6 p.m.

From A5 Igloo

said. "They (Vivos) get to say, 'OK, we just get to keep reselling these things over and over to people,' and that seems like it's an inequitable relationship." Former Igloo residents: FBI investigation underway News Watch recently learned that FBI agents from the San Diego office have interviewed at least two former residents of Vivos xPoint. One former resident, Elliott, said he was interviewed by FBI agents in November related to Vicino "dealing with problems in an illegal way." Former Vivos xPoint resident David Streeter said he has been interviewed by FBI agents twice since November. Streeter said they inquired about the leases and financial dealings at the Vivos xPoint complex and were also investigating other allegations related to Vicino. Streeter, who shot a Vivos subcontractor in the chest during a confrontation at the complex in August but was not charged in the shooting, is involved in a number of lawsuits related to Vivos xPoint. He has two pending small claims lawsuits against Vivos and is fighting his eviction. Vivos has filed eviction and defamation lawsuits against Streeter, who has become a leading critic of Vivos and Vicino. A spokesperson at the San Diego FBI office said the agency would not comment on ongoing investigations nor confirm if an active investigation was underway.

Bunker resident Wayne Corriea, one of the first people to lease a Vivos xPoint bunker and who formerly worked security for Vivos, said Vicino is an unethical businessman who takes questionable and possibly illegal actions against anyone who disagrees with or challenges him. "When I was head of security, there were several things I wouldn't do," Corriea said. "I won't torment, harass or intimidate people, and I won't do anything that I feel is wrong. If it's right by the law, it's good to go and if you're doing it for the right reasons. So several times I disagreed with him, and I wouldn't do stuff, and I think that caused a lot of issues with him and me because he wanted me to lie for him, but not to him."

In an email response to Corriea's claims, Vicino said he "enforces the agreements that he enters and wants all parties to follow those agreements." He called Corriea "a former employee hostile to Vivos" and said he disagrees with any allegations that he acts in an unethical or retaliatory manner. Vicino said he wasn't aware of any FBI inquiry but said he welcomes any investigation by authorities. "I welcome it, good, come talk to me," Vicino said. "We love being vetted because as far as we know, we're all by the book." "We do exactly what the lease says. ... There's nothing criminal here, there's nothing under cloak, it's all right out there and it's all justified." Residents worry about on-site subcontractors At least three current and for-

mer Vivos residents told News Watch they are concerned about the actions of two on-site subcontract workers for Vivos who have criminal records. One worker, Kelly Anderson, lives in a Vivos bunker and does construction work on the property, Vicino said. Anderson, according to information received from a News Watch public records request, served time in prison in Colorado in 2006 after a felony armed robbery conviction. Despite the felony conviction, several residents and former residents told News Watch that Anderson routinely carries a gun while on the premises at Vivos xPoint. Anderson, 47, pleaded guilty to marijuana possession in Fall River County in May 2024 and was ticketed for driving without a license in Edgemont in January 2023, according to court records. Anderson was shot in the chest during an August confrontation with Streeter, a former Vivos xPoint resident who is fighting his eviction. Streeter said he shot Anderson in self-defense after Anderson threatened Streeter and his family. Anderson, who was unarmed at the time of the confrontation, sent threatening messages about harming Streeter to an acquaintance just prior to the shooting, according to text messages records obtained by News Watch. According to that text log, Anderson wrote: "I'm about to f— his ass up," and "What he did isn't right and I'm gonna educate this mother f——." Streeter provided aid to Anderson after the shooting, and Anderson was life-flighted to Rapid City for care. After a grand jury review in Fall River County, no one was charged in the shooting, which was videotaped by Streeter's daughter. Streeter was charged with simple assault in a separate confrontation prior to the shooting. Anderson, who is now suing Streeter for damages and sought a protection order against him in civil court, did not return a News Watch call seeking comment. Records obtained from Jefferson County, Colorado, indicate that Anderson was arrested on Sept. 27, 2005, and charged with six felony counts related to the burglary of a home in which a female resident's hands and feet were bound with a telephone cord. According to an Arvada Police Department report, Anderson broke into the home with a sawed-off, 12-gauge shotgun and was in the home when the woman arrived. He bound the woman and made her lie face down with a towel over her head. Anderson stole items and fled. After an investigation, Anderson pleaded guilty to aggravated robbery while menacing a victim with a deadly weapon and committing a violent crime with a deadly weapon, according to records. Vicino said Anderson is a good person and worker who, despite prior criminal convictions, deserves a chance to make a living

just like anyone else. "If we were to say that in South Dakota, 'You've been arrested and been in jail, then you can't be employed by any company,' you're going to have the scarlet letter on your forehead," Vicino said. "That might wipe out, what 20%, 25% of South Dakota (from employment)." Vicino acknowledged that Anderson might be a convicted felon but said "that doesn't mean he doesn't serve society and that he's upstanding at this time." Vicino also downplayed Anderson's arrest on marijuana charges. "That wouldn't have an effect on us," he said. "As far as possession and use (of marijuana), tell me somebody up there (in South Dakota) who isn't." Vicino said he also wasn't overly concerned that Rodriguez, another on-site subcontractor for Vivos, pleaded guilty in September to a misdemeanor charge of having a dog that killed domestic animals on the Vivos xPoint site. Court records from Maryland show that Rodriguez has an active bench warrant for his arrest on a misdemeanor theft charge. Rodriguez could not be reached for comment. Several residents of Vivos xPoint said that tensions in the complex have been especially high since the August shooting. When News Watch visited the site in October, the entrance gate was open and there was no security system or personnel in place. Vicino said he recently hired a private security service to protect residents and workers within the complex. According to a Vivos memo obtained by News Watch, Vivos announced in November 2023 that it had hired a new chief of security, Mike Archer, who has a background in military and real estate. Archer's term of employment lasted only a short time, however, and Archer said he could not comment on his former employment due to signing a non-disclosure agreement. Vicino said residents, many who use satellite services for cell-phone and internet connections, can call the Fall River County Sheriff's Office for assistance if needed or dial 911 in an emergency. Bunker resident Rich Roehm said he always carries a .357 handgun but that after the August shooting, he removed the "snake shot" cartridges and replaced them with hollow-point bullets with far more stopping power. Roehm called Anderson, the subcontractor who lives and works at Vivos xPoint, "dangerous." "Now I have to worry about the two-legged snakes," Roehm said. Amenities offered but not provided Numerous amenities offered to current and potential residents, listed on a large sign at the complex entrance and marketed in a video with computer-generated images on the Vivos website, have not been completed several years after the complex opened. Some current and former residents – in interviews, court

Contd. A8 Igloo

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* * *

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From A6 Igloo

filings and complaints to state and local authorities – said Vivos takes payment for bunker leases or bunker improvements up

“Now I have to worry about the two-legged snakes,” Roehm said. Amenities offered but not provided

Numerous amenities offered to current and potential residents, listed on a large sign at the complex entrance and marketed in a video with computer-generated images on the Vivos website, have not been completed several years after the complex opened. Some current and former residents – in interviews, court filings and complaints to state and local authorities – said Vivos takes payment for bunker leases or bunker improvements up front and that those projects can take years to be completed, if ever. Even though amenities are not being built, residents must continue to pay the monthly common area fees.

Vicino pointed out that while community amenities such as a workout bunker, gym, general store, community theater, medical clinic, woodworking shop and restaurant are planned for Vivos, contractual language states they are not guaranteed and that a leasing decision should not be made based on expected completion of the amenities.

And yet, some residents said they are frustrated at the slow pace of building common area amenities or finishing projects they have already paid for. Vicino blamed the slow pace of construction of common area amenities and bunkers build-outs on the worker shortage in South Dakota.

“We have a backlog, and why do we have a backlog? A lack of laborers, not a lack of money, so we can only do it so fast,” he said.

But later in the interview, Vicino did point to the costs of hiring contractors as a reason for long project delays at Vivos xPoint. “You could go to Rapid (City) and bring a contractor down and do it all, but for twice the money,” he said. “Our job and offer is to offer and maintain it at the lowest price possible.” Also, he said, “All our contracts with these people and the work agreements say, ‘Subject to available labor,’ so there can be delays.”

Roehm, who has leased a Vivos bunker for three years, said in a three-page complaint to the South Dakota Attorney General’s Office that his septic system was not installed correctly, that he paid for roof repairs that have not been completed, and that Vivos has not provided security systems or personnel as promised.

“Due to all the maintenance that is not being done, and the positions that are not being filled, I have to question where our fees are going,” Roehm wrote in his complaint.

In an interview with News Watch, Roehm said he is disappointed that Vivos xPoint has not lived up to the claims made when he inquired about leasing, and that the company has not met his expectations that it would be a safe, well-run community for him, his wife and their son.

“It’s a shame because I think he (Vicino) could have done this right and still made money,” Roehm said. “I mean, just treat people right.”

Vicino: We’re doing things ‘by the book’

Vicino said his son, Dante Vicino, who manages on-site operations at Vivos xPoint,

has been in “constant contact” with the state attorney general’s office. Vicino said his son was told by AG officials, “You guys are doing it by the book. We’re pleased with what we see, and congratulations.”

Tony Mangan, a spokesman for the attorney general’s office, confirmed the office has received five consumer complaints about Vivos xPoint. He said the agency is not conducting any criminal investigations related to the complex at this time. Some residents also question the level of response and protection provided by the Fall River County Sheriff’s Office, which has received complaints about Vivos xPoint and the behavior of its subcontractors.

Fall River Sheriff Lyle Norton did not return two phone messages seeking comment.

As far as the rule restricting media communication by bunker residents, Vicino said it is a common practice that is akin to how a major corporation limits what its employees can say to the media about the business and its operations.

“We want to have control of that,” he said. “We don’t want hundreds of different stories because, you know, they’re coming at us left and right, the media. It’s really for coordination or control.”

James, the Custer attorney, said it is unusual to see a landlord place a restriction and possible penalties on tenants who speak to the media.

“You wonder about the rationale that went into drafting that, and what’s the purpose?” James said. “It’s because they have things that they prefer not to be scrutinized is the only rationale that you could think of.”

Corriea, the bunker resident who used to work for Vicino, said he expects that he will likely face consequences for speaking to News Watch. But he said the truth about Vicino and Vivos xPoint needs to be told by those who really know it.

