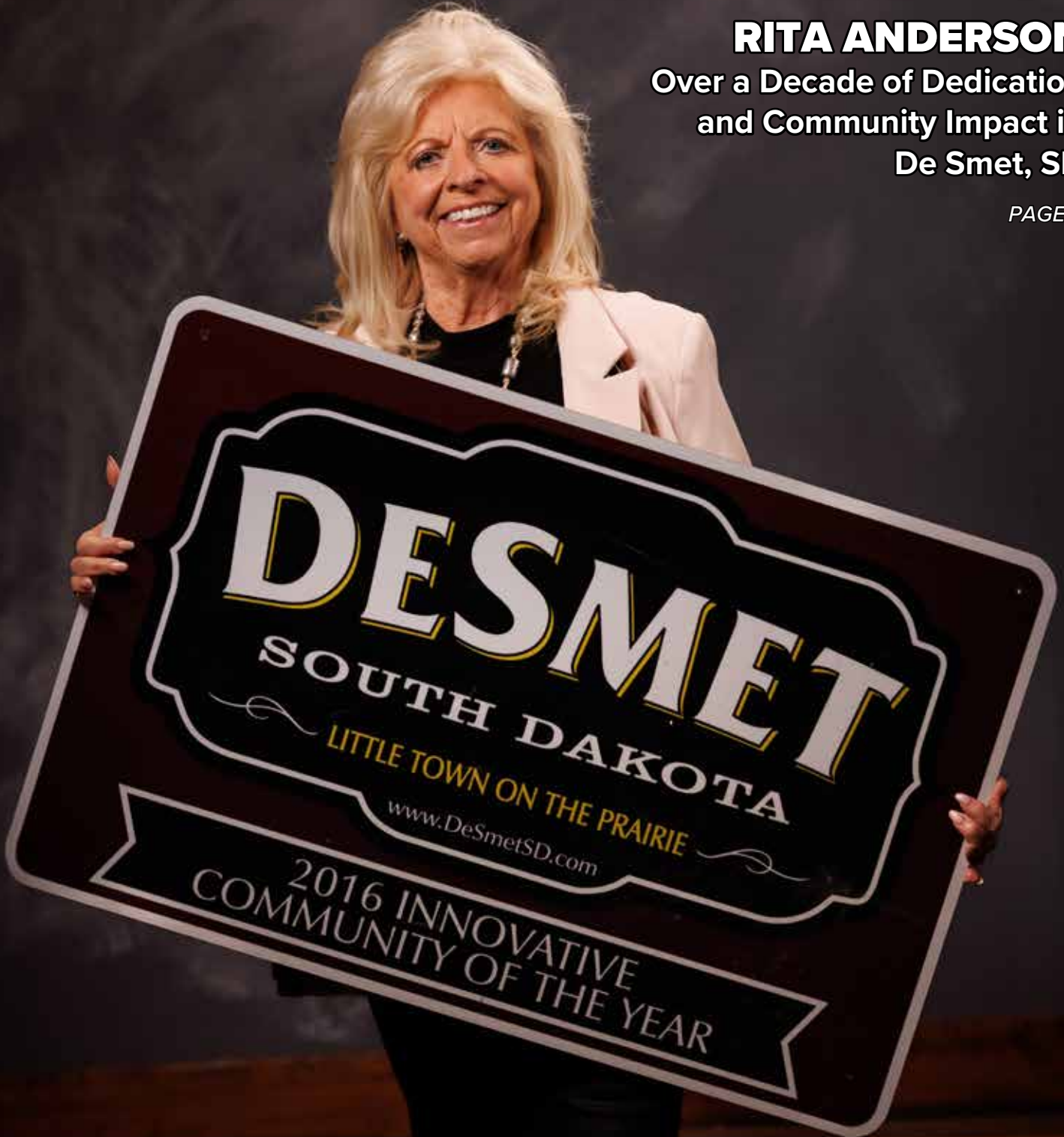


# PRAIRIETRACKS

## RITA ANDERSON

Over a Decade of Dedication  
and Community Impact in  
De Smet, SD

PAGE 6





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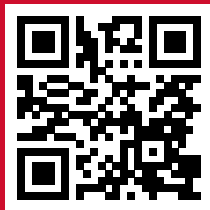
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— FROM THE —  
**CEO's Chair**

**Laurie Shelton**, President/CEO  
Huron Chamber & Visitors Bureau

As we leap into 2024, my prayer is that we as a community continue to grow and embrace the opportunities that we have along with looking for new ways to make Huron the best community it can be.

At the Huron Chamber & Visitors Bureau our mission is to “Serve our members by strengthening business, supporting visitors and enhancing community”.

If you are a business owner and a member of the Huron Chamber, are you utilizing your membership to the fullest? Are you taking advantage of the advertising opportunities with our e-mail blasts, Prairie Tracks and our poster route? Make sure your website listing on [www.huronsd.com](http://www.huronsd.com) is accurate. Are you utilizing our partnership with the Small Business Administration for consultations regarding your business or to discuss new business ideas or problems you may have. Networking is a buzz word that we often hear, but are you making the most of the opportunities presented to you? Our Chamber Mixers are a great way to get to know others in the business community. When you attend, make the effort to talk to the other attendees and let them know what you do, bring up that sale you are having or the event you are putting on. You may also find attending one of our luncheons to not only be informational and educational, but another opportunity to connect. Become involved with a chamber committee or other committees or in service groups. Being a volunteer will not only help our community but can help your business as well. If you're not a Chamber member, does the information above sound worthwhile to you? We'd love to visit with both members and future members to further enhance and strengthen your business.

When events, conventions and tournaments are hosted in Huron we provide visitor packets to attendees so that they may know what we have to offer them in the way of attractions and points of interest along with services and retail options. This could also be an opportunity to bring visitors in your doors. The Chamber works with the host of the conventions and events to see what other services they may need and do our best to be a resource to them. The economic impact of having these events, conventions & tournaments in Huron is tremendous and we do our best to make sure their experience is a great one and that those attending will want to come back. If you are a chamber member and have promotional items that you would like us to share in our visitor bags, please bring them in to the office.

The Huron Chamber along with our Huron Connect group prepare Welcome Baskets for new residents. We would love to have your promotional items to make those baskets full of fun items. For more information contact our office at 605-352-0000.

Lastly, I would like to ask for your help in making this community the best that it can be. It takes all of us to make a difference. Let's make a difference by promoting kindness and positivity and being part of the solutions not the problems.

Happy 2024!

