

Sponsored in part by

DACOTAH BANK

Here for you.

Dakotafire

SPRING 2013



12 GREEN SPARKS

Ideas to make your life a little more eco-friendly *Page 8*

POWERED BY WOMEN

Entrepreneurial women help Britton's Main Street Thrive *Page 34*

Marshall County 4-Hers maintain the paper recycling program in Britton.

YOUTH LEAD RECYCLING EFFORTS

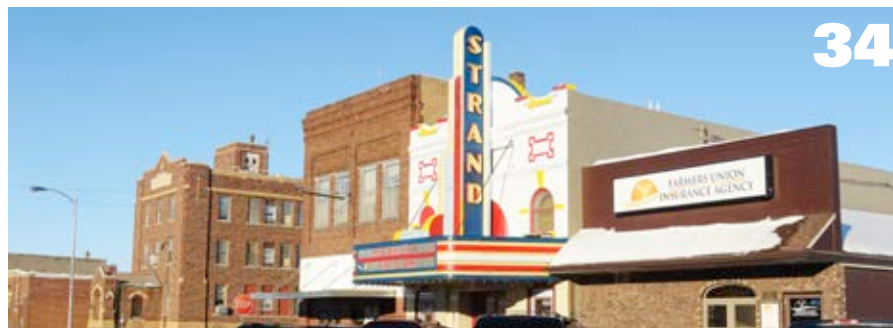
Page 9

\$3.95US



Dakotafire Media, LLC

- 1** What is Dakotafire?
- 2** Meet a Newspaper
- 4** From the Editor:
A Big Budget
- 6** As the Climate
Changes, Agriculture
Changes as Well
- 8** Feature: 12 Green Sparks
- 9** Recycle What You Can
- 13** Recycle Creatively
- 14** Power Your Business
with the Sun
- 15** Upcycle
- 16** Go Geothermal
- 18** Find Common Ground
on Net Metering
- 20** Get an Energy Audit
- 21** Glass is Not Garbage
- 25** New Transmission Line
Would Increase Capacity
- 26** Green Sparks From
DakotafireCafe.net
- 28** Grassland is Going,
Going...
- 32** Make Sleeping Mats
from Plastic Bags
- 34** Community Feature:
Main Street Britton:
Powered by Women



34



28



9

- 41** 10 Dakota Day Trips
- 44** Dakotafire.net Briefs
- 46** Regional News Briefs
- 48** Postcard: All That
Remains of Deisem

Next Issue:
PHILANTHROPY
Coming Summer 2013



48

ON THE COVER
PHOTO BY
TROY MCQUILLEN

FRONT ROW: LEFT TO RIGHT- WESTON HENSCHEL, PARKER BRANDT, KORDELL FELDHAUS, DANE FELDHAUS, SARAH HINMAN, AND HALEY RINGKOB. ROW TWO: MAKIAH HENNING, THANE HENSCHEL, BRITTANY BUSH, TOMI LYNN JONES, LINDSEY EFFLING, AND HANNAH KILKER. ROW THREE: MASON KILKER, BLAZE JONES, AND TREY JONES.

Editor-in-Chief
Heidi Marttila-Losure
heidi@dakotafire.net

Creative Director
Troy McQuillen
troy@dakotafire.net

Editorial Office
P.O. Box 603
Frederick, SD 57441

Website
Dakotafire.net

Designer Eliot Lucas
Webmaster Josh Latterell

Partnering Newspapers
(Bowdle) Pride of the Prairie
Britton Journal
Clark County Courier
Edgeley Mail
(Eureka) Northwest Blade
Faulk County Record
Grotton Independent
Ipswich Tribune
Kulm Messenger
LaMoure Chronicle
Langford Bugle
The Litchville Bulletin
(Webster) Reporter and Farmer
Tri-County News

Sponsors



Here for you.™



**South Dakota Community
Foundation Adviser**
Stephanie Judson

Dakotafire is published quarterly and owned by Dakotafire Media, LLC. All content is copyright ©2013 Dakotafire Media.

What is Dakotafire?

Dakotafire is team of community journalists reporting on issues important to rural communities in the James River Valley of North and South Dakota.

Our goal is to give a “big picture” view of the challenges our communities face—from the way past generations have addressed similar problems to the insights of experts who study these issues to the way others in the region and beyond are finding solutions—so you have the information you need to make the best decisions about the issues that affect our lives.