“I know that whatever happens, there’s gonna be retaliation to me because there always is,” Corriea said. “He (Vicino) retaliates for whatever you do against him, whether you don’t go along with what he does or what he wants (you) to do.”

Work not done, or not done right

Edith Horn, who retired to the Vivos xPoint complex in 2021 after a 32-year military career, said she tried for months to get Vivos workers to groom the top of her bunker as paid for. She said she also paid up-front for concrete work to be done in 2021 and that it was done improperly by Vivos contractors, forcing her to fix it herself with a grinder.

“I said, ‘I think I’m due a refund because your contractor poured hot concrete and it looks crappy and I need a level floor,’” Horn said. “And never once did I get any response.”

Horn said that Vivos raised questions about how she was paying monthly and annual fees, noting that Vivos prefers payment in a lump sum and was threatened with eviction before reaching an agreement with management.

Later, she was questioned about a fence she installed, and afterward, she began to see Vivos subcontractors drive slowly by her bunker, taking pictures of the site.

Former bunker resident Susan Bass, who now lives in North Carolina, told News Watch that Vicino and his team use false advertising to attract people who are seeking a unique and specific lifestyle. Among other

construction concerns, Bass said the floor of her bunker was not installed properly and was never fixed despite her complaints. “Stuff just doesn’t get done. And when you complain to Robert about it, he isn’t going to help you, you’re on your own,” said Bass, 70. “So people feel betrayed.”

Bass said she and her husband leased a bunker in 2020 and lived in a motel in Edgemont while it was being prepared. She said they wanted to be free from government intrusion in their lives and find a place where they could live safely if anything disastrous happened in the U.S. Shortly after moving into the bunker, Bass’ husband died of COVID and she later sold the bunker.

“We thought we would be safer there, which now seems ridiculous,” she said. “These people, including myself, they’re very vulnerable, and he (Robert) is preying on their fears.”

In an email, Vicino said Bass violated the lease agreement in how she built a structure next to her bunker but that she was allowed to sell the lease to her bunker to a new resident.

Lawsuits make claims of possible fraud

In late November, Michelle Collins, a resident of Virginia, filed a civil lawsuit against Vivos xPoint Investment Group alleging that the company has broken numerous contractual agreements made with her. The lawsuit states that in September 2020, Collins signed both a contract to lease a Vivos bunker and to have improvements done in advance of occupancy. The lawsuit states that Collins paid Vivos \$35,000 to lease the bunker, another \$3,000 for a water hookup and about \$94,000 for the construction work. Collins was also paying the annual land lease fee of \$1,000 and about \$100 a month for Vivos to provide for “common area” amenities, maintenance and security.

But more than four years later, the lawsuit states, the construction work has not been completed, water service is not being provided and much of the work that was done has been rendered useless. Further, the lawsuit states, Vivos locked Collins out of the bunker, used her bunker for storage and has not provided security services, road maintenance or trash removal services as contractually obligated.

Vivos originally agreed not to charge Collins the monthly common area fees but later reneged on that agreement, the lawsuit claims. After Collins hired an attorney to represent her, Vivos emailed her saying: “Had you not decided to have an attorney contact us out of the blue, this may have gone very differently,” according to the lawsuit.

The lawsuit, filed on Collins’ behalf by James, the Custer attorney, seeks a refund of the initial lease payment, the costs of unfinished construction work and attorney fees as well as any punitive damages for “Vivos’ willful and malicious conduct.”

When asked about the Collins complaint, Vicino stated: “We’ve given full refund to those who ask for it. Michelle Collins is not paying any rent because she wanted a deferral until her bunker is done, and then she will pay up the amount of deferral.”

In a 2014 federal civil lawsuit filed by an Illinois family against Vicino, his wife, Barbara, and business partner Steven Wallner, the family alleged that they were defrauded of \$140,000 paid to secure spots first in a bunker in Kansas and later in a “secret fortified bunker” called Vivos Indiana.

In the lawsuit, plaintiffs Taiya Shevelev, Yakov Ryabov and their two children said the defendants operated a company called Fractional Villas, which the complaint said also did business as The Vivos Group. The lawsuit alleged that “defendants engaged in an elaborate fraudulent scheme to sell plaintiffs membership interests in the secret bunker while at the same time misrepresenting various facts and circumstances surrounding plaintiffs’ purchase, use and the operational status of the bunker.”

According to court documents, the lawsuit was settled and dismissed in 2015 after “the disputes between the parties having been resolved by agree-





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Vivos xPoint bunker complex resident **Rich Roehm**, shown on Oct. 4, 2024, in his bunker near Igloo, S.D., filed a complaint with the South Dakota Attorney General’s Office over improvements he said he paid for that were not completed or were completed improperly. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

ment,” details of which were not reported.

Vicino said in an email to News Watch that the lawsuit was thrown out. “She was in the Indiana shelter, she attempted to do a mutiny,” Vicino wrote.

North Dakotans ‘frustrated’ at pace of work

Mike Pugh, a resident of Bismarck, North Dakota, said he and his wife have grown frustrated with the slow pace of construction on a bunker they leased at Vivos xPoint three years ago.

The Pughs paid about \$140,000 in advance to Vivos to lease a bunker and have it built out by Vivos contractors, Pugh told News Watch. Pugh said the couple sees the bunker as an inexpensive home in which to retire.

“We were required to pay in advance because at the time I didn’t have the time or expertise to do the construction part of it,” he said. “After three years of waiting, we’re still not down there.”

Pugh said he has visited the Vivos bunker and has seen some progress in construction. He also traveled to South Dakota to do his own installation of a solar system at a cost of \$20,000.

Pugh said he has inquired about the delays and is aware that the contract for construction states that completion time is dependent on market factors. “Robert (Vicino) is real savvy that way,” Pugh said. “But after three years, we’re not talking about building a palace, it’s a basic build-out, so it seems to me it should have been done by now.”

In the meantime, Pugh said he received an email from Vivos earlier this year informing him that the monthly amenity fee and annual land use fees had increased at the bunker complex.

Pugh said he and his wife have considered taking legal action over the delays but that he doesn’t see that as a good option. However, he added, “I’m starting to get concerned that it’s never going to get done, and that I may not get my full value out of it.”

Bunker idea came in 1982 from a voice

Vicino said that in the late 1970s he invented and patented the large inflatables that are now ubiquitous in advertising, creating a company that allowed him to buy a Rolls-Royce and a beachfront home in California in his mid-20s.

Vicino said he first became interested in developing or selling survival bunkers in 1982. Vicino said he heard a female voice in his head clearly tell him that, “Robert, you need to

build underground bunkers or shelters for thousands of people to survive what is coming,” he said. “I attributed it to the Holy Spirit.”

Vicino said after he learned of the South Dakota former munitions site, he soon signed an agreement with a local rancher who owned the land to lease the bunkers, enabling him to launch Vivos xPoint in the spring of 2017. Later, he said the rancher approached him about buying the land and the bunkers, and Vicino did so.

Fall River county property records show that Vivos xPoint Investment Group bought three parcels of land at the site for \$2.5 million in May 2020.

Vicino said he paid cash during that transaction. “We’ve never borrowed any money, and we’ve done pretty well for ourselves, you know, millions in the bank,” he said. Vivos xPoint is promoted on the company website as “the largest survival community on earth.” A video indicates that amenity bunkers will eventually include a restaurant, general store, community center, medical clinic, security station, workout facility, pool house, workshop, hydroponic and aquaponics bunker and a horse stable. Language under the video indicates that “each of these amenity bunkers will be developed as the community develops and time permits.”

Vicino said his hope is that Vivos xPoint will grow into a place where up to 5,000 people can work together to survive the worst possible catastrophes, such as a nuclear war, a global flood or an asteroid strike. “We want people to harmonize with respect and tolerance for one another,” he said.

Current lease holders at Vivos xPoint, Vicino said, include three Los Angeles Police Department officers, a high-powered attorney and retired sheriffs and military personnel.

According to the Vivos website, the company also owns a large survival bunker called Vivos Indiana and another known as Vivos Europa One in an undisclosed location. Vicino said he is developing a new survival project in Switzerland. He said Vivos operates other survival sites in locations he cannot disclose.

The website also promotes the opportunity to buy into the underground Vivos Trine complex, whose location is also not revealed. That large bunker complex, the website says, can house people, a staff, munitions, supplies for a year and vaults that can “store the DNA and gamete cells for millions of



This sign just inside the entrance to the **Vivos xPoint** bunker complex, shown Oct. 4, 2024, near Igloo, S.D., indicates that most promised amenities have not been built and are still “coming soon,” several years after the project launched. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)



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March 14th – Feeder Cattle & Replacement Hfr Special – Selling All Classes Of Cattle
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November students of the month were recognized at the December School Board meeting. Two students who won the award in October, but were absent from the last board meeting were included this month. From left: **Maliky Rodriguez**, 8th grade (October), **Parker Martin**, 6th grade, **Sierra Saivong**, 6th grade (October), **Bethanie Bertalot**, 6th grade, **Presley Conry**, 8th grade, **Abigail Schwede**, 5th grade, **Jayde Lahoe**, 7th grade. Not Pictured: **Aspyn McKinney**, 5th grade, **Lucia Rodriguez**, 7th grade, and **Cody Stampley**, 8th Grade. Longbrake photo

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January 30, 2025.....	BRED CATTLE & WEIGH UP SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, BREDS @ 12 MT
February 6, 2025.....	NO SALE THIS WEEK!
February 13, 2025.....	FEEDER CATTLE & WEIGH UP SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, FEEDERS @ 12 MT
February 20, 2025.....	BRED CATTLE & WEIGH UP SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, BREDS @ 12 MT
February 27, 2025.....	FEEDER CATTLE & WEIGH UP SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, FEEDERS @ 12 MT
March 6, 2025.....	BRED CATTLE & WEIGH UP SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, BREDS @ 12 MT
March 13, 2025.....	FEEDER CATTLE & WEIGH UP SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, FEEDERS @ 12 MT
March 20, 2025.....	REGULAR SALE – ALL CLASSES @ 10 AM MT
March 27, 2025.....	REGULAR SALE – ALL CLASSES @ 10 AM MT
April 3, 2025.....	FEEDER CATTLE & WEIGH UP SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, FEEDERS @ 12 MT
April 10, 2025.....	BRED CATTLE & PAIR SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, BREDS & PAIRS @ 12 MT
April 17, 2025.....	FEEDER CATTLE & WEIGH UP SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, FEEDERS @ 12 MT
April 24, 2025.....	REGULAR SALE – ALL CLASSES @ 10 AM MT
May 1, 2025.....	FEEDER CATTLE & WEIGH UP SPECIAL – WEIGH UPS @ 10 AM MT, FEEDERS @ 12 MT
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School Board from A1

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Community Christmas Dinner Snapshots





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Puzzle venture showcases South Dakota charm, critical thinking skills

South Dakota artist, educator turns photography into educational tools

Dakota Scout

www.thedakotascout.com

An aspiring educator is combining her passion for puzzles and photography to help South Dakota kids become critical thinkers.