*Laurie*

# WHAT'S INSIDE

- Community Calendar..... 5
- Cover Story ..... 6
- South Dakota State Fair..... 8
- Vantage Financial Scholarship Program ..... 9
- Huron Area Economic Indicators ..... 10
- HRMC Foundation..... 11
- Ag Scholarships ..... 11
- Redfield ..... 12
- Ringer Wants To Know ..... 12
- Huron School District Foundation..... 13
- Shop Local Winners..... 13
- New Chamber Board Members..... 14
- Huron Community Foundation ..... 15
- De Smet Happenings..... 16
- United Way Heartland Region ..... 18
- Greater Huron Membership Renewals..... 18
- Out of the Magazine..... 19
- Outdoor Minute ..... 20
- Lake Preston..... 20
- Health & Wellness ..... 21
- Small Business Development ..... 22
- Tom Glanzer..... 23

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## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

- Feb 1-29 **Burger Battle**  
Huron Community  
See Chamber Facebook page for details
- Feb 1-3 **STEM Conference**  
Huron Event Center
- Feb 2 **Dairy Queen Fundraiser for CLC**  
Dairy Queen
- Feb 3 **Meat Bingo**  
2pm • Hurst's Corner
- Feb 3-4 **SD EpSCoR Training**  
Huron Event Center
- Feb 3-4 **Outta the Attic - OPEN**  
11am • 225 Lincoln Ave SW
- Feb 4 **Huron Community Soup & Sandwich**  
5pm • Salvation Army
- Feb 8 **HAWBL Presents: Curing the Winter Blues**  
4pm • Nordby 4H Exhibit Hall
- Feb 9 **Delta Waterfowl Banquet**  
5:30pm • Huron Event Center
- Feb 9 **Connecting Cultures Winter Event**  
6pm • Huron Campus Center
- Feb 10 **Coffee with the Legislators**  
9am • City Hall
- Feb 10 **Super Bowl Sub Sandwich Drive-By**  
10am • Our Savior's Lutheran Church
- Feb 10 **Annual Dart Tournament**  
11am • Hurst's Corner
- Feb 10 **Snowflakes & Sweets**  
6pm • James Valley Christian Auditorium
- Feb 10 **Valentine Bingo**  
6:30pm • Holy Trinity School Multipurpose Room
- Feb 11 **Bingo, Silent Auction & Bake Sale for Animals**  
2pm • Huron Community Campus
- Feb 15-17 **Lily Pad Scrapbook Event**  
Huron Event Center
- Feb 15 **Food Giveaway**  
11:30am • People's Transit
- Feb 16-18 **Girls 14U Hockey Tournament**  
Bergmann Arena
- Feb 18 **Bingo Night**  
6:30pm • StoneyBrook Suites
- Feb 22 **Huron Chamber and Greater Huron Development Corporation Annual Meeting**  
5:30pm • Huron Event Center
- Feb 23 **Valentine's Dance**  
7pm • Huron Area Senior Center
- Feb 24 **Coffee with the Legislators**  
9am • City Hall
- Feb 24 **United Way Cabin Fever Games**  
3pm • Nordby Exhibit Hall
- Feb 24 **WAPA SD Regional Science Bowl**  
Huron Event Center
- Feb 27 **Huron Rising 2.0**  
6pm • Huron Community Campus
- Feb 28 **Parkinson's Support Group**  
1:30pm • Huron Public Library
- Every Tuesday **MS Society Fundraiser - Crown the King!**  
6pm • Red Arrow Bar
- Every Friday **Chase the Ace of Spades**  
6:30pm • Hurst's Corner
- Every Friday **VFW Bingo**  
7pm • Huron Mall
- Every Friday **Karaoke**  
9pm • Sportsmen Bar

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awesome starts here

You may have seen Rita Anderson's name or photo in Prairie Tracks since it's fruition in 2011. Rita worked with Peggy Besch and the Huron Chamber of Commerce in 2010 to make Prairie Tracks a reality and has been one of the top contributors of monthly articles. Over the past 12 years, Rita has written 144 pages of De Smet Happenings! Now Rita is retiring and the Prairie Tracks staff is featuring her with her dedication and passion for our magazine and her many accomplishments to improve our area and state.

Residents of De Smet, SD (a small-town of 1000 people) know that if they want something done they will all have to "kick-in" and help to make it happen. It takes that one special person to do the groundwork and the legwork to get everyone working together. That "spark plug", that "whirlwind" of energy and ideas hit De Smet in January of 2010 in the form of Rita Anderson.

She is the daughter of the late BC and Ruth Aughenbaugh, being raised nearby and had relocated back to the farm home place. She had already been involved in economic development in Colorado – in fact, had received Yuma, Colorado's 'Citizen of the Year' award. With that know-how and innate enthusiasm, the projects started happening and new businesses and opportunities came to town.

Within two years Rita was the catalyst to bring the Development Corp, city, school and community together to build a \$4.8 million Event and Wellness Center operated by the city. The school's \$1 million football field and track plus \$500,000 baseball fields were all part of the plan. Rita, as Economic Development Director, established the Community Foundation which has been the 'pathway'

for approximately \$5 million brought to De Smet for all types of community projects. The De Smet community recognized her efforts by honoring her with the prestigious Spirit of Dr. Bell Award for an individual who "gives willingly, energetically and consistently without seeking recognition".

In the 13 years Rita has been in De Smet she has promoted every aspect of quality of life.

### **Business & Commerce**

For a small, rural South Dakota town it is unusual to have a large manufacturing park that Rita has helped to expand with two additional 10,000 sq.ft. buildings & recruiting numerous companies that have chosen to relocate in the Industrial Park and downtown. These have brought new employees and families to become part of the community. In addition, she has helped businesses expand utilizing the Development Corporation's Revolving Loan and Workforce Incentive programs. Rita can tell some inspiring stories about recruiting businesses, medical facilities and convincing others to merge and expand.

### **Housing**

Rita realized the community cannot grow without additional housing, even before the present housing crisis. She wrote many successful grant applications receiving millions of dollars in funding and developed programs that have brought housing projects, including an assisted living facility, townhomes and chiropractic clinic building.

### **Community Improvements**

Rita has proven that 'if you stick with it' and do not give up, you can finally get it done! This was demonstrated with the success of the Kingsbury County Transit system. After being turned down for partnerships with several transit groups across the state, being told the community did not have enough residents, the Rural Office of Community Services was discovered and one of the most successful transit systems in the state was put into place. Operating successfully for over three years, giving an average of 30 rides each day and raising large funds locally for new vehicles, the program is expanding to be countywide.


And the amazing Kingsbury Journal story of the Development Corporation saving the local newspaper through volunteers and going countywide has proven that smaller rural communities can accomplish almost anything by bringing the community to work together to make it happen!

### **Tourism**

Tourism brings over 50,000 people to De Smet each year to visit Laura Ingalls Wilder sites. She has grown this economic impact by developing a community website and writing/editing a 64-page annual De Smet Community Guide. All this while fielding calls 24/7 with her personal phone which she listed for any tourism questions, e-mail requests or housing needs.

### **National & Statewide Promotion/Coordination**

Rita is well known as she represents De Smet nationally and makes certain the area is well represented and promoted at the State level, creating an outstanding network of contacts throughout the State. She has given presentations to the South Dakota Legislature and many mid-western economic development conferences. She has served as President of the South Dakota Chamber & Economic Development Council, and instrumental in forming a greatly needed South Dakota Economic Development Professionals Association. She has played



*Sitting in front of the De Smet townhomes under construction in 2015, Rita was instrumental in the planning, funding and implementation of the project. The Development Corporation received grant funding from the SD Housing Authority for one-half of the cost of the 4-unit complex.*

a large role in bringing international recognition to the area through the Hwy 14 Tower and Trails architectural design competition and involving countless volunteers with over twenty state and national organizations.

The above list could go much longer. And yes, this

is just one person we are talking about without any office staff. Yet if there is an event, she has been the one doing the leg work, bringing food and cleaning up. Even though she is busy, she is quick to share her expertise. She received an award as the 2019 Mentor of the Year by Dakota Resources for actively helping other young Economic Development entrepreneurs. She does it all – she was responsible for writing the successful \$325,000 grant application to the prestigious Bush Foundation and De Smet receiving the Innovative Community of the Year Prize. It is a lucky thing that Rita is good at her famous “all-nighters” to meet deadlines.