By working together, we can cover topics that we could not address as successfully alone. We hope the “common voice” of Dakotafire helps the people of the region see one another as allies in facing common challenges and opportunities.

The results of this reporting are published in participating newspapers, online at Dakotafire.net and in this quarterly magazine.

Dakotafire stories are designed to spark discussion, to challenge conventional thinking and to get people to consider alternative possibilities. We are fostering a regionwide conversation on Dakotafire.net, on Facebook (search for Dakotafire Media) and Twitter (@DakotafireMedia) and on our new forum site, DakotafireCafe.com.

As part of the Knight Community Information Challenge, the three-year project has received \$240,000 in support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and \$60,000 from the South Dakota Community Foundation, with additional support coming from Dakotah Bank, Citibank, other foundations, and corporate and individual sponsors.

The project is being implemented by Dakotafire Media, LLC, a media company based in Frederick, S.D., owned by Heidi Marttila-Losure and Troy McQuillen. ✨

Turn to page 44 to get a taste of what dakotafire.net has to offer.



Dakotafire Café: A Gathering Place for Good Ideas

Almost every little town has a little coffee shop where people gather to talk and, some will tell you, solve the world’s problems (if only anyone would listen!).

Dakotafire Café (www.dakotafirecafe.com) brings that problem-solving conversation online so we can have it regionwide. This is where we can look up over our newspapers, magazines or devices and talk about the issues presented in Dakotafire’s stories and how these new ideas might apply to us and our communities. We also sometimes ask for your opinion on topics we are thinking of covering in the future.

For example, to go with our rural church series, we asked readers to share a photo of their church and tell us what it meant to them.

Dakotafire Café is based on a platform called MindMixer, which aims to make it easy and fun for the public to engage in civic questions. As described on the MindMixer website, “MindMixer has changed the culture of engagement in communities across the country, helping citizens become active contributors to community-driven conversations and initiatives.”

As participants suggest new ideas or comment on others’ ideas, they earn points, which can be redeemed for prizes, including Dakotafire T-shirts and mugs.

It’s a bring-your-own-beverage café—but trust us, the talk around the table is worth it! ✨

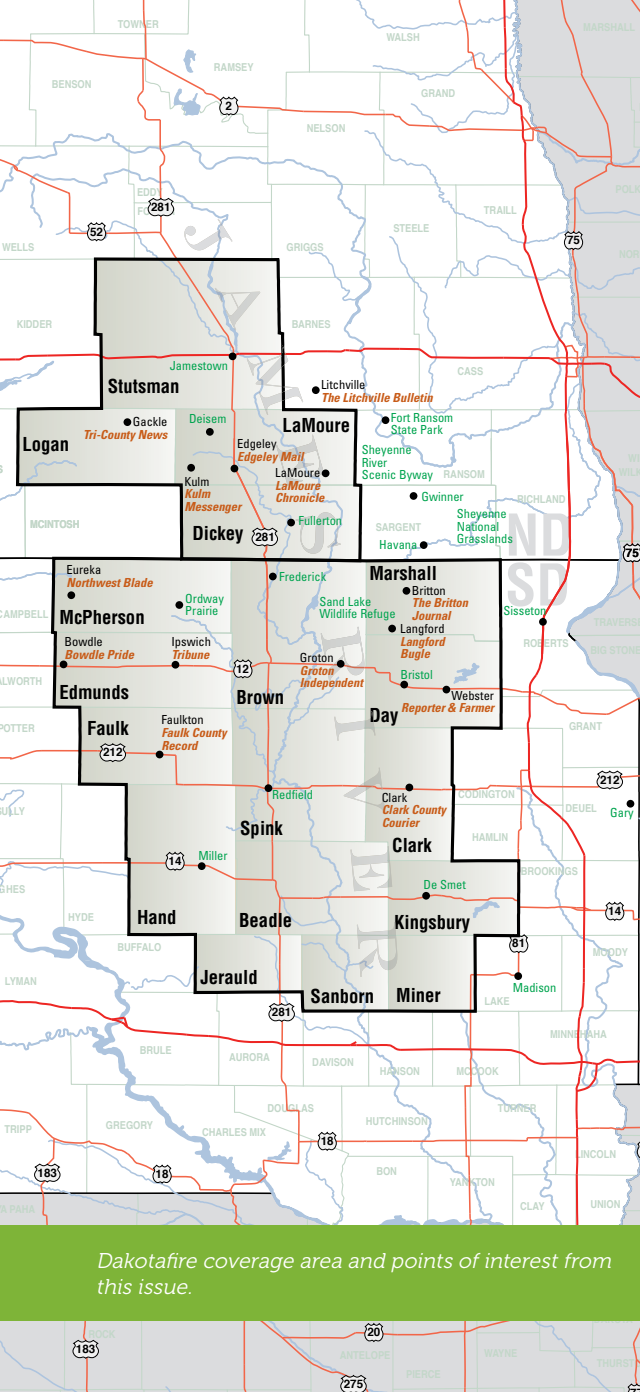


Bergen Lutheran Church of Bristol, submitted by Karen J10

FIREBACK

FEATURED QUESTION:

If you came back to your hometown, what brought you back? If you haven’t come back but might like to, what would it take to bring you back? Join the conversation! www.dakotafirecafe.com/homecoming



Dakotafire coverage area and points of interest from this issue.

Meet a Dakotafire Newspaper /// Clark County Courier, Clark, S.D.

The newspapers participating in the Dakotafire project are spread across thousands of square miles, and so are our readers. But even if we are not next-door neighbors, we are all in this community-building effort together. To help you get to know your partners in rural revitalization a bit better, we bring you this regular feature on Dakotafire's participating newspapers. Say "hello" to the *Clark County Courier*, which has been a part of Dakotafire since the beginning. Welcome, Bill Krikac! We are happy to have you and Clark County on board.



Tell us a little about your newspaper.

The Clark County Courier is an SAU broadsheet serving the entire County of Clark including the towns of Clark, Willow Lake, Bradley, Crocker, Raymond, Carpenter, Garden City, Vienna, Naples and Henry in Codington County. Our employees are Kimberly Harrington, Annette Helkenn and Lisa McGraw.

When did you become the publisher?

I left an 18-year teaching career in 1995 to start my career as a newspaper publisher. Having bought the Clark County Courier from the Moritz family, I took over ownership in 2000-01.

What is the circulation?

Close to 2,000, although every time we run an obituary it usually means we lose a subscriber. We lose about 50 subscribers a year to that process.

What is interesting or great about your community?

Our county is a rural county, twice as long as it is wide, with two geographical features, the



→ Bill Krikac, publisher

James River Valley and the Coteau de Prairies, dissecting Clark County. This causes a difference in weather conditions and moisture results. Our communities have great history, and the fifth governor of South Dakota, Gov. Samuel Elrod, was from Clark.

What is the best part of your job?

Being the publisher/editor of a newspaper means that life is not routine or in the least boring, as every week and every paper are different. In a small (population-wise), rural county, the newspaper is the primary place where people find the local news. Keeping up with school, county and city happenings is a 24/7 opportunity, and being involved with all activities is the best part of the newspaper business. ✨

SANFORD®

Aberdeen

Advanced Heart Care Close to Home

The occasional chest pain last fall got the attention of Gwenda Kolb of Aberdeen. She had a history of heart disease, including procedures for blocked coronary arteries.

“I’d been through this before and was familiar with what should be done,” says the 72-year-old. “But it took me a while to agree to it.”

When she learned the advanced heart care she needed was readily available at Sanford Aberdeen, Gwenda moved forward.

“My earlier procedures required out-of-town travel. That’s a lot of expenses and arrangements,” she says. “Staying here is so much easier.”

A welcome option, an expert team

Gwenda’s specialized heart care in Aberdeen began with an appointment with Dr. John Windsor, Interventional Cardiologist. With 20 years’ experience, he’s performed more than 10,000 procedures.

A thorough exam indicated Gwenda needed a cardiac angiogram, a high-level heart study that shows possible blockages. Performed in Sanford Aberdeen’s state-of-the-art cardiac cath lab, the study requires the insertion of a catheter (long, narrow tubing). The usual point of entry is the femoral artery in the groin, but a newer technique involves the radial artery in the wrist. Both techniques are safe and effective, but having had cath procedures in the past, Gwenda opted for the radial procedure, prompting the help of Interventional cardiologist, Dr. Puneet Sharma.

Dr. Puneet Sharma has performed hundreds of cardiac catheterizations, many involving wrist access.

Gwenda’s scheduled procedure took place in November. “I went in that morning and by 5 was back home,” she says. “I felt well cared for and didn’t even feel like I was in a hospital. It was very homey and comfortable.”

Gwenda’s angiogram showed no major blockages. She takes medication and continues to see Dr. Windsor for follow-up. She also participated in Cardiac Rehab at Sanford Aberdeen.