And a growing line of puzzles being released by 21-year-old Laney Titze also aims to foster family connection.

“During my classroom observations for my degree, I noticed that many kids struggle with critical thinking skills,” said the Mitchell woman who is majoring in elementary and special

education at Dakota Wesleyan University. “I wanted to address this issue in a creative way.

That’s when it hit me — I could combine my love of photography and turn my pictures into puzzles. Puzzles are such a great way to engage the brain while improving problem-solving and critical thinking skills.”

Titze’s journey began in March 2022 when, at 19, she started a small photography business with her mother. That has since evolved into a mission to promote learning and bonding through puzzles.

To turn her idea into reality, Titze focused on ensuring her puzzles were entirely made in the United States. After extensive research, she partnered with a Georgia-based company to produce and ship her designs. Drawing from thousands of photos in her portfolio, she selected 20 images depicting scenes from across South Dakota to launch the line.

“Every photo tells a story, and they’re all deeply rooted in

South Dakota. From Mitchell to Stickney to Armour, these images represent the heart of my home state,” Titze said. “I’m excited to explore more small towns and create even more puzzles that celebrate South Dakota’s charm.”

Titze views her puzzles as more than just a business — they’re tools for building relationships and enhancing education. She hopes they will be used in classrooms and homes alike.

“Working on a puzzle with your child is a wonderful way to teach critical thinking and problem-solving skills while spending quality time together,” she said. “I can’t wait to have these puzzles in my own classroom someday and share the stories behind each image. Who knows? Maybe I’ll inspire a new generation of South Dakota artists.”

Titze continues to expand her puzzle collection while pursuing her degree, blending her artistic talents with her commitment to education.



Area Church Schedules

BLACK HILLS GOSPEL ASSEMBLY
1/2 Mile east on Hwy 34
210-1374
Kenny Riley, pastor
Sunday: 1 p.m.
Friday: 7:30 p.m.

CHRISTIAN LIFE CENTER
2020 Vista St
892-4767
Dan Carlson, Pastor
Paul Howard, Pastor
Sunday Schedule:
Long Term Care Service 8:45 a.m.
Sunday School: All ages 9:30 a.m.
Fellowship Hour: 9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship Service: 10:30 a.m.

CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS
1105 Todd St.
John Allred, Bishop
Sunday: 10 a.m. Sacrament Meeting
Sunday School:
1st & 3rd Sundays, 11 a.m.
Priesthood Meeting, Relief Society, Young Men and Young Women: 11 a.m. 2nd & 4th Sundays

CONNECTION CHURCH (SBC)
613 Sixth ave., Belle Fourche (605)-210-2150
Pastor Stephen Carson
Worship Pastor Ashton Rone
Associate Pastor Chad Logan
Sunday Worship: 8:30 or 10:15 am

EMMANUEL BAPTIST
Meet at Americinn Conference room
Andy Anderson, Pastor
9am Sunday School 10am church
Men's Bible Study 10am at the Senior Center
Women's Bible Study Tuesday 9am.
Call for location.
website: ebcbf.org

FIRST BAPTIST
807 8th Ave. 892-4178
Pastor Tim Smith
Sunday: Sunday School - 9:15am
Morning Worship - 10:30am
Wednesday: Salt and Light Youth - Kindergarten - 12th grade
5:00pm Soup & Sandwich
5:30pm - Salt and Light

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UCC
892-3402
www.bfsoucc.org
717 Jackson St. Sunday: 9:35 a.m. Sunday School 10 a.m. Worship

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
901 Laurel St. Whitewood (605)-920-1959
Reverend Jill Jennewein
Sunday: 9 a.m. Worship
10:30 a.m. Adult & Teen Bible Study
10:30 a.m. Children's Sunday School

GLOBAL METHODIST CHURCH
Pastor Sheri Fadley
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605-892-2405
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NEW COVENANT PCA
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642-1122
Luke Bluhm, Pastor
Sunday: 10 a.m. Worship Service

NEWELL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH
308 4th Street, Newell SD, 57760
605-456-2544
Sunday Worship Service: 10:00am

NISLAND INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY CHURCH
On Hwy 212 in Nisland
(605) 257-2356
Sunday School: 9:30 a.m.
Worship: 10:45 a.m.

NORTHERN HILLS CHURCH OF CHRIST
5 miles South of Belle Fourche on Hwy 85
642-7167
Calvin Chapman - Int. Minister
Sunday: 9:30 a.m. Bible Class
10:30 a.m. Praise & Worship
Wednesday: 6:30 p.m. Bible Class

NORTH POINT CHRISTIAN CHURCH
10959 Kellem Lane, Spearfish
Sunday Services: 9AM and 10:30AM

PRAIRIE HOME CHURCH
1701 Hwy 212, Newell
Sunday School: 10 a.m.
Worship: 11 a.m.

RANGELAND MINISTRIES CHURCH
Alzada, MT
Sunday: Worship: 10:00am
Mark Leverington, Lay Pastor

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Belle Fourche Rec Center
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Worship Service: 10:45am
Bible Study-Tuesday: 6:00pm

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Pastor Rick and Diane Brennan
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Kidz Church Immediately Following
Wednesday: September - May
6:30 p.m. Adult Bible Study
Kidz Alive (Kindergarten - 6th Grade)

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402 Rosander St. Vale SD 57788
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Top 10 Reasons for Shopping Local in Your Community

We have written many columns in the past on the critical need to shop local, rest assured it isn't just a feel-good slogan – it's a crucial economic and social strategy that helps maintain the vitality of small towns and rural areas. Here are the top 10 evidence-based reasons why supporting local businesses in rural communities is essential:

#1 – Studies show the local economic multiplication effect by chopping at locally owned businesses recirculate a far greater percentage of revenue locally compared to chain or online stores. According to research by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, local retailers return an average of 48% of their revenue to the local economy, compared to just 14% for chain retailers and even less for online. In rural communities, this multiplier effect becomes even more critical.

#2 - Small local businesses are collectively the largest employers nationally. In rural areas, they provide 63-67% of employment opportunities, according to the SBA. These jobs are typically more stable during economic downturns, as local businesses are more likely to cut hours than eliminate positions, thus maintaining better community stability.

#3 - Local businesses contribute more in local taxes relative to chain stores and online retailers. A study by Civic Economics found local businesses generate about 70% more



local tax revenue per square foot than big box retailers. This revenue is crucial for communities to maintain essential services like schools, emergency services, and infrastructure.

#4 - Shopping local reduces transportation-related carbon emissions. When rural residents shop at local stores, they typically travel shorter distances compared to driving to distant shopping centers. Additionally, local businesses often source products regionally, reducing shipping distances. The National Transportation Group estimates that shopping local can reduce transportation-related emissions by up to 26% compared to shopping at distant retail centers.

#5 - Community Health and Food Security Local grocery stores and farmers' markets in rural areas play a vital role in food security. Research from the USDA shows that 40% of rural counties are considered "food deserts," where access to fresh, healthy food is limited. Local food retailers are more likely to stock locally grown produce and support regional farmers, improving access to fresh, nutritious food while supporting the local agricultural economy.

#6 - Local businesses foster community connections and social cohesion. A study in the Journal of Rural Studies found communities with a higher density of local businesses show stronger social networks and civic engagement. Local owners

in rural areas are 15-20% more likely to serve on local boards, volunteer, and contribute to local organizations.

#7 - The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated how local businesses contribute to community resilience during crises. Rural communities with strong local business networks adapted more quickly to changing circumstances, with 76% of local businesses modifying their operations to continue serving their communities, compared to 61% of chain stores.

#8 - Local businesses help maintain the unique character and heritage of rural communities. Studies show that communities with a higher percentage of local businesses attract more tourism dollars, with visitors spending an average of 23% more in areas characterized by unique local businesses rather than chain stores.

#9 - Local businesses are more responsive to local needs and preferences. Research from the Small Business Administration shows that small local businesses introduce more new products and services per employee than large corporations, particularly in rural areas where they can identify and fill specific community needs more effectively.

#10 - When residents shop at locally owned businesses, more money stays within the community. A study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta found rural communities with strong local business sectors experienced 15-20% less wealth leakage compared to similar communities dominated by chain stores. This retained wealth is critical in small rural towns.

These benefits create a virtuous cycle: as more people shop locally, businesses become more viable, creating more

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Capitol News
December 29, 2024
This has been a beautiful December week at Capitol and on Tie Creek. The weather has been mild with a tiny bit of moisture, and we are glad for every drop.

The Christmas Eve Candle-Lighting service at the Methodist Church in Camp Crook brought hope, and a feeling of joy, to all who shared it. We thank Rock Tarter for being leading narrator, Marty Tarter presented the Scripture readings of the Christmas story, and the whole congregation joined in responses.

Karen Odell played piano for the many and varied Christmas carols and songs. The singing voices joined in, making the music especially dramatic, exciting and beautiful, and in everyone we could see the feeling of love that Christmas has brought to us all.

Karen Odell got to visit with all her children and grandchildren on Christmas Day. She also got to visit with her brothers in Ohio, and cousins in Florida. On Friday, Karen got to see grandson, Carson Odell, in his middle school winter concert at Mitchell, because she could watch it on YouTube.

She enjoyed Carson's voice as an announcer for the program,

especially because he has a voice similar to his dad's, who did some radio announcing, and his great uncle, Ron Evans who announced Ohio Northern University football, basketball, and even tournament volleyball for about thirty years.