In addition to all of the above, she is a much-loved mother and “push-over” Grandma who is often traveling to see her two children and four grandkids in Colorado.

Rita is a joy to visit with and is known for bringing fun and laughter wherever she goes with many unique experiences to talk about. Be sure to ask her about when she was kissed by Elvis and he gave her his scarf! She and her sisters are in the National Baton Twirling Hall of Fame and she was named one of the Top 10 Baton Twirlers in the Nation, honored at the Indianapolis 500 Speedway Race where she performed in front of the large crowd twirling her baton as she marched down the tricky, sloping track! She and her sister were on national TV when they twirled on the Ted Mack Variety show.

**Future Plans**

Our entire area is fortunate that even though Rita has retired, she continues her tireless efforts promoting and working towards improvements for community needs and quality of life. Keeping her calendar straight has to be an amazing task as she is still very involved with many local projects and being an active board member on several statewide organizations continuing her passion for housing, trails, nonprofits, economic development, funding and the arts. She laughingly tells others, “I am still busy volunteering for my favorite projects and organizations but I have found retirement means ‘no pay check!’” And we must mention – she continues to be very involved in baton twirling, and recently returned from Liverpool, England where she and her sister attended the World Baton Twirling Championships.

**We salute you – Rita Anderson!** We will miss your Prairie Tracks involvement but know we will be seeing you as you continue being a South Dakota promoter!



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# SD State Fairgrounds Update

**BY CANDI BRILEY**, South Dakota State Fair Assistant Director

We are in full swing for 2024! Ask anyone in the fair office, we aren't sure it's slowed down since the fair! We have a variety of irons in the fire, with some exciting projects in the works.

Teachers, it's time to shine a spotlight on your students' talents! Enter their exceptional work in the Education Department at the SD State Fair. The 2024 Education Department handbook is now available online for educators to see how they can get their students involved in the 2024 SD State Fair by entering a project from school! Any and all classroom subjects are able to be entered. Public, private, and homeschools can enter in the Education Department. Kids love going to the fair and seeing their project on display! Teachers, we would love for you to enter, especially if you haven't in the past. Show the world the amazing things happening in your classroom!



The Education Department handbook can be found at [sdstatefair.com](http://sdstatefair.com). The deadline to submit entries is April 12. Education entries transitioned to online only this year which will be a positive change for the teacher and the fair office! A fantastic, easy to follow instructional video was made to help teachers through the online entry process that can also be found on the education webpage.

Now, onto a different kind of class and subject! The annual Original SD BBQ Championships, held in conjunction with Wheel Jam on the SD State Fairgrounds, is a Kansas City Barbeque Society (KCBS)



sanctioned event. To judge a KCBS sanctioned event, judges must be a certified KCBS judge. To increase the pool of certified judges and offer continued training to those already certified, a KCBS judging school will be held at the Nordby Exhibit Hall on the SD State Fairgrounds in Huron on Saturday, April 13 from 10 AM – 2 PM.

Following the judging school, a table captain class will also be held. Taking the class will result in becoming a certified KCBS table captain.

The classes teach you the art and mechanics of judging and at the end of the class, you'll be a certified judge. Those active or interested in becoming active in competitive BBQ may also consider taking the class as it teaches what the judges look for when judging.

Registration for the judging school is \$115. Registration for the certified table captain class is \$60 and participants must be a certified judge. To register, go to [www.sdbbqchampionships.com](http://www.sdbbqchampionships.com) or call the State Fair Office at 605.353.7340 for more information. The deadline to register for the classes is April 3. To take either class, you must be a registered KCBS member. To become a member, go to [kcbs.us](http://kcbs.us) and click join now.

For more information, log onto [www.sdbbqchampionships.com](http://www.sdbbqchampionships.com) or call the State Fair Office at 605.353.7340.

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# February Athlete of the Month: Abby Aslesen

BY MATT NIEDERBAUMER, CFP® Vantage Financial, Partner, Senior Wealth Advisor

Abby Aslesen, a senior at Howard High School, comes from a family of avid basketball fans. Both of Abby's parents played college basketball so naturally she started at an early age and became passionate about the sport. Abby has played basketball for 12 years and competes as a forward on her high school team. She is grateful for the relationships and opportunities she has gained through her athletic experience. Over the years, Abby has learned that the time and effort she puts into training and practice directly leads to success. She has spent many late nights in her high school gym practicing free throws, ball-handling, and post moves. Usually, she will stay in the gym until a teacher or one of her parents kicks her out. Abby shared, "I hope that as I continue to prioritize these principal values in my life, I will continue to find success on and off the court." Abby has earned numerous awards including Midco Player of the Week, Varsity Offensive MVP, Breakout Player of the Year, Hansen Anderson magazine cover athlete, in addition to being named to the All-Conference First Team and Second Team. Head Coach Travis Aslesen describes Abby as a "determined, no-nonsense leader" whose drive for excellence and success brings out the best in her teammates. Abby is "the glue that keeps the team together . . . and [she is] determined to help others find their fire for competition and success." With a high regard for team unity, and maintaining a positive attitude, Abby uplifts all those around her. In addition to her success on the basketball court, Abby is also a talented volleyball player who recently finished her 10th and final varsity season as a middle hitter. She was named MVP and Second Team All-Conference while serving as team captain for the last two years.



In the classroom, Abby is recognized as a scholar in her class having earned high marks by focusing on her studies with the same dedication, effort, and diligence as she demonstrates on the court. She is a member of the student council, National Honors Society, choir, and quiz bowl. Next fall, Abby will attend Valley City State University in North Dakota where she has earned a basketball scholarship. Abby is looking forward to competing at the collegiate level and pursuing a degree in Communications with a concentration in Digital Media Management.

To obtain an application for the Athlete of the Month Scholarship program email [bfast@vfplanning.com](mailto:bfast@vfplanning.com), visit Vantage Financial Partners website at [www.vfplanning.com](http://www.vfplanning.com), or ask your high school guidance counselor. If you are a high school senior who plays sports, attends a SD high school, you are eligible to apply for a \$1,500 scholarship.

## Getting to know Abby:

**FAVORITE QUOTE:** For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you. - Matthew 17:20

**FAVORITE FOOD:** Nachos

**FAVORITE LATE-NIGHT SNACK:** Oreos with milk

**HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR SPORT CAREER:** Winning the SoDak 16 game to make it to the State Tournament during my junior year. I think that was the best basketball game my team had played all season. Everyone contributed to the win, and it was just such a great memory that I will always have.

**FAVORITE HS CLASS:** Trigonometry. My teacher Mr. Wiese instilled so much confidence in myself and my academic abilities. We engaged in many interactive activities, which you don't normally get to do in a regular math class.

**FAVORITE FAMILY GAME:** Mario Kart on the Wii. My family can get a little too competitive with it, but we always have so much fun!

**FUN FACT:** If I ever drop a penny and it lands heads up, I always leave it for someone else so that they can have good luck!