Natalie Frank, Exercise Specialist, stresses the importance of specialized exercise following a heart procedure.

“We slowly build patients to the point where they’re confident exercising on their own,” she says.

Available for emergencies

In addition to scheduled procedures, the full-time, Aberdeen-based heart team is well-prepared for emergencies.

“Our ‘door to balloon’ time is excellent,” says Dr. Windsor. “From the time a patient with an acute heart attack arrives to the time we open the blockage, we’re consistently at 60 minutes or less. The national goal is 90.”

Care doesn’t end after a life has been saved, as Dr. Sharma points out: “Once you’re diagnosed with heart disease, it doesn’t go away. We stay in touch with our patients and we’re available for them.”

Gwenda appreciates the difference: “It puts you at ease knowing the care you need is right here in Aberdeen.”



Puneet
Sharma, MD



John
Windsor, DO

To make an appointment with Dr. Sharma or Dr. Windsor, call Sanford Aberdeen at (605) 725-1700.

A BIG BUDGET



BY HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

→ Editor Heidi Marttila-Losure can be reached at heidi@dakotafire.net.

After living in other parts of the country for 12 years, when I replanted myself here I was able to notice key parts of Dakota culture I probably wouldn't have seen before, when I was deeply rooted in the culture myself. One of those key insights: People here know how to stretch a dollar.

This skill in household economic management shows up in various ways: Most people I know are very aware with what is on sale where, and most generous souls share that info with their neighbors. They don't spend on fancy when store brand will do, and they can also make do with what they have or do without if needed. I think the legacy of the Depression is still strong around here—we are still influenced by that generation.

I think sometimes, though, we are so good at managing our households that we don't always think about our role in managing the "household" we all share. For we do all share a responsibility in making sure the planet we call home stays within its budget, too.

Our bank accounts aren't limitless, and it turns out, neither is the "bank" we draw from for many of the things we need to survive. Most of the things we use and need have limits. The problem for us humans is it's hard to see those limits

from where we are. Most of us know how to keep from bouncing a check—just don't spend more than what's in the checking account. But if our money was spread out between hundreds or thousands or even millions of accounts, with fractions of a cent in each one, we'd have a harder time avoiding spending more than we have. That's the way it is with the resources we need to survive: Just because we can't see the limit from where we are doesn't mean it doesn't exist.

If we humans as a species could apply to the world the traits that we Dakotans know so well for our households, our decision-making would be a lot easier.

For example, we know that it's not a good idea to spend more than we need from our paychecks—we need to keep some back for the unexpected problems life throws at us, both big and small.

Similarly, it's probably not a good idea to use more than we need of our natural resources, such as clean water, soil fertility, oil or coal. Life might throw an unexpected problem at us (like drought or other extreme weather), and it may well be good to have held some in reserve.

We know not to borrow against a future paycheck to spend on frivolous things, since there's no sense living with a big-screen TV this month but no money for food the next. It's also not wise to

waste resources today that our children or grandchildren might need for more basic needs in years to come.

We grownups know that we can't make a mess in the house without consequences. Someone will have to clean it up eventually. (Most likely Mom.) And there's also no point in moving the mess from one room to another (though sometimes this mom has tried to fool herself with this temporary fix); the whole house is our responsibility.

What if we humans thought more like that about the world?

We also know how to share. We try to make sure everyone who sits at our table gets enough to eat, and if something happens to be of limited quantity, we divide it equitably.

The problem is not that the world operates by different principles than our households. The problem is simply that the house is so big that we aren't always aware that we are all—all—really under the same roof of air and walking on the same floor of soil.

As the stories from Dakotafire newspapers came in for this issue, it became clear that the young people in our communities are often the ones with the clearest understanding of this. In many small towns, it was the kids who convinced the grownups that recycling is a



Green Spark 1: Use Passive Solar.

Incorporating Passive Design Principles in New House Construction Means a Comfy House and Lower Heating Bills

BY HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

One interesting feature of our house-made-from-a-granary is what you don't hear on sunny winter days: Neither the wood stove nor our backup space heater has to make a sound.

We designed our house using passive solar principles, which allows the heat from the sun to heat the house. The four basics of passive solar design are:

1. Large windows on the south side of the house, limited windows on the west and east sides, and few to no windows on the north side.
2. A properly sized overhang above the south windows, so light comes in in the winter but the windows are shaded in the summer.
3. Adequate thermal mass in the house, which can absorb heat during the day and give it off at night.
4. Adequate insulation to keep heat in.