Carson is very lucky, because Mitchell has an especially great music program for all ages, bringing out the creative abilities of so many students, and especially raising math scores through musical influence.

Karen Odell would like to thank everyone at Capitol and on Tie Creek, for sharing their lives and stories for you to read throughout this year. It is an especially wonderful gift to share our lives.

It is a gift from the heart. People all the way across this country enjoy reading about our lives here. They don't read it just for entertainment. They don't read it because the stories are so beautiful.

They don't even know many of the people. They don't read it because it is so captivating. They don't read it because they know us, or because we are special in any way.

They read The Capitol News because it is a way of coming home.

Happy New Year to everyone, and Welcome Home, from Karen Odell

Central Meade County News

By Sandy Rhoden December 22, 2024



It's been a wonderful Christmas season and we look to have a mild day for traveling and celebrating this year. It seems the crowds are larger than ever when shopping in Rapid City. The good news has been that folks are genuinely respectful and polite which makes for a much calmer atmosphere among shoppers.

On Thursday, folks from Aspen Grove of Sturgis came out to Union Center Community Baptist Church for an evening of music and song and to celebrate Christmas. They had a nice turnout. Jack Seller was part of the planning for the special event. Edna Smith was likely there bringing light and great celebration through her music.

Some visitors from the east side of the state stopped in between Sunday School and regular church services to view the almost life size nativity scene that is currently being displayed at the church in Union Center. The beautiful figures of the nativity scene take up the full stage area.

It was brought back from a Nebraska trip that Gary and Amy Cammack took. Their son Chris, owns the nativity scene and kindly allowed his folks to haul it all the way to Union Center. It was made in Italy

some time ago and one can see the artistic quality that resembles Italian artists' work from the 14th Century. It is truly a sight to behold. If you are interested in viewing it while it is still in Union Center please give a call to Gary or Amy, John or Sylvia Rhoden, or call 605-985-5461 to see if we are home. Cammack Ranch Supply may be a good option as well. Many thanks to Gary and Amy Cammack as each piece is very heavy and will be individually wrapped up again when it's time to go back. It's has been such a treat and a blessing to have throughout the Christmas season.

John and Sylvia Rhoden enjoyed a campfire, fellowship and some fireworks on Sunday evening. Sunday was a nice day in the 50s. Lorie and Gary Hausmann, Dan and Kathy Rhoden, and their boys were all there to enjoy some down time that evening.

Larry and Sandy Rhoden enjoyed attending the Governor's Christmas party at the residence on Wednesday evening. Larry stayed in Pierre for meetings while Sandy drove home after the festivities.

May you all enjoy this Christmas season with your families, and take some time to visit or share some goodies with someone who may be alone this Christmas. Blessings to you all!



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jobs and generating more tax revenue, which in turn supports better community services and infrastructure. This makes the community more attractive to both residents and businesses, further strengthening the local economy.

For rural communities facing challenges such as population decline and economic stagnation, supporting local businesses isn't just about preserving mom-and-pop shops – it's about maintaining the economic and social fabric that keeps these communi-

ties viable and vibrant for future generations.

John Newby is a nationally recognized Columnist, Speaker, & Publisher. He consults with Chambers, Communities, Business & Media. This column appears in 60+ newspapers and media outlets. As founder of Truly-Local, he assists chambers, communities, media, and businesses in creating synergies that build vibrant communities. He can be reached at: John@Truly-Local.org.

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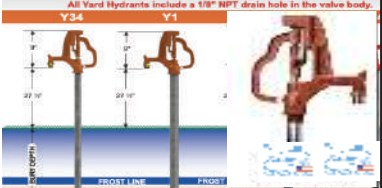
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VIEWPOINT | Regulations’ enormous costs and DOGE’s enormous upside

Contributor
www.thedakotascout.com
Column by Veronique de Rugy

The Department of Government Efficiency has made a promise: It will go after regulations that slow growth, obstruct innovators and cost American households thousands of dollars each year. Here’s hoping for success.

The burden of excessive regulation is hard to measure. We know, for instance, that the Code of Federal Regulations is over 188,000 pages long, guaranteeing that citizens can never really be sure they comply with every regulation.

While the stated intent of many rules is to protect the public interest – be it the environment, safety or market fairness – the unintended consequences are often staggering. Regulations frequently impose costs far beyond their benefits, stifling entrepreneurship and innovation while hampering businesses’ ability to produce at full potential, hire workers or provide consumers with what we need.

Wayne Crews, author of the

Competitive Enterprise Institute’s “Ten Thousand Commandments” study, produced a price tag that he says is very conservative: \$2.1 trillion per year. That’s equivalent to Canada’s entire economy and a hidden regulatory tax of \$15,788 annually on each American household.

These eye-popping figures tell only part of the story.

The costs disproportionately impact new, small and medium-sized enterprises, which lack the resources to hire compliance officers or navigate complex regulations. The Dodd-Frank financial legislation, enacted in response to the 2008 financial crisis, was over 2,300 pages long and added more than 400 new rules and mandates. While it aimed at reducing systemic financial risks, it’s much harder for smaller banks and credit unions to navigate, leading to financial sector consolidation and reduced competition.

Environmental regulations are renowned for going too far and imposing costs that outweigh any benefits. Ignoring that the Clean Air Act’s approach could be better handled through property rights and tort

law, this act – which the Cato Institute’s Peter Van Doren calls “utopian ‘costs-don’t-matter’ air quality standards” – imposes massive compliance costs on businesses with diminishing returns. Each new amendment tackles increasingly smaller amounts of pollution at exponentially higher prices that are passed on to consumers.

Stringent Environmental Protection Agency emissions standards have made it prohibitively expensive to construct new manufacturing plants, effectively halting innovation in certain industries. The auto industry, too, faces onerous fuel-efficiency standards that raise the cost of vehicles – even green ones – and reduce consumer choice, all while delivering marginal environmental benefits.

And don’t get me started on the National Environmental Protection Act of 1970. Its requirement for exhaustive environmental reviews has evolved into an endless process whereby even simple projects can be delayed for years through nonstop studies, public comments and litigation.

A single environmental im-



Veronique de Rugy

pact statement can cost millions of dollars; on average each takes four and a half years to complete. This regulatory maze makes it far more difficult to build critical infrastructure like highways, bridges and energy projects promptly.

NEPA essentially gives federal bureaucrats and activists veto power over private development, even on state and private lands. Rather than protecting the environment, it’s become a weapon for blocking development through death by delay, driving up costs for everything from housing to energy while providing minimal environmental benefit.

A prime example is the Keystone XL pipeline saga. The pipeline, which would have transported Canadian crude oil to U.S. refineries, was ultimately canceled after political and regulatory pushback. But NEPA is even more punishing to green projects.

The coming reforms should prioritize inserting sunset clauses on rules as they become outdated, streamlining compliance processes and focusing on outcomes rather than prescriptive, rigid mandates that rule

out more innovative approaches. Reducing regulatory burdens with these simple methods can unleash the creative potential of entrepreneurs and businesses.

Indeed, Van Doren reminds us that we are still benefiting from 1970s deregulation. Airline deregulation, while worth it on its own, opened the door to competition and innovation, including the emergence of low-cost airlines and other mass travel that no one could imagine at the time.

A freer economy is not just more productive or better equipped to meet the challenges of the future. It also means lower prices. Writing about Argentina’s large, ongoing deregulation under President Javier Milei, Wall Street Journal columnist Mary O’Grady writes that the country’s deregulation czar has “discovered a rough rule of thumb: Where deregulation happens, prices decline in the range of 30 percent. He has seen it in textiles, logistics and some agricultural products.” Thirty percent!

That leads to a lot of extra economic growth. Potentially 3 percent more, argues economist John Cochrane. And since economic growth is everything – making nations richer, safer, healthier, cleaner and even more peaceful and tolerant – we should all cheer for DOGE to succeed.

Veronique de Rugy is the George Gibbs Chair in Political Economy and a senior research fellow at the Mercatus Center at George Mason University. To find out more about Veronique de Rugy and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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School Board from A1 of all the students coming to the school district and all of the students leaving the district and where they went to. “This kind of gives you a snapshot,” explained Thompson. “It gives you guys a little bit of an idea of the transient nature, not as simple as back in the day, when you started kindergarten and then you graduated at the same school.”

Thompson discussed the reasons for utilizing Master Planning Services from CO-OP Architecture for a lump sum of \$28,500 for phase 1. He said, “Paying the expense will be made up in efficiency later.”

Thompson said it was important to know what the district is paying for so that the district didn’t duplicate or pay for improvements that wouldn’t be necessary in a few years. He went on to explain using an example of thermal tinting on windows. He said paying \$50,000 to get thermal tinting on windows and then finding out in three years that those same windows need to be replaced, therefore losing the thermal tinting the district just paid for would then be a waste of \$50,000. That is what he is trying to avoid.

Thompson discussed his upcoming evaluation and shared, “A superintendent new to the school system will be evaluated once each semester during the first two years of employment, in accordance with state law.”

He is doing the steps needed to make this happen.

Susan Proefrock, Business Manager, shared that the audit report on the Belle Fourche School District for the fiscal year 2024 was reviewed and accepted.

Information was shared about the Governor’s budget address on December 3. Noem proposed a \$4 million fund for a school choice program that used to be called a voucher program, and is now called Educational

Savings Account.

It puts money aside to pay for private funded school, thereby harming public school money.

Also on the chopping block with large budget reductions are Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, SD Public Broadcasting Funding, Board of Regents, Dual Credit 50/50, State Library and Subsidized Assisted Living and a few others for almost \$40 million in budget reduction expenses.



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End of Year 2024 Bronc School Photos



Seventh grade students created gift boxes to provide joy and comfort to **Home Health and Hospice Care** patients. Each box, filled with jokes, games, snacks, ornaments, and handmade Christmas cards. (Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Schools)



South Park Elementary students perform for parents and community. Pictured here is the 4th Grade performing “**Proud of our Veterans**”, directed by elementary music teacher **Lindsey Haber**. (Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Schools)



National Honor Society has all the gifts delivered from the “Giving Bell Tree” to be gifted to local youth! Thanks to this wonderful giving community for helping to make this project a success! (Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Schools)



Belle Fourche **Special Olympic basketball team** competed against Spearfish. (Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Schools)



Grade level teams met today to look at student data and make informed decisions on how to best support our students at BFMS. The Middle School has implemented “Bronc Time” in all grade levels to support students in reading and math. (Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Schools)



Seventh grade students created gift boxes to provide joy and comfort to Home Health and Hospice Care patients. Each box, filled with jokes, games, snacks, ornaments, and handmade Christmas cards. (Photo courtesy of the Belle Fourche Schools)



Resident-driven ideas at heart of Engage South Dakota

Pilot project uses storytelling and civic engagement to identify and share solutions to challenges impacting communities across the state.