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# HURON AREA ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Sales Tax Collected	December '22	December '23	% Change
Sales Tax - 1% .....	424,040	391,799	-8%
Second Penny .....	424,040	391,799	-8%
Third Penny (BBB) .....	68,525	40,875	-40%
Year-to-date combined total .....	9,386,133	10,045,036	7%
**Real Estate Statistics	December '22	December '23	% Change
Sales .....	10	15	50%
Average Sale Price .....	169,250	245,723	45%
Year-to-date Total Sales .....	178	145	-19%
Active Listings .....	26	31	19%
Average List Price .....	186,938	227,689	22%
YTD Average Days on Market .....	81	82	1%
Building Permits	December '22	December '23	% Change
<b>Residential</b>			
New Homes .....	0	0	0%
Garage .....	0	0	0%
Remodel .....	3	17	467%
Estimated Value .....	6,672	134,414	1915%
<b>Commercial</b>			
New .....	0	1	100%
Remodel .....	2	0	-100%
Estimated Value .....	875,000	856,593	-2%
Year-to-date combined total .....	15,627,940	19,961,749	28%
Employment (County)	November '22	November '23	% Change
Total Workforce .....	9,177	9,188	0%
Total Employed .....	9,019	9,049	0%
Total Unemployed .....	158	139	-12%
Unemployment Rate .....	1.7%	1.5%	-12%

\*\*Real Estate Statistics courtesy of Huron Board of Realtors

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# Dancing Duos Revealed for 25th Anniversary of Papa Luigi



BY LEVI KARY, HRMC Foundation Executive Director

We're setting the stage for a silver celebration at the 25th annual Papa Luigi gala on Saturday, March 23 with a Dancing with the Stars style event. After several weeks of anticipation, our seven star-couples have been revealed on the HRMC Foundation Facebook page, complete with a practice reel and video introduction of each couple! **Scan the QR code to see the videos.**



Dancers have been practicing for several months with Tarin Oyler, longtime professional dancer and instructor, and wife of Dr. Vincent Oyler, family medicine physician. "We're having a great time learning our dance and we're really embracing our inner dancers," said Dr. Tony Loewen, general surgeon with New Life General Surgery. "We're hoping for a great turnout and some friendly dancing competition for a great cause."

Each couple will debut a dance the evening of the event, complete with choreography, music, and costumes inspired by themes from previous Papa Luigis. Attendees will have the opportunity to vote for their favorite couple by making a donation to the Foundation, with one couple taking home the first ever Papa Luigi mirror ball trophy.

Sport your best silver outfit or cocktail attire to celebrate our 25th anniversary and join us for a star-studded evening featuring excellent food, drinks and entertainment including live and silent auctions. Individual tickets and tables are available to reserve now at [hrmcfoundation.org](http://hrmcfoundation.org) or by calling 605-353-6315.

The HRMC Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Huron Regional Medical Center. We support health care education and scholarships, programs to strengthen health and wellness, and technological advances to provide excellent health care in our rural community. All proceeds from Papa Luigi support the HRMC Foundation's mission to ensure high-quality health care is always available, close to home.



Tom and Jane Meekins



Eric and Sarah Miner



Craig and Tasha Lee



Dr. Tony and Emma Loewen



Chris and Teresa Person



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Jonathan Wachter and Callee Bauman-Wachter

## Ag Scholarships

The Agriculture Committee of the Huron Chamber & Visitors Bureau is once again accepting applicants for their scholarship program. One \$1,000 and two \$500 scholarships will be available to area graduating high school seniors planning to enroll in post-secondary education at any South Dakota University or Technical Institute. The recipient will receive scholarship funds at the start of their second semester.

The Agriculture Committee of the Huron Chamber & Visitors Bureau awarded \$2,000 in Ag Scholarships for 2023. Landon Wallman of Huron received \$1,000, Harlee Heim and Cally Jo Faulhaber each received \$500 toward their furthered education. The criteria for the scholarships include activities, leadership, scholastic ability, or improvement and character. Please take time to complete & return the application prior to April 1st, 2024 to be eligible for a scholarship.

If you are interested in applying for this scholarship, applications can be picked up at the Huron Chamber & Visitors Bureau office at 1725 Dakota Ave S in Huron or are online at [www.huronsd.com/ag](http://www.huronsd.com/ag). Applications must be returned to the Huron Chamber & Visitors Bureau by April 1st, 2024. If you have any questions contact Brianna at the Chamber office at 605-352-0000 or email [program.events@huronsd.com](mailto:program.events@huronsd.com).

Mark the calendars for February 19 for the annual Presidents' Cracker Barrel at the CNW Historic RR Depot, Redfield. The event runs from 1 pm-3 pm with legislators from Districts 122 & 123 present as well as those from Districts 1, 2, and 3. A Q & A session allow for audience participation, so bring questions and concerns.

The Depot is located at 715 W. 3rd Street and can be contacted at 605-472-4566.



**RINGER WANTS TO KNOW...**

**WHAT IS THE DATE OF THE PAPA LUIGI EVENT?**



Find the answer to Ringer's question in this edition of Prairie Tracks. Call the Chamber at 352-0000 or email wanda@huronsd.com with your answer and phone number by February 15<sup>th</sup> for a chance to win \$25 in Huron Bucks.

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# Huron School District Foundation 2023 Update

One year has elapsed since the formation of the foundation and many accomplishments have occurred. Approximately seventy-five individuals, classes and businesses contributed \$2,000.00 or more to become Founders Club Donors and over \$220,000.00 has been pledged this year. The reality that we will soon be able to enhance educational opportunities through scholarships is upon us as we watch our endowment grow, thanks to so many generous donors.

Our Homecoming Scramble was a success thanks to the sponsors and support shown by so many who participated on the Saturday after Homecoming. If your class is planning a reunion in 2024, please add the golf scramble to your agenda and stay tuned for additional events being planned by the foundation board.

The Day of the Tiger was well received with over \$55,000.00 raised which included a generous \$25,000.00 match from Terry and Nancy Schiltz. Chloe Culver secured great testimonials from the students and staff at HHS encouraging support of the Day of the Tiger and our community responded. Plans are already underway for the 2nd Annual Day of the Tiger.

It is a privilege for the Huron School District Foundation to be named as the recipient of memorials given in honor of loved ones who have passed away. With each and every donation received, we are reminded of the care and compassion we see in the Huron Community.

The Board of Directors of HSD Foundation would like to wish everyone a healthy and prosperous 2024. For more information regarding the Huron School District Foundation, please visit [HSDfoundation.com](http://HSDfoundation.com) or email [info@hsdfoundation.com](mailto:info@hsdfoundation.com).



## 2023 Shop Local Christmas Promotion Winners



**Yvonne McDonald**  
*Shop Local 1st Place Winner*



**Donna Minske**  
*Shop Local 2nd Place Winner*



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**Tulare 605.596.4200**

# Meet the New Chamber Board Members

The Huron Chamber and Visitors Bureau is pleased to share with you our three new Board members who are replacing Ryan Hofer, Rebecca Rink and Belinda Nelson. We are excited to have them join our Board of Directors and to help us with our mission of serving members by strengthening business, supporting visitors and enhancing our community.



MATI FELDERMAN

Mati Felderman is the director of marketing and communications at Huron Regional Medical Center. She joined the HRMC team in 2017 as executive assistant and physician services coordinator and took on her current role in June of 2022.

She is a Wyoming native, and graduated from Black Hills State University in 2007 with a major in mass communications with an

emphasis in public relations, and a minor in business. Upon graduation, she began her career as the development manager for the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Her husband, Chad, works for Dakota Energy Cooperative based out of Huron and Miller, and they have two sons, Noah, age 15 and Jaxson, age 11. They reside on her husband's family farm south of Doland, SD.

She is excited and honored to join this passionate group of community members in serving on the Huron Chamber & Visitors Bureau board of directors. While they don't live immediately in Huron, it's extremely important to her to have strong businesses, job opportunities, resources, and health care for the residents and visitors of Huron, but also for the surrounding rural communities.



RAY CARDONA

Ray Cardona came to Huron in 2006 from San Angelo, Texas. He brought his skills to Dakota Provisions, where he manages the Refrigeration Department for all three facilities. He has been married to Vanessa for 23 years, and they have five children. Three have graduated from college (MTI & SDSU) and his youngest two are in Huron Middle School.



CHRIS PERSON

Chris Person is the owner of Cookie Dough Cupcakes. Before moving to Huron in 2020, his background was in Lean Manufacturing and Commercial Sales. In 2021, he turned his passion for baking into a new business.

Chris enjoys making cupcakes and spending time with his wife, Pastor Teresa Person. They both enjoy golfing, traveling and spending time with their (3) adult children and (3) grand-daughters.

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# Huron Community Foundation 2024 Grant Application

BY STEVE GOHN, Huron Community Foundation President

Applications for HCF grants are accepted February 15th through March 15th. The application is available on the foundation website or from the Huron Chamber & Visitors office at 1725 Dakota Ave S. Grant guidelines are available on the website and explain the process. Huron Community Foundation oversees several legacy funds including the Jerry & Sandra Mencke Family Fund, the Wheeler Family Fund, the Emily and Robert Entwisle Family Fund, the Schiltz Family Fund, the Craig Matthesen Fund, The William K. Kingdon Fund. For more information, contact one of the advisory council members or email [hcf@huronsd.com](mailto:hcf@huronsd.com).

Email the completed application to [hcf@huronsd.com](mailto:hcf@huronsd.com), or mail to: HCF Grant, 1725 Dakota Avenue S, Huron, SD 57350. Applications must be received by 5:00 pm on March 15th. PLEASE NOTE, the HCF grant application does NOT include requests directed to WINGS FOUNDATION. WINGS grant requests will be received via their own grant application.

The **WINGS Foundation** is a local entity, which was established after the closure of the YWCA of Huron and is now a part of the South Dakota Community Foundation. The earnings from this sizable foundation are distributed back annually to Huron and the surrounding communities through a grant application process. The WINGS Foundation aligns with the Huron Community Foundation grant cycle which opens February 15th and closes March 15th, but also accepts direct requests on a year-round basis. In keeping with the YWCA of Huron’s mission, approved funds must align with the following directive.

‘Funding designated to achieve the successful establishment or continuation of new or existing family services and community infrastructure in Huron and surrounding areas. Preference will be granted to those requests which provide support for the growth, protection and overall benefit of women and children in an effort to fortify community and strengthen the family unit.’

It is with this mission, the WINGS Foundation has confirmed the YWCA’s legacy and unwavering commitment for the next 100 years to family, community, and stronger tomorrows.

The WINGS Foundation maintains a local seven women board of directors made up of Paullyn Carey, Heather Rozell, Janice Christensen, Jennifer Fuchs, Laura McGirr, Sara Newman, and Dawn Mutchelknaus. Grant applications can be found at [www.WingsFoundationHuron.com](http://www.WingsFoundationHuron.com) and can be submitted via email to [wingsfoundationhuron@gmail.com](mailto:wingsfoundationhuron@gmail.com) or mailed to WINGS Foundation P.O. Box 1375 Huron, South Dakota 57350.



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**BY BILLI AUGHENBAUGH,**  
De Smet Community Foundation



## Youth fishing derby to be held on February 10

The Four Lakes Improvement Associations sponsors an annual Future Fisherman Ice Fishing Derby for youth ages 2-14 every year at Lake Thompson State Park. This year, the event was originally planned for January 6 but has now moved to February 10 so that the ice could get nice and thick for all participants!

Participants can enjoy the event and have hot chocolate and snacks followed by a hot lunch, treats and prizes at the Lake Preston American Legion Post.

Registration for the derby starts at 9 a.m. at the Lake Thompson State Park fish-cleaning station. The derby itself starts at 11 a.m. and ends at 2 p.m. The entry fee for each participant is simply one box of mac 'n' cheese, which will be donated to a local food pantry. Last year, this event brought over 700 items for the food bank.

If anyone has questions about this event or would like to donate or volunteer, call Fauniel Wasserburger at (402) 669-9350.

## Highway 14 Trails Tower Reveal Party

The Legendary HWY 14 Tower Trail project has received some incredible international attention! This endeavor has been in process with many years of faithful work by the team made of up community members and organizations. In 2023, the international Architectural Competition Design firm, Buildners, has chosen to give the tower one of their highly coveted competition spots!

They recognized the importance of the historic Silver Lake/Big Slough complex, the health and community benefits, the tourism boost, and of course, the iconic centerpiece this will be to a future regional recreation trail.

Bringing a network of over 200,000 architects and designers, a web presence with over 1 million visitors and a social network reach of over 1 million, this competition is putting De Smet on the map once again.

At the end of the competition period, we will have a curated list of high quality, unique and innovative designs to choose from for the observation tower portion of this incredible coming amenity. Winners will be selected in February with the top designs being unveiled to the public at an open house where the committee will be asking for the public's input on what they like best!

**Plan to attend the open house event, Saturday February 17 from 4:30-7:30 p.m. to see the reveal! The Highway 14 Trails Committee and the National Park Service will be there for people to mingle with as well as snacks and beverages!**

## Vendors welcome to De Smet's 3rd annual Outdoor Show in March 9

Fields Fish & Game and the non-profit Prairie Lakes Pheasant Club will be co-hosting De Smet's 3rd annual Outdoor Show at the beautiful De Smet Event Center in March. The last two years have had great success with over 500 attendees. Interested in being a vendor? Call/text Amanda Fields at 410-903-2281, or email [fieldsfishandgame@gmail.com](mailto:fieldsfishandgame@gmail.com).

### Looking for that special Valentine's Day gift?

De Smet's Main Street has several fun gift shops that you'll be sure to find the ideal gift for your loved ones. Make a trip out of it and hit them all up!

### The Hazel L. Meyer Memorial Library Book

**Bingo has begun!** You could win a Fire HD10 Tablet by playing. Stop by the library or call them at 605-854-3842 for details. Book Bingo is happening now through April 19.

### Looking to relocate?

Find home for sale and a great job in De Smet! Check them out at [www.desmetsd.com](http://www.desmetsd.com) and on the De Smet, South Dakota Facebook page.

## FEBRUARY 2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Kingsbury County Food Pantry open every Tuesday afternoon • 1 - 4 p.m. • 221 Calumet Ave**

**AA Meetings @ Ward's Store & Bakery every Wednesday • 5 p.m.**

**Feb. 6 'The Sharing' Community Meal**

United Methodist Church • 6:00 p.m.

**Feb. 11 Growing Youth Gardens planning meeting**

Event Center • 2:30 p.m.

**Feb. 12 Wilkinson Bull Sale @ Event Center**

**Feb. 14 City Council Meeting @ Event Center**

**Feb. 14 Valentine's Day!** Watch 'De Smet, South Dakota' Facebook page as we share specials going on at De Smet businesses to celebrate!

**Feb. 15 Roller Skating**

Event Center • 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Feb. 17 Highway 14 Trails Tower Reveal Party**

Event Center • 4:30-7:30 p.m.

**Feb. 22 Roller Skating**

Event Center • 7:00-9:00 p.m.