Bart Pfankuch
sdnewswatch.org

HOT SPRINGS, S.D. – A sense of optimism and opportunity filled the air as a group of residents of this southern Black Hills city gathered recently to forge a new potential path forward for their community.

The roughly two dozen people brought a wide variety of backgrounds: city council member, hospital administrator, school superintendent, landlord, artist.

Despite their inherent differences, they all shared one critical similarity: They were and remain committed to finding ways to make life better now and into the future in their beloved hometown of Hot Springs.

Challenges were quickly identified.

Housing availability and affordability. A lack of workers. A need for higher-wage jobs. Indecisiveness in how to move forward.

And then the ideas spilled forth, fast and diverse, both big picture and pinpoint.

Can public-private partnerships attract employers and development of new housing stock? Could Hot Springs repurpose its aging Veterans Affairs hospital into a university satellite campus? Would improved marketing of natural assets drive tourism, especially among young people? Could an enhanced riverwalk use exercise stations or a series of murals to lure more people downtown?

As suggestions flowed freely, no voice went unheard, and contrasting views were celebrated rather than diminished.

Can public-private partnerships attract employers and development of new housing stock? Could Hot Springs repurpose its aging Veterans Affairs hospital into a university satellite campus? Would improved marketing of natural assets drive tourism, especially among young people? Could an enhanced riverwalk use exercise stations or a series of murals to lure more people downtown?

As suggestions flowed freely, no voice went unheard, and contrasting views were celebrated rather than diminished.

That approach is a key component of a new community betterment pilot program called Engage South Dakota, which is being administered jointly by South Dakota News Watch and the Chiesman Center for Democracy at the University of South Dakota.

Engage South Dakota uses community input, a citywide survey and meetings like the one held at The Space in Hot Springs in October to identify challenges and bring forward potentially replicable solutions. Findings will appear in a final report (available at the end of this story) and in news articles.

The ultimate goal is to inform the community and its leaders on public opinion, identify local challenges, and bring forth potential solutions that can spread to other towns dealing with some of the same issues.

A first step in strategic planning

Engage South Dakota adds a statewide storytelling element to a successful model of community-based strategic planning used in numerous other places, including across the state in Watertown.

In 2012, Watertown used responses to a community survey and other sources of resident input to drive a decade-long planning process that resulted in the development of a wellness center and ice arena and renovation of the local opera house. The city recently embarked on a second community planning effort using many of those same concepts with expectations of further growth based on the needs and wants of local residents.

The strength of those efforts, and of those intended by Engage South Dakota, is to obtain substantial resident input to guide decisions and actions of local elected and appoint-



About two dozen residents of Hot Springs, S.D., gave up part of their day on Oct. 7, 2024, to share ideas on how to improve the city during community conversation held at The Space in downtown Hot Springs. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

ed officials, said Julia Hellwege, director of the Chiesman center and a co-leader of the Engage South Dakota program.

“This is a set of bottom-up recommendations, a clear idea of what the community members themselves recommend,” she said.

In Hot Springs, more than 300 of the city’s 3,600 residents completed the in-depth survey, which Hellwege said created “highly reliable survey data.” Based on the surveys and input from the October community meeting, Hellwege’s team generated a 43-page final report summarizing the findings and making recommendations for possible action.

Hellwege said the hope is that Hot Springs residents will use the report as a “lobbying document” to encourage city leaders to take the next step of engaging in a more formal strategic planning process.

“It’s one step toward the real strategic planning that is necessary,” she said. “This is a document that interested and invested community leaders can use to invest in a broader, more comprehensive plan because that’s what helps a community move forward, having a singular voice and knowing what the focus, priorities and goals should be.”

Encouraging community conversations

Carson Walker, CEO of News Watch and co-leader of Engage South Dakota, said the strong survey response rate and vibrant conversation at the community meeting show there is a desire and a need for greater resident input in the evolution of cities across the state.

“The information from the survey and the in-person meeting was phenomenal and really shows the value of dialogue,” Walker said.

The hope is that the positive reaction from residents and officials in Hot Springs will form the basis for expansion of Engage South Dakota planning efforts in other cities.

“The goal of this is to go to different places and address different topics, but then tie all the pieces together to address issues but also raise up potential solutions,” he said.

Walker said he also sees Engage South Dakota as a way to “equalize” the planning opportunities between urban areas that have the population and spending power to do extensive, formalized planning and within smaller, more rural communities that often do not have the resources to engage in long-range planning. Many small, rural communities in South Dakota are suffering from ongoing losses of population and economic activity, he said.

“What we’re doing is creating a blueprint for small communities to do this themselves,” he said. “A lot of communities in South Dakota are coming to grips with the fact that they’re 10 years away from vacant homes and other problems that come with losing population.”

The role of News Watch in the process, Walker said, is to help facilitate community input and get important conversations started in communities that want to grow and prosper. But moreover, News Watch can then bring those important stories and potentially replicable solutions to a statewide audience as a way to propagate

similar planning efforts in other cities and towns.

“We’re really on the front edge of something that can jumpstart this process for the 300 communities across South Dakota,” he said.

Watertown preparing a new strategic plan

On Nov. 14, some good news arrived for those in Watertown who are trying to alleviate the city’s substantial shortage of day care spots that are needed to allow more parents to work.

The Governor’s Office of Economic Development announced that it was providing a \$500,000 South Dakota Works Loan to the Mother of God Monastery in Watertown, where an effort is afoot to convert a building on the monastery campus into a day care center that could house up to 225 children.

In response to a local needs assessment, city and school officials in Watertown are also working together to convert shuttered elementary schools into day care centers.

Watertown leaders expect their next community survey report will be released soon, providing the next step in their ongoing planning journey.

Walker said sharing those solutions to the child care problem with a statewide audience will hopefully prompt similar ideas elsewhere.

Hot Springs survey reveals community needs

The online survey completed by Hot Springs residents revealed that the city faces many of the same major issues as other South Dakota cities, notably challenges in housing and workforce.

A majority of respondents listed housing (70%), business development (55%), workforce development (54%) and the labor shortage (52%) as major concerns.

Responses showed that residents feel they have the ability to make a difference in their community, but they are less certain of how decisions are made and are somewhat dissatisfied with the performance of local government.

Residents feel safe in their community and are happy with law enforcement, the survey showed.

But the survey also showed that some residents believe opportunities for greater growth and development are being missed, and concerns arose over the city’s positioning for long-term economic stability.

“Community leaders and regular citizens both understand the gravity of the home shortage, price and property tax issues, and largely understand why these issues have occurred. Creating affordable child care opportunities, ensuring the VA hospital remains operational, and capitalizing on the natural beauty of the area and the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally were other major discussion points,” the survey noted.

Andrea Powers, executive director of the Southern Hills Development Corp., said she was pleased to see the generally positive attitude in the survey responses and is optimistic that the community can use the process to bring forth positive change.

“There was an overall perception that our community has the capacity for economic growth and an increased quality of life without sacrificing the elegant Victorian character our town is renowned for,” she said.

Powers, whose organization has helped support the Engage South Dakota pilot program in Hot Springs, said the residents appear to support “metered growth,” in which future development occurs but does not change the overall sense of place, natural offerings and positive attitude now present in the community.

“In a rural community, people know and care for one another, pitch in where help is needed and hold a deep respect for the natural world, and these are all values the community wants to retain,” Powers said. “Sometimes that creates hesitancy about growth, but the overall consensus is that we can have positive change and retain our character if it’s done strategically.”



Longtime resident **Kelly Cape**, in green shirt, shares ideas on how to improve the community during an Engage South Dakota discussion held on Oct. 7, 2024, at **The Space** in Hot Springs, S.D. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)

Community discussion mirrors survey results

About 25 residents showed up to the two-hour community discussion held at The Space in downtown Hot Springs, and a lively, communal vibe permeated the discussion.

Kyle Cumbow, superintendent of schools, moved to the area this summer to begin work in the fall semester. While planning her move from Pierre, Cumbow said she checked the website Zillow daily starting in April to see if any suitable housing was available in Hot Springs but with limited success. “I was in tears several times,” she said.

Cumbow, whose husband still works and lives in Pierre, said she considered buying a camper to live in until she found a house in Hot Springs. She said she bought a “fixer-upper” on the culmination of a dead-end street and started by remodeling a bathroom but has a long way to go in making the house more livable.

Attendees said one reason people might leave Hot Springs is because taxes and the cost of living are relatively high, while wages remain low.

Some brought up the challenges of having a population that is much older than the state median age and that there is a lack of racial, ethnic and age diversity in the local population. At the same time, some survey respondents said Hot Springs should embrace its role as a retirement community and make life better for senior citizen residents.

Resident Carl Hall said Hot Springs growth is held back by the lack of housing, especially affordable housing, and generally low wages. “People need to be able to make a living wage,” he said.

Hall added that the lack of housing opportunities puts potential homebuyers or renters at the mercy of property owners who sometimes have a strict screening process.

“You used to be able to quickly rent an apartment with cash and a handshake,” he said. “Now, it’s credit checks, background checks, questions about how much you make, and everything is done through contracts.”

City council member Debora Johnson said some people, including elderly residents, can no longer afford to live in Hot Springs. “People are being priced out of their homes,” she said. “We don’t want the locals being pushed out of their homes and only the tourists or rich people being able to afford to live here.”

The city also has not done enough marketing of its assets, and the city for years was left off tourism maps that market the Black Hills to tourists, Johnson said.

Val Crawford, a property owner and landlord, said rents she charges have doubled in the past 20 years.

The city needs an influx of young people, and their spending power, so the city doesn’t eventually become a “dead building, people-waiting-to-die kind of place,” she said.

One resident said the city also needs a long-term plan with specific goals in order to grow in a sensible way and that community beautification efforts need to continue.