**Feb. 27 Afternoon of Arts @ De Smet School**

**Call 605-854-6060 for information on events and to schedule your event / meeting / conference at the De Smet Event/Conference Center!**



# The Incredible Impact of a Faith-Fueled Life of Purpose!

By: *Cornerstone Financial Solutions*

For many people, financial stability is the first step towards a more meaningful life. Having a solid foundation provides the freedom to think about what fuels your heart and define what success means to you.

For the dedicated team at Cornerstone Financial Solutions, wealth management goes beyond numbers; it's about helping clients cultivate a sense of purpose. By helping clients explore their passions and how they want to impact the world, the team empowers clients to define retirement success on their own terms.

Their commitment to the power of purpose is so profound that they've partnered with the renowned inspirational speaker and legacy coach, Melanie Brown, to add several presentations to their annual calendar of events for clients and invited guests.

Melanie shares her perspective, "I've met very wealthy people who feel they haven't fulfilled God's purpose for their life. It's not that money leads to unhappiness, but people want a sense of purpose that brings true meaning and significance to their lives." She goes on to say,

"Legacy isn't measured by what you own. Your story of impact is what will live on in the hearts and minds of those you've touched. It's the ripple effect that lives way beyond our life."

Melanie's presentations for Cornerstone clients will be centered on using God's greatness to find the courage to live authentically, with gratitude and enthusiasm. Melanie emphasizes, "With faith as our driving force, we all have the capacity to lead lives filled with love and leave behind a powerful legacy of greatness."

She continues, "The exciting thing is that Cornerstone is the rock-solid foundation to support your God-sized dream. They have phenomenal leaders who go above and beyond to empower you to live a faithful, grateful, more purposeful life and give you the confidence to make the impact you're capable of making."

**Call 605-352-9490 or email [cfsteam@mycfsgroup.com](mailto:cfsteam@mycfsgroup.com) today to schedule a complimentary, no-obligation strategic review of your financial plan.**



*Melanie Brown and  
Cornerstone's Leadership Team.*

## ***Open to the Public...***

### ***THE INCREDIBLE IMPACT OF A FAITH-FUELED LIFE OF PURPOSE!***

*Featuring inspirational author, dynamic speaker, and legacy coach Melanie Brown*

Legacy isn't measured by what you own. Your story of impact is what will live on in the hearts and minds of those you've touched. With faith as a driving force, find the courage to live an authentic, grateful, more purposeful life!

**February 12 at 6:00 pm**  
**Crossroads Hotel & Huron Event Center**  
**100 4th St. SW, Huron**

**RSVP to 605-352-9490. Baked potato bar will be served. RSVP required by Feb 6th.**

Raymond James is not affiliated and does not endorse the opinions or services of Melanie Brown.



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# Making a Difference with United Way



**BY JEN BRAGG**, United Way Heartland Region Executive Director

The United Way Heartland Region 2024 campaign is raising money to help fund 38 different programs to our region. The best part is that the money you give stays right here, and you can see the results in your own backyard. A donation doesn't just mean supporting us at the United Way, it means helping the entire community. You can be assured that your gift will make an impact on those who need it the most, strengthening our community and improving the lives of many across our region. How can you or your company partner with the United Way Heartland Region to make a difference?

**A Tax-Deductible Corporate Gift** - Simply send a corporate donation to the address listed below. Take a look at our pledge card to see all the ways you help improve lives in our community when you support the United Way Heartland Region.

**Start a Workplace Campaign** - This can range from collecting money on a Blue Jeans Day, having a friendly food collecting competition between departments to go towards the Backpack Program, or handing out pledge cards and hosting a workplace presentation with a United Way board member. Finding something that appeals to your employees makes for a fun and easy way to give back to our community. If you would like helping planning a 'fun-raiser' at your office with proceeds going towards the United Way, contact us today.

**Host an event for United Way** - If your business sells merchandise, donate a percentage of items to one of our programs. If you are a restaurant, host a Dine United event. If you are a service business, give a portion of gift card sales. Call the number below today to find the best way that your business can become involved.

**Backpack Program** - Serving over 600 children in nine local schools this school year, the Backpack Program is especially in need of additional funding. More students enrolled and higher prices at the grocery store mean big bills for this important program in our community. If you or your business are interested in helping with this program by volunteering, by hosting a food drive, or with a donation, please reach out today.

**Volunteer Opportunities** - There are many opportunities for volunteering right here in our community. Think of the causes that you care about most, and get in touch. Using our relationship with so many partner agencies in the region, we are bound to find the right fit for you.

As we have always said, we are stronger together than we could ever be alone. What we do together today determines how we Live United tomorrow. Please contact us at 605-352-3537, uwhuronsd@gmail.com, or PO Box 652, Huron SD to find the best way to join the United Way and make an impact in our community today.



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# For the If in Life

BY CRYSTAL LIEN, PrairieTracks Contributing Writer



If.....

If we always got it right; if we never hurt another; if we never endured hurt by another; if we never withheld forgiveness; if we never harbored words and thoughts of angst, revenge, and mean-spirited wishes toward another; if we never spat words of hate or hurt; if we never wrote words meant to harm or hurt or destroy; if we reacted how we wanted without regard for another; if we burned relationship bridges without remorse; if we treated others however we wanted...

If that, then what?

If we only needed self, we would never need a helper, a savior, a do-over, a clean slate.

If we could do it all ourselves- save ourselves, redeem ourselves- we render Jesus and His work unnecessary.

If that, then what? Then, we all get heaven? Based on what? Our goodness? Our deservedness? Our rightness?

If that, we all get to do as we want, say what we want, think how we want and never ever need to reap what we sow or suffer the consequences for our thoughts, words, and actions. If we have no need to face the repercussions for the potential destruction, broken relationships, and hurt that our free will has left in its wake, then what good is Jesus?

Exactly! So, why do we need Jesus?

Matthew 1:21 tells us He (Jesus) saves us from our sins. He redeems us from the Fall, from spiritual and physical death. He opens the door to eternal life. His supply of mercy is endless- flowing from the glory that is in Christ, who left heaven to show love and mercy to rebels- like you and me. Jesus is our ONLY way to God. Through Him, we experience forgiveness and the newness of life. Without God, we are never satisfied. Acts 17:25 & 28 says "God himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things...in him we live and move and have our being."

We, in our flesh, have a restless human spirit! We have a longing desire that must be pointed in the direction of God. Otherwise, we seek other ways to fulfill that longing desire. How much wealth would be enough? How much prestige? How much knowledge? How many trips, vacations, friend-getaways? How much passion? How much self-righteousness and "I'm right and you're wrong" thoughts and platitudes? Can ANY of these ever be enough to satisfy the deep sense of incompleteness that is within us? The rotting of our soul apart from Jesus, away from the Throne of God is the true "what if" we should be addressing.

We are incomplete without God for we are made in "the image of God" (Genesis 1:16). And God's spirit is described as "abiding" in us (Genesis 6:3). We were made for His glory! (Isaiah 43:7; 1 Corinthians 10:31) If our identity is not rooted in God then we have an identity problem lending to a dissatisfaction and discontentment with life. As St. Augustine declared, "My heart is restless until I find my rest in thee". We are too often putting our rest in anything BUT thee! Jesus came to give us life, and the way to this abundant life is by our union with him! (John 6:56; John 15:4) Christ invites us to share in His nature abiding in the will of God. Apart from him, we will lack love, compassion, peace, gentleness, patience, and self-control. Run the race- this earthly race- to gain the prize: Christ. (1 Corinthians 9:24)

Don't risk the forfeit of your soul.

Have you noticed that the more we have, the more we need to have; the more we are loved, the more we need to be loved; the more we achieve, the greater our achievements need to be? It's never enough. (Ecclesiastes 1:8) "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing". King Solomon- the most successful man who beheld the greatest wisdom, had wives a-plenty, had the greatest gardens and parks and herds and flocks, the man with vast treasure of silver and gold and provinces- even he admitted, "All that my hands have done and toil spent in doing it...all is vanity and chasing after the wind...there is nothing really to be gained under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11) We are a society of addicts and extremes, and our self-glorifying methods and self-indulgences lead to selfish consumption. Does having more lead to more lasting joy? Does our "more" mean we are happier?

Are you happier?

If we gain it all and lose our soul, we have truly lost everything; our soul for what cost?

When we are in pursuit of everything, trying to recreate heaven on earth, all without God we end up empty with no gain. Life without God is never enough. God wants us to gain the world but never at the expense of losing or neglecting our relationship with Him. Seek God first and allow Him to add the world unto your hold.

Everyone sins. There will never be a soul without the stains of sin. If we only need ourselves and have no need for Jesus and the Cross, then what becomes of our sins? They must be accounted for, and without Christ they are all accounted TO YOU. Judgement has already been made against you, and your sentencing day will arrive when you die. You need Christ...to atone for your sins (Romans 5:11), to mediate between God and you (1 Timothy 2:5). Don't seek your own things and neglect the things of Christ (Philippians 2:21). Acknowledge your need for Christ and God will supply all you need.

Everyone needs the Lord Jesus Christ. Not everyone knows it.

If you've read this far, you know it.

What will you do now?

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Huron Parks & Recreation Department

BY JAKE LINDGREN



As I write this, the 15-day weather forecast is predicting a significant amount of time indoors. Below zero temperatures, blowing slow, and long nights have me wishing time forward to nicer weather. I speak for most people when I say I am already sick of our South Dakota winter. Nevertheless, complaining does not get you very far so I'm left visualizing next fall's hunting season. Here's a couple of things I'm doing right now that I believe will lead to more success down the road.

One of my favorite quotes is, "your calendar is a reflection of your priorities." I like to take this time of year to sit down and create a "hunting plan" for the upcoming season. This works because primarily, it gets everyone (my wife and I) on the same page. Secondly, as my life gets busier, I've learned that if it doesn't get put on the calendar, something else will fill that spot.

Another tradition of mine during the long winter is to process all the leftover meat from hunting season. This year, a group of my hunting friends got together to turn venison into several different meats including Mexican-chorizo, habanero brat patties, and

Italian sausage. This ensures that nothing goes to waste, as well as making products we will enjoy throughout the off season until it's time to fill the freezers again.

As I have made crystal clear by now, I am obsessed with deer and deer hunting. Twelve months out of the year, becoming a better bow hunter is at top of mind. Something new I did this year was keeping a log throughout the season called "deer stand improvements". Examples include things such as cutting new shooting lanes, developing food plots, and adjusting the stands. In previous years, I notice these problems in November, but nothing gets done, and then the same issues persists the following year. This year we have taken a more process-oriented approach to make sure progress is made by next deer season.

By doing these few things, I have noticed my perception for the long winter is becoming more positive...and soon enough the snow will be gone, and we will all be over the winter blues.

LAKE PRESTON

BY DARLENE DEKNIKKER

**B.Cakes** is running four specials this month for Valentines Day!

\* Dipped Strawberries, Cupcakes, Rose Cookies or Cake Balls (place your order and pick them up between Feb.9-14th)

**Flegal Flowers** - Hours are Monday - Friday 9-4pm, Saturday 9-12pm

Lots of Specials Bundles this month for that Special someone in your life! ( check out her Facebook page)

February 13th - Single Ladies Bouquet Bar Starts at 5pm-7pm ( Cost is \$35.)

Another new addition to her Store is she is now COFFEE!!!! Hot- Iced - Many different flavors!!!

Coffee hours are: Monday and Wednesday at 6am

There are a lot of fun gift ideas as well as clothing in the Store! Always changing things!!!

**Treasure Chest** - The area's custom furniture, decor and gift destination.

**Don's Bakery** - When you're thinking of your loved ones this month, call Amanda she would be happy to bake for you.

Pies, Pastries and more! (Call if your needing buns for your Super-Bowl party.)

**Maynards Store** - Super Bowl Party...get your meat and cheese trays , chips , drinks ,Subs and all your other needs!! Watch for the Specials!!!

**Chase The Ace** is Back.....Every week, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 6-7pm.

The drawing will take place at the Other Bar at 7:30. \* This year you do not need to be present to win!

\* NOTE you can call all locations and buy your tickets (Country Club, New Horizon Lounge, Other Bar).

**SCHOOL EVENTS**

- State One Act Play at Brandon Valley
- Feb. 8th - Festival of Song at SDSU
- Feb. 12th- Music Booster Bingo
- Feb. 14th Valentines Day Dress Up
- Feb. 22nd- FFA Breakfast
- Feb. 28th- Region Music Contest in Watertown
- Check out the Facebook page for games and wrestling matches

**CHURCH EVENTS**

- **UCC-UMC:** Every Wednesday at 3:30-5 is KIDS for CHRIST - Wednesday at 5-7pm is YOUTH Group
- **Lutheran Church** - Men's Bible Study - at 7pm, Every other Sunday

Ice Fishermen - thank you for stopping and staying in Lake Preston, we want you to stay safe on our area lakes!



# Myopia Control

BY MEGAN NELSON-HARTMAN, O.D., PC, Huron Eye Clinic, PC

Myopia (nearsightedness) is a condition where distance vision is blurred more than near vision. While myopia usually starts during the early teenage years, in some patients it can start much earlier, increasing the risk of developing high myopia.

High myopia tends to have a genetic component, with children having myopic parents, but there are also environmental influences. Children who spend more time outdoors and less time using electronic devices are LESS LIKELY to become myopic or continue to progress.

While there is no cure for myopia, optometrists have a group of methods called Myopia control, that are used to slow the progression of childhood myopia.

### High Myopia risk factors:

- Onset of myopia prior to age nine
- Lower than expected hyperopia (farsightedness) at a young age
- Rapid progression in glasses prescription in a short amount of time
- Parents with High Myopia
- Asian ethnicity
- Near work (greater than two hours/day)
- Time spent outdoors (less than two hours/day)

Myopia control techniques can be used to prevent myopia in children without a prescription, or slow changes in already myopic children. Unfortunately, these techniques cannot reverse myopia and these children will still require glasses and/or contact lenses for clear vision.

### Myopia Management techniques:

There are a number of different options in myopia control to try and slow prescription progression, each with a different reduction in progression:

- Progressive glasses: 12-55%
- Multifocal contact lenses: 29-49%
- Orthokeratology: 63%
- Low dose atropine drops: 64%

Progressive glasses and multifocal contact lenses are traditionally used to improve near vision in adults over the age of 40, but are a great therapeutic option to relax children's strong focusing muscles.

Orthokeratology are contact lenses worn at night to reshape the cornea. This corrects your prescription so glasses and contacts aren't needed during the day.

Atropine is a special-mixed eye drop that relaxes the focusing muscles and slows eye growth.