Jesse Naze, financial officer for Fall River Health Services, said the city should have more young people and a more diverse population to appeal to potential new residents and workers.

Naze said he has noticed a lower number of children engaging in sports, which he attributed to a lower birth rate exacerbated by an aging population.

The housing shortage and high costs of housing are holding back growth in the city, he said. Naze said the hospital has lost several prospective medical workers because they couldn’t find or afford suitable housing. He said he has also seen the number of hospital workers who commute from Rapid City rising in recent years.

Naze said Hot Springs has a committed group of people engaged in civic affairs but that “it does seem like the same people volun-

teering all the time.”

Potential solutions
Longtime resident Kelly Cape said that while the city has a significant number of income-subsidized houses and apartments, he hopes that more higher-end, market-priced housing units can be built to attract new residents and workers.

Cape also hoped the city could attract or target for relocation a wider range of employers, both large and small. He noted how Ellendale, north of Aberdeen, was able to land a new cyber-security firm that is expected to create between 50 and 100 new jobs.

Some other ideas:
Resident Gary Telkamp said one of Hot Springs’ virtues is its nice weather, both compared to the Great Plains and other parts of South Dakota, and he suggested more marketing could focus on the dry and warm conditions. “That’s kind of a big deal and people need to know that about us.”

Gail Sprentall floated an idea that the South Dakota Board of Regents could make an arrangement with the federal government to use part of the VA hospital complex into a satellite campus of the university system. The facility could have a natural resources educational focus, she said.

Sprentall added that Hot Springs should “embrace” its VA connections and opportunities. She added that the community could better market its strong waterways, including Fall River, Angostura Reservoir, and other nearby lakes and campgrounds.

Barb Hallberg, who hails from the Black Hills town of Nemo, said Hot Springs could emphasize its historic and current focus as a “center of healing.” “That could make Hot Springs more of a destination, and I don’t think we capitalize on that opportunity enough,” she said.

One resident suggested the city could do more to market the many murals around town and create a walking tour that describes the murals and the artists. Someone suggested murals could be painted on the concrete retaining wall used for flood control.

Councilor Johnson said the city already invested \$3 million to have an elevated walkway along the river in the north part of downtown and another \$40,000 to clean up weeds and other debris along the river corridor.

Sandra Merrow, a counselor in Hot Springs, said she thinks that for an investment of roughly \$15,000 the city could build a fitness course along the riverwalk that people could use to get a good workout while enjoying the downtown scenery. “It would be nice to have because people already walk along the river every day,” she said. “It would be great for locals and tourists to put up fitness stations along the way.”

Next steps
Powers, from the Hot Springs economic development group, said she will make sure the final Hot Springs report is provided to local elected officials and community leaders for review and to create new avenues for further discussion.

Cammie Mengwasser, executive director of the Watertown Area Community Foundation said earlier that the new planning group has initially identified three big challenges to address – housing, child care and workforce – but she expects the process will identify three or more other topics of focus moving forward. Mengwasser said the next steps in the planning process will include a rollout of the consultant findings at a large community meeting early next year. “And that’s when the work will really start,” she said.

From there, resident committees will form to explore and examine issues revealed in the report, and local groups will then take their suggestions and do the ground-level work to get things done, she said.

“They’ll take the ideas, start researching them and then try to find funding to move toward what can ultimately come out of this,” she said.



University of South Dakota student **Julia Stanek**, left, takes notes during the Engage South Dakota community discussion on Oct. 7, 2024, at **The Space** in Hot Springs, S.D. (Photo: Bart Pfankuch / South Dakota News Watch)



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SCOUTING REPORT | Geese hazards & social media spouting

Jonathan Ellis & Joe Sneve
www.thedakotascout.com
A goose dinner has been a traditional feature of Christmas supper in the Midwest. This correspondent respects that tradition, and wishes he had a 12-gauge shotgun and legal permission to engage said birds this month as wave after wave of Canadian geese took flight from the Big Sioux River. The interaction took place while delivering our print edition of The Dakota Scout to Granite City Food & Brewery, a restaurant of outstanding food and craft beer. Shortly after that encounter, the city of Sioux Falls issued a warning about the geese – which again, are good food sources when properly prepared (See the 2013 cookbook “Duck, Duck, Goose: The Ultimate Guide to Cooking Waterfowl, Both Farmed and Wild.”) The proliferation of Canadian geese has created a safety hazard for the Sioux Falls Regional Airport. As it turns out, jet plains traveling at hundreds of miles an hour might not interact well with 15-pound winged butterballs. Who could have imagined?



Hey Scouts. Joe Sneve here with a Scouting Report blurb of my own this week. Mid-December brought a reminder for yours truly about the risks of spouting off on social media – and the conundrum some South Dakota municipalities find themselves in as they manage tight budgets with broad needs and wants. As a proud native and resident of Dell Rapids, the biggest little city in South Dakota, I take an interest in my community, its successes, its struggles and, of course, City Hall. I also keep an eye on my utility bill. So, when I saw some chatter on Facebook about yet another rate increase for city-provided water and sewer coming for the good people of Dells, I aired my frustrations. That in itself was a moment of weakness for a reporter who knows better than to publicly weigh in on any government debate. But, gosh darn it, that damn utility bill is double what it was when I moved back to my hometown a little more than a decade ago.

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The Spearfish clinic will continue to provide medical, emergency dental, counseling, and resource services on Monday nights at Our Savior's Lutheran church, located at 1020 State Street.

For more information contact:
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5 Melville's captain
9 Compass direction
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13 New sugarcane shoot
14 Time period
15 Terrapin
16 Slope
18 Witch city
20 Troubles
21 Call
23 Circuit Court of Appeals (abbr.)
24 Abhor
25 No (Scot.)
26 Miles per gallon (abbr.)
29 Ger. district of old
30 Jewish scholar
31 According to (2 words)
32 Country (Lat.)

DOWN
33 Young animal
34 Scorn
36 Mortar mixer
37 Clergyman
38 Dutch cheese
40 Cossack
41 Model
43 Muslim judge
46 Air-to-air missile (abbr.)
47 Fr. month
48 Feather palms
49 No middle initial (abbr.)
50 Wife of Ramachandra
51 Moselle tributary

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE
HERE ALP TEAM
ABET TAE HALE
DULCIMER AREA
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SUPER REGINAL
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TAE LAT
MFG LEBAN AIT
ARIA SEMESTER
AARP ICIPARE
MELT AKA APIS
7 Wing
8 Woman's garment
9 Blind in falconry
10 Offspring
11 Within (pref.)
17 Bantu language
19 Brythonic sea god
21 Monsignor (abbr.)
22 Two-toed sloth
23 Civil Aeronautics Board (abbr.)
25 Siesta
26 Hindu king
27 Cabal
28 Railway station (Fr.)
30 Abrade
33 Argentine plain
34 Or (Lat.)
35 Suspenders
36 Cuckold
37 Letter (Sp.)
38 Test
39 Half (pref.)
40 Tense
41 Belonging to (suf.)
42 Law (Fr.)
44 Dead on arrival (abbr.)
45 Comparative ending

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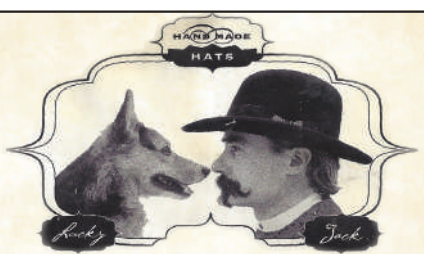
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6 Beef Tips & Gravy Roasted Potatoes Spinach Salad	7 Chicken Enchilada Soup Southern Corn, peppers & Rice Refried Beans	8 Liver or Deluxe Cheeseburger French Fries Mixed Vegetables	9 Pork Loin Scalloped Potatoes Green Beans Roll	10 Cheesy Beef and Mac Casserole Corn Bread Mixed Vegetables
13 Beef Lasagna Roasted Vegetables Tossed Salad Garlic Bread	14 Shredded Chicken Sandwich Cowboy Beans Potato Salad	15 Turkey Noodle Soup Tossed Salad Breadstick	16 Meatloaf Mashed Potatoes & Gravy Green Beans Dinner Roll	17 Breaded Fish Sandwich Bacon & Pea Salad Sweet Potato Fries
20 Tortellini Soup Tossed Salad Breadstick	21 Tuna Noodle Casserole Broccoli Dinner Roll	22 Chicken Fried Steak Mashed Potatoes & Gravy Arugula Salad	23 Ruben Sandwich Sweet Potato Fries Creamy Brussel Sprouts	24 Turkey Pot Pie Roasted Zucchini Dinner Roll
27 Pancakes Scrambled Eggs Sausage Links Asparagus	28 Chicken Cordon Bleu Mushroom Risotto Romaine Salad	29 Club Sandwich Coleslaw Chips	30 Beef Stroganoff Egg Noodles Roasted Carrots Dinner Roll	31 White Chicken Chili Tossed Salad Corn Bread

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B's Buzz

Betty Bruner

news@bellefourchebeacon.com

5-4-3-2-1! On your mark, get set, GO! Are you ready for the new year? Nah, me neither. But just like Christmas it comes whether we're ready or not. Always on January 1, not before and not later. No matter how we wish it would wait.

It is a fresh start, a new beginning, and just like a new day, we get to launch into a new adventure!

I've been thinking a lot about the new year and what it may bring. As I gaze out the window, with all the brown and bare trees, I can't help but begin planning the garden. I enjoy gardening vegetables and such, but really love seeing the flowers brandishing all their colors and sizes. And so, I'm making plans for a flower garden. I have lots of books and magazines that I've saved over the years. Dog-eared and worn on the pages of my favorites. I could spend hours dreaming, however, time is whizzing past and so I have to scan through the pages in my head.

Right now, my thoughts need to center on what's directly before all of us. A new year with endless possibilities. The first step is to take inventory of the resources at hand.

I have a really nice computer that is very useful for writing, planning school menus, studying, and bookkeeping (and maybe playing a game or two). The internet is fast and reliable. My husband is completing an office room for me with big windows that look out onto the garden and the cow lot (perfect views). The wood stove keeps the house cozy. The freezer and refrigerator are stocked. Our parakeets keep me company by watching me on the computer and chirping loudly.

Life is good! There are all kinds of challenges and opportunities. The hardest part will be deciding where to start.

As of today, Sunday, there are seven days until school starts and the workday is filled with cooking, planning, and bookwork. So, I plan to embrace these next seven days and take satisfaction in day to day routine of being home.

There are still days planned for work, but being a family supersedes that. To sleep until 5:30 or 6, to fix breakfast for my hubby, and to leisurely enjoy a cup of coffee will be the beginning of each day. Whatever happens after that will be an adventure!

As to the rest of the year? Who knows? Flowers in the spring, bees (and mosquitoes) in the summer, autumn leaves falling, and then comes the snow! And the circle comes around again.

A Season of Giving



Becky and Dean Johnson, owners of Truck Defender Bumpers by Prairie Industries of Vale, held a free Christmas dinner for the community on Saturday, December 21 at High Plains restaurant in Newell.

Brunner photo

A Season of Giving

Guest Writer Colleen Brunner

NEWELL – For the fifth year in a row, Dean and Becky Johnson, owners of the Truck Defenders business in Vale, have given back to the community in the form of a free Christmas dinner. The couple have always had a heart for the community they live and work in, and have given in many more ways support, but everyone looks forward to the annual free dinner, which this year was held on December 21.

Right now, I'm going to embrace the day! And tomorrow? It sounds like snow, so I may be sitting by a cozy fire reading a book. Hmmm? Which one should I choose?

Here's the Beef

Wall Custom Meats delivered much rich protein to Newell School thanks to Randy Oliver and Leon Minor. The two producers donated two beef animals to the school.

The ground beef will be used to feed the students at Newell School. The school pays for the processing of the animals. With the donation of the beef, the cost is cut in more than half.

The local Farmers' Union has donated toward the processing fees.

The students will enjoy many meals made with the fresh beef.

The first two years the dinner was held in Vale at the old bar. The first year Candy Swenby was the chef. The past three years Shelby Schuelke and High Plains Restaurant has been the site with Johnsons as the hosts.

"They were just opening but I talked to her (Schuelke) and asked if they might take it on," said Becky Johnson. "They were enthusiastic, and we had a great turnout."

This year the people were lined up near the front door

of the restaurant by 4:30 with more than 50 people already waiting. As soon as the doors opened the people flooded in. They were seated, given a free drink of punch or spiced eggnog and then given a numbered plate they took through the buffet line.

Chef Dave Nunke was serving up healthy portions of prime rib, while other staff served baked potatoes, buns and green bean casserole.

"We had over 100 people," shared Schuelke. No one went

away hungry and even those who had no idea there was a free meal, like the hunters who came later, enjoyed the free dinner.

The Johnsons were surprised to see one of their semi-truck bumpers featured in a brand new television show, "Landman," on the Paramount Network. In the scene in the pilot episode, a semi punches through a plane and van parked on the highway in rural Texas.

"I was so surprised," said Johnson. "I said, 'That's one of our bumpers!'"



Everyone from hunters, to cowboys, to the average Joe, came to rub shoulders, say hi to the Johnson family and thank them for hosting the free dinner Saturday night.

Brunner photo

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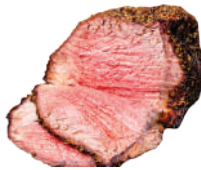
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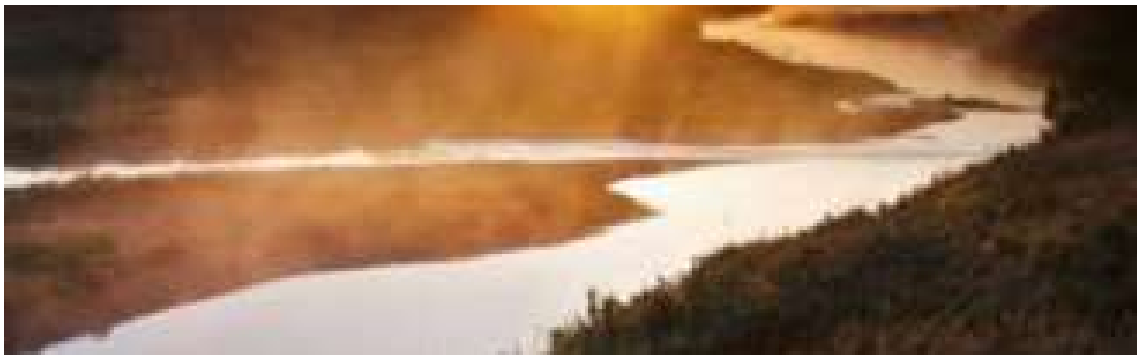
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Best Choice Mac & Cheese Dinner 5.5-7.3 Oz. • Selected Varieties  89¢	Best Choice Shredded or Chunk Cheese 6-8 Oz. • Selected Varieties  3/\$5	Banquet Pot Pie 7 Oz. • Selected Varieties  4/\$5	Jif Peanut Butter or Smucker's Grape Jelly 16-32 Oz. • Selected Varieties  \$2⁴⁹	Fast Fixin' Breaded Chicken 22.5-24 Oz. • Selected Varieties  \$4⁴⁹	Best Choice Dressing 16 Oz. Selected Varieties  \$1⁸⁹

Grand River Roundup



Betty Olson
news@bellefourchebeacon.com

Christmas is over and we’ve started a brand new year. This last week was warm and busy and we even got a little sprinkle of rain in the night on Thursday, December 26th.

We lost a really good cowboy this week: The funeral service for Bud Longbrake, 62, of Dupree, was held on Saturday, December 28, at the Dupree School Gymnasium. Bud passed away Friday, December 20, at the IHS Hospital in Eagle Butte. The Longbrake family has our sympathy.

Our daughter Teri and Mike McNelis and their boys came here from Buffalo, Minnesota, on Friday, December 20, to celebrate an early Christmas with us. Taz went up to work on Dalton Mellmer’s house that day and Casey left for the wrestling tournament in Hot Springs that started on Saturday. Missy came over to have a good visit with Teri Dee that evening.

Sandy Dan, Thad and his

daughter Kanon came Saturday morning to celebrate Christmas with Teri and family at our house. We had a good day celebrating Christmas with all of them. Thad and Kanon left late that afternoon, but Sandy Dan stayed here to go to Sage and Alaina’s kids Christmas program at the church in Bucyrus Sunday morning. Since Teri and her family filled up our basement that night, Sandy Dan spent the night at Casey and Missy’s house after Casey got home late that evening.

Sandy Dan went with us to the really fun Christmas program in Bucyrus Sunday morning. Polly Markegard was in charge of the program and all seven of the kids in the program were her grandkids. They all sang some Christmas songs and our granddaughter Ellarie played the piano. We stayed for the potluck dinner after the program and had some good visits.

We had to miss the Christmas program at Slim Buttes Lu-

theran that started at the same time with Missy in charge of the program and there was also a potluck dinner. It’s too bad both programs were at the same time, because we sure missed seeing that one. It sounded like it was a really fun day with Taz and Amanda’s kids in it and Taz even playing the part of a sheep!

We were having trouble gassing up our black pickup so we took it up to Laufer’s Vermeer Monday morning to get a new filter put in the gas tank. We also left our red pickup at Lakeside Autobody to have Mark Faller put a new rearview mirror on it that I busted backing out of the garage and to put a grill guard on it to keep the deer from damaging it.

Our granddaughter Lanie Klug made a beautiful backdrop on the stage of the manger in Bethlehem that we got to see when we went to the Christmas Eve service Tuesday afternoon. Reub and I came home after the Christmas Eve service and just

relaxed in our recliners, but Casey and Missy, Taz and Amanda and the kids went down to Sturgis for Christmas Eve at Rick and Cindy Engle’s house.

Reub and I went up to Sage and Alaina’s on Christmas Day. We joined them to celebrate Christmas with our grandkids Acalia, Ellarie, Irelyn and Dathan, both of Alaina’s parents, her Uncle Larry Stadheim, Jeremy and Carrie Stadheim and their kids, and Josh and Brandy Stadheim and their girls. It was a really fun day with friends and family and, as usual, we ate too much of that delicious food.

Taz and Amanda had Casey and Missy at their house for Christmas and Ron and Starla Jensen stopped in to visit them on their way to Belle Fourche. Lanie and Matt’s kids were sick so they stayed home, Bryce and Braxton stayed in Rapid City, and Trig and Dakotah went to Wyoming to celebrate Christmas with Dakotah’s family.

Our grandson Till and Kelsey Olson and their daughters Hattie and Grace came from Wisconsin to celebrate Christmas in the Black Hills and they had planned on coming up to the ranch before they drove back home. Till called me Thursday morning to let me know that the girls had gotten sick so they couldn’t come until Friday. I called Till Friday morning and they were all sick so they weren’t going to bring the sickness up to share with us. They had to take little Grace

Annalee to Urgent Care the night before because she was so sick, so they were just going to drive to Sioux Falls on Saturday and then drive back to Wisconsin on Sunday because they had to go to work on Monday.

Casey went to Buffalo for the first wrestling practice since school got out before Christmas. The wrestlers are getting ready for the tournament in Buffalo on Monday.

It was a nice warm day on Saturday so I was able to wash clothes and hang them out on the clothesline. Everything just smells so good when you can bring it back in the house after it gets dry. Casey went up to Bowman and brought the tractor home that he had left up there to get fixed.

Pastor Henry and Linda Mohagen weren’t in church on Sunday because they were up in North Dakota at their son-in-law Jon Dryburgh’s church to see his last sermon at the church in Brayton before he changes to a church at Mayville which is closer to his home. Iver Heier led the service here and then we got to watch Jon Dryburgh give his final sermon.

I’ll leave you with these New Year’s jokes:

Q: What happened to the person who stole a calendar on New Year’s Eve?

A: He got 12 months.

Q: Why does the person who runs Time’s Square on New Year’s feel like a failure?

A: He always drops the ball.

Then and Now in Newell

“Looking Forward to our Past”

December 31, 1914
The Christmas dance at the Theatorium was an overwhelming success due to Manager Seymour’s efforts to provide for a gathering of the farmers and ranchers of this vicinity. They were there in large numbers, and all enjoyed themselves, as did all the others in attendance.