### Why control myopia:

In addition to having poor vision requiring stronger glasses, as your prescription increases it also stretches the internal structures of your eye. This can lead to an increased risk of retinal detachments (4-16 times), cataracts (2-5 times), and glaucoma (4 times).

The best way to take advantage of myopia control is to detect nearsightedness early. Even if your child is not complaining of vision problems, it's important to schedule routine eye exams for your children, starting at six months of age. School screenings, while a great tool does not replace a comprehensive eye exam.



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## Want Happy Customers? Meet Their Expectations

**BY KELLY WEAVER**, Small Business Development Center, Regional Director

More than ever, customer loyalty is not a given. If you want to get and keep customers, you must meet their expectations. Expectations, by the way, are not static and are changing faster than ever. Each purchase comes with an expectation. When we walk into a restaurant, we expect to be seated and have our order taken within a certain period of time; we expect our order to be correct and properly prepared when delivered. If our expectations are met, we are happy; if they are not met, we are dissatisfied. If our expectations are exceeded, we may be inclined to share it with someone else (although not as readily as we share the times our expectations were not met!)



Successful businesses understand a customer's expectations are based on a lifetime of experiences, not just the specific interaction with their business. As they gain more experiences, the expectations can change. If businesses are smart, they try to understand those expectations and in some case they need to help set the expectations by communicating with the customer so they know what to expect. Here are some simple steps to proactively manage your customers' expectations and create a better experience and stronger relationship with them.

1. Understand the customer's base expectations. If expectations are unrealistic, create a plan to educate the customer to give them the knowledge and experience to reset their expectation.
2. Influence expectations. Communicate with your customer so they know what to expect. This could be as simple as posting your business hours or what forms of payment you accept to educating them on your product and service.
3. Focus on performance. Use complaints and solicit customer feedback to understand their expectations of your product/service and make relevant improvements.
4. Create a company experience. Beyond 'customer service', great companies train staff to solve problems on the front lines. They collect information to improve company processes thereby creating a consistent experience. Having a consistent experience builds trust in the company.
5. Follow up. Only 4% of customers with problems will complain to you. Contact after the sale allows you to learn how you are (or are not) meeting the customers' needs and correct problems early on. This will solidify your relationship with the customer and may even open the door for additional sales.

While none of this information is revolutionary, it is surprising how little most companies invest in such strategies. Always test to make sure you understand customer expectations and do your part to help them have realistic expectations of your products and services. Take a proactive stance in managing your customers' expectations and you will reap the rewards.



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# The Valley Burger

BY TOM GLANZER, PrairieTracks Contributing Writer

Some of you that live in the Huron region haven't really lived life to the fullest. Some of you have walked the streets of Huron all your life, and have not eaten at the best seasonal restaurant the area has to offer...the nights they are actually open it is the best burger joint in town.

It is understandable that you don't know about it though...the restaurant that serves this masterpiece is only open every once in a while, and they don't advertise. You just have to know the secret timeline as to when this burger palace is open.

The "burger joint" is the James Valley Christian School Junior Store. They are open exclusively during varsity basketball games, don't try to order a burger during volleyball, NO BURGER FOR YOU!...only basketball season....and only after 5pm...and they close down before the 4th quarter...and the burger is the famous "Valley Burger".

In all reality, the Valley Burger is just a double quarter pounder with cheese. Two slices of cheese, two burgers, made with locally raised beef, a pretty basic bun...slapped with butter and lightly browned on the griddle.

I am not sure why it tastes so good, but the Valley Burger is crazy good...it might be because every other gym or hockey rink concession stand I visit has a walking taco as the "big item", and you get sick of Domino's pizza, a pretzel with cheese or another hot dog.

A burger from the JVC Junior Store might be just straight nostalgia for me....like back to the 90's...kind of like going to Brookings and slamming three or four burgers from Nick's, or a slice of pizza out the window from George's Pizza, or in Sioux Falls getting up early to get a cream-filled nutty long john from Daylight Doughnuts. Or the ultimate "fill your senses" restaurant... The Smokehouse BBQ in Gladstone, MO. I can still taste my first "REAL" K.C. BBQ experience. Sitting in that old fancy booth with Steph's folks and trying to eat like a gentleman...every time we go back there I feel lucky to have found that girl, and that Kansas City BBQ institution.

Back to the Valley Burger....when I was in high school the Valley Burger was served in the James River Valley that the burger was named after....right out of Rose Tschetter's school kitchen, and you had better have the grill cleaned perfectly at the end of the night...or you were coming in the next morning to finish your job. There were a few years where no Valley Burgers were served due to the flood in 1997 and the new building on the north end of Huron not being completed until 2000....but they came back, same recipe, same name, new grill top, new store front.

The Valley Burger is honestly an icon....it is its own currency.... referees get a free one at the end of the night no matter how many calls the home team coach thinks they missed, if you run the scoreboard or take stats at a game you get one, they have been the prize in friendly wagers and the gift to neighbors that pulled a tractor out of a mud hole.

So what class of Juniors had the idea to put it on the menu? Was it made on a whim and overnight became a regional success? Was



it on the menu as a double cheeseburger then got branded? The answer to the question is the Class of 1972. In the first semester of their Junior year they became the curators of "The Junior Store", and Winona Stahl was the Junior Store manager.

"We ordered the candy in boxes from Westpark, and that was a big deal, we didn't have a Sam's Club," said Stahl. "In the back of the old gym there was a kitchen and that is where we made the burgers." Stahl doesn't remember if the double burger was on a menu prior to having a name, but her class is the one that named it the Valley Burger. She even recalls making the addition to the menu signage.

But like all good stories, this burger had to survive some turmoil. About a year after its introduction to the public, the old wooden JVC gymnasium burned down, and along with it the kitchen and Junior Store signage that adorned the walls....and this is where the history turns into lore. I interviewed several students that would have graduated in the mid-70's and many had no memory of the Valley Burger, but a couple did. There would have been a couple of basketball seasons without a home in the 70's so when the Junior Store came back online and the Valley Burger with it....kind of remains a mystery.

We know for sure that over 50 years ago this talented Junior class at JVC invented something so delicious that people throw away their diets for the night....that perfect "cheat day" meal of basketball fans all over the 281 Conference....they invented the "Big Mac" of JVC. WE ARE IN THE 50TH-ish or so ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF THE VALLEY BURGER AND NOBODY IS CELEBRATING!!!

Well, we do celebrate, every time a person eats their first one. I was there last week for that moment in someone's life. Nicole Erasmus (Hofer), or as she is known around our house, London and Lennix's mama, took her first bite of the Valley on January 4, 2024 at around 18:00 hours. When she said, "that was my first Valley Burger!" I was shocked, Melissa Hofer was sitting by Nicole, and she was also shocked...people all around celebrated and talked about their first Valley Burger...ok maybe not, but it was a big deal...I mean sometimes I only go to basketball games for the burger!

That got me thinking, how many other people have never had one? Well it is time....get on the JVC school website find a home game, and head north to the best burger spot in town, on game days, at James Valley, from 5pm to before the 4th quarter starts, order a burger, spring for the Mt. Dew, a candy bar and some popcorn. You can even stay for the basketball if you want to!

Also if you don't want to spend the money on one, tell my uncle, Skipper Glanzer, to treat you to one. Somehow he bought a punch card for like 20 of them, and says he may have a hard time eating all them or giving them all away.

So again WE SALUTE YOU "JVC CLASS OF 1972" Ray Kroc and Dave Thomas would be proud of your hustle!

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