Proper full skirts, no slits Newell Museum

The Rebekah ladies served supper in the Hall at midnight and were the recipients of many a complement both on quantity and quality of their repast. Blasphemous and slit skirts and transparent stockings were barred in the high School at a special session of the girl students and women members of the faculty held today. The teachers said that conditions had become shocking.

Ellis and Ben Arnold from the Moreau country, spent Christmas with their sister on Centennial Prairie where the family had a reunion. Misses Regan and Myrtle Hall traveled from Newell yesterday to spend the holidays with their parents also on the Moreau.

December 25, 1924
Miss Lucile Connell and Miss Millbrae, Horse Creek instructors, are spending their vacation at their respective parental homes and Miss Carrie Needham at her sister’s home in

Newell. The pupils wish them a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

At a meeting in Pierre last week of the State Board of Pardons, the application of Roy W. Howlind was rejected. Howlind was convicted of grand larceny in Butte County in November 1923 and sent to serve 5 years in the penitentiary. Our of 7

by Linda Velder

Mayor M.E. Hafner of Wm Niva as City Marshall. According to the Mayor, the new primary Marshall’s duties will be to make enough arrests in the city so that from the fines collected the city can build a new jail.

Santa Claus called at the Vale auditorium Thursday evening, but due to crippled reindeer, did not deliver any toys or candy until the next day at the school rooms, where all the little folks of the vicinity were asked to assemble.

The effectiveness of the new chemical tanks, recently purchased by the Newell Fire Department, was amply demonstrated last Thursday afternoon when the Fire Department was called to the Svoboda home north of the Experiment Farm, to extinguish a fire. The straw packed for insulation under the floor between the joists was burning and for the prompt response with the chemical truck, the house undoubtedly would have burned to the ground. The boys spent several hours before the blaze was wholly extinguishable.

December 21, 1944
An American flag is available from the War Department to every family having a member who has died in the service of his country. Any family entitled to such a flag should write to their congressman for an appropriate blank to fill in for that purpose so that this valued treasure may be forthcoming to all eligible recipients.

Mr. & Mrs. Lucas Bachmeier and children and Mr. & Mrs. Valentine Vetter and daughters of Nisland were



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Mr. & Mrs. A. J. Smith, Mr. & Mrs. R. C. Johnson and the entire faculty. Christmas carols were sung as the guests arrived. Sally Christopherson was the accompanist for the evening. The one long table was decorated with clever Christmas arrangements, including apple Santa holding the place cards, and a Yule log in the center from which red and green crepe papers streamers extended to the ends of the table. The garnishes were red, green and white and fruit cocktail salad in red paper cups. The guests departed with profuse compliments for their delightful hostesses.

December 30, 1954
Sealed bids will be received at the office of the Belle Fourche Irrigation District Office for the sale of one 2-story frame office building 29’x64’ with 95’ walls. The entrance of the building has been partially destroyed by fire. Building to be removed by February 1, 1955. Bids will be received until 8 P. M. January 4, 1955, at which time they will be publicly opened, read and considered by the Board of Directors of the Irrigation District. Bid Forms and instructions may be obtained at the office from Secretary Florence T. Hedman.

The Annual Newell High School Alumni polio benefit

preliminary at 7:00 PM. Kenny Canfield’s orchestra will play at the City Hall for the Annual Newell Fire Department’s Ball and Hugh Williams will play for a similar event at the Vale Community Hall to round out 1954 and enthusiastically ring in 1955.

The Cove emerged as first-half winner in the Newell Mixed Bowling League as play was suspended the past week to resume after Christmas vacation January 3rd. High scores last week were rolled by Frank Medansky; Lewis Papousek; Gene Scott; Clara Stolnack and Clarice Anderson. The final half standings were the Cove; Ben Franklin; Hedricks; Bob’s Recreation; Newell Implement; Newell Livestock in that order. The starting game on January 3rd will be between Hedricks and Bob’s Recreation.

December 28, 1964
Residents were back on pre-1964 hard water consumption basis this week, after the pump motor in the new soft water well southeast of town burned out Saturday, however city authorities were in hopes that a new unit could be installed by Christmas day. The exact cause of the failure of the new motor could not be determined, City Water Commissioner Don Hafner explained. However, with a guarantee on the unit in effect the city moved to minimize usage of hard water from the dam west of town by ordering a new unit at a small difference in cost rather than to ship the burned-out one for repair and await its return shipment. Lawrence Materi, Upton, Wy, contractor, agreed to install the new pump in the present well to put it back into production.

Stay off dangerous ice is the warning issued to all ice fishermen by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks. Ice fishing has become a very popular sport in South Dakota and in some cases a very hazardous one. Several people drowned in cars while ice fishing. One should find out just how thick the ice is. A few precautions are taken before going onto the ice, one should determine thickness and strength the ice is before you venture onto it. It’s up to you to make ice fishing a safe and enjoyable sport.



A typical New Year card: To Larry from Manual, 1915 Newell Museum

visitors Sunday at the Joseph Klein home of the South Hilan Community.

Monday evening a delicious Christmas dinner was served at 6:30 PM in the Home Economics Lunchroom by the Home Economics II Class. Under the direction of instructor Mrs. Habeck. The guests were

basketball game at Newell tonight and both Newell and Vale’s Firemen benefit dances Friday night of this week will mark the end of the year in this territory. The former Newell High School aces are expected to see action against the Irrigators, will be preceded by a

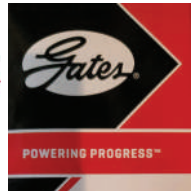
December 27, 1934
The City Commission, at a meeting held Monday evening, endorsed the appointment by

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Here's What's Happening in Newell!

Mondays

Monday Night Bingo at the NVN Senior Center 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Wednesday

Story Time with Patty
Every 1st & 3rd Wednesday, 11 a.m. All ages welcome

Whistle Stop Market

First Saturday of every month through April, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Newell Senior Center

Feeding South Dakota

Second Thursday every month, 1:30

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Open Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



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Season of Giving



Above: The elder Johnsons are always in attendance to support Dean and Becky in their altruistic endeavors. Brunner photo

BELOW: TThe line was long, but the High Plains staff had a plan and things went smoothly as they fed a full prime rib dinner to over 100 people Saturday night. Brunner photo

Everyone is cordially invited to the annual

Vale Ag Fair on January 8th 2025.

The event will start at 10AM and end at 2PM

A free lunch will be served from 11AM to 1PM

Many area vendors will be in attendance
Hope to see you at the Vale Community Hall
at 409 Rosander Rd.





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Introducing Newell Coaches

Head Coach Hendrick Interview
Hendrick obtained her undergraduate degree in Physical Education, Health, and Coaching from Black Hills State University and master’s degree in physical education and Coaching from Indiana State University. She is the current Athletic Director at Newell School District in addition to teaching Health and Physical Education.

Assistant Coach Ginsbach Interview
Why did you choose

coaching? I thought it was a good way to become more involved with school activities. I’ve always enjoyed playing or watching volleyball, so I figured it would be a good one to coach.

When did you start? This year was my first year of coaching. I really enjoyed it, so I hope to continue next year.

What coach inspired/influenced you the most? That’s a toss up between Teresa Pittman, my volleyball coach, and Mr. O, my FFA advisor. They both continued to push us to better ourselves and teach us life lessons that could be used for the

rest of our lives.

What are your goals for the season? My goals for the season were to help the girls improve, make sure everybody had the opportunity to play, and overall, to have fun.

Your background: High school/youth years in the sport I played volleyball all 4 years of high school.

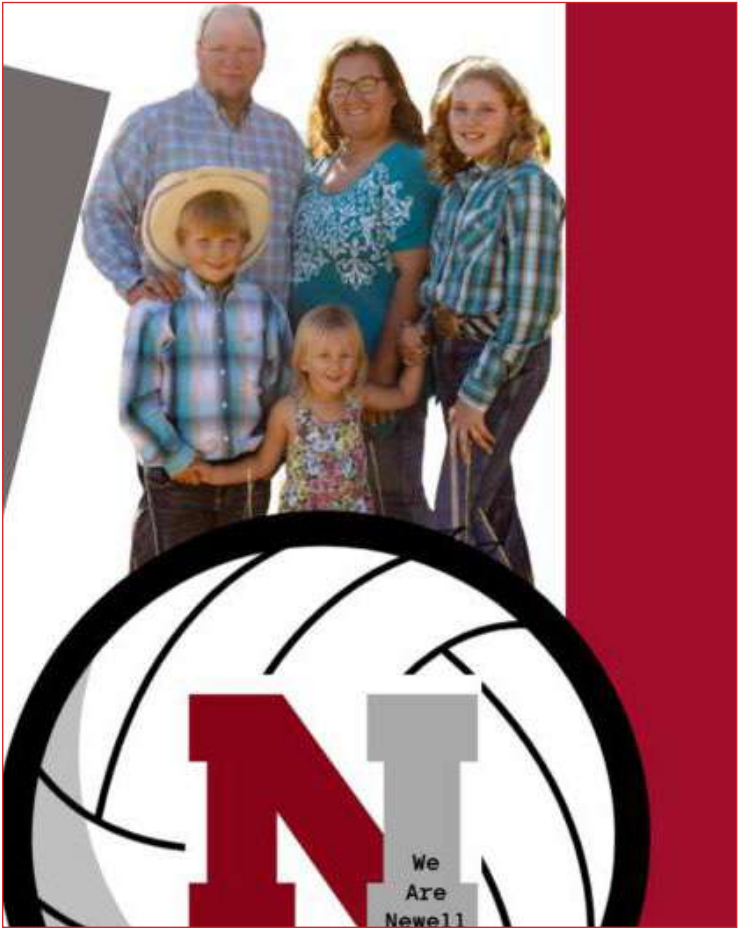
Where did you graduate from? I graduated from Newell. Family My husband, Todd, also graduated from Newell High School. Both of my oldest children attend Newell School. Victoria is a 7th grader, Jared is in Kindergarten, and Raina is 3.

Whistle Stop Market
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Wrestling Highlights

Newell wrestlers were in Hot Springs Friday and Saturday. Friday was girls wrestling and Cody fought hard and was 4th in her bracket. Saturday was

exciting with many grueling matches and 16 man brackets. Will got lots of experience, but came up short. Dyson- 5th place

Joe- 8th place
Bodie-8th place

Courtesy Photos