Many people tried passive solar designs in the 1970s and '80s but didn't get all four pieces of the puzzle in place—if the overhang isn't right, for example, rooms are likely to get too hot in the summertime.

Our design isn't perfect, either. Since we were working from a building already in place, there was only so much engineering of the overhang we could do, so we get some August sun. (Curtains help with



The winter sun heats the house through the large south-facing windows. Photo By Heidi Marttila-Losure

that problem.) And there was a limit to how much thermal mass we could creatively fit into the house.

But it's good enough for us! Having a warm and cozy house in the winter was well worth the added time it took to design it. And since we were able to incorporate the design principles early in the building process, the additional cost was minimal.

In fact, I would recommend that all new houses in our part of the world incorporate passive design principles for more energy-efficient, comfortable homes. ✨

If you are interested in passive solar design, here are some resources to help you get started:

- Basic passive solar overview, including codes and standards: www.wbdg.org/resources/psheating.php
- Sustainable by Design calculators: susdesign.com/tools.php
- "The Passive Solar House" by James Kachadorian. New version from 2006 includes a CD-ROM with custom design software.

LEARN MORE

good idea. In Britton, I asked some 4-Hers why they thought that happened—why were the young people getting recycling going when the grownups weren't?

"Because we're going to be here longer," one student answered.

Pretty perceptive. We can keep making messes, but eventually, somebody—maybe that Britton student and her generation—is going to have to clean up if our common household is going to remain livable.

A college friend, now a minister, was working on his dissertation last fall and posted on Facebook an interesting tidbit: The same Greek word in the Bible, *oikonomia*, is sometimes translated as "economy" and sometimes as "stewardship." The Greek word carries both meanings: Managing a budget wisely requires caretaking, and even just plain-old caring.

Dakotans' budgets for their own households are steeped in that caretaking. It's time to bring that good, care-ful management to the world outside our doors. ✨

FIREBACK

Agree? Disagree? Tell us what you think about this and other articles in the magazine: Go to the forum page at www.dakotafirecafe.com/going-green.

AS THE CLIMATE CHANGES,

BY CHRISTOPHER CUMO

AGRICULTURE CHANGES AS WELL

The reports on weather trends are using a lot of superlatives lately.

Each month last summer brought a new report that that month was the adding to the chain of months of above-average temperatures. (The Earth last had a below-average month in 1985.)

Then, in January, we heard that 2012 was the hottest year ever in the United States, since the National Climatic Data Center's records started in 1895. Differences in temperature between years are normally fractions of a degree, but 2012 beat the previous record year, 1998, by a full degree Fahrenheit.

These statistics are but the latest data points in a long chain of evidence that suggests climate change is happening. And, as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported in 2011, it will likely get worse: Dangerous "unprecedented extreme weather" is likely to happen in the future.

The Dakotas are not exempt from these trends, even as places where extreme weather is commonplace.

- North Dakota is 1.6 degrees Fahrenheit warmer during the growing season than it was in 1913, according to climatologist Adnan Akyuz of North Dakota State University. The heat index suggests that, compared to 1890, the sun gives crops 16 percent more heat.
- In North Dakota seven of the ten worst floods occurred after 1975, the floods between 2006 and 2009 being particularly severe. Geophysicist Allan Ashworth notes that drought gripped North Dakota between 1998 and 1992 and again in 2012.
- A report by the University of Maryland predicts droughts may become more extreme in North Dakota.
- Climatologist Laura Edwards of South Dakota State University notes that the eastern part of South Dakota has been wetter and warmer and the growing season longer.

- If the pace of climate change remains the same, South Dakota's average temperature will rise by 5 degrees by 2050, according to the National Climate Assessment and Development Advisory Committee. "Changing extremes in precipitation are projected across all seasons, including higher likelihoods of both increasing heavy rain and snow events and more droughts," according to their January 2013 draft report.

The question, then, is not whether climate change is happening, but what can we do in the face of it.

CROPPING FOR WARMER WEATHER

Farmer David Podoll of Fullerton, N.D., says he remembers when corn and soybeans were an anomaly in North Dakota.

"Corn and soybeans were just experimental crops until the late 1980s," Podoll says.

Now the state looks much more like Iowa than the Dakotas of Podoll's childhood. That is in part due to longer growing seasons that allow farmers to take advantage of late-maturing crops, notably corn, which yield more than their short-season counterparts.

Laura Edwards, South Dakota State University climatologist, says the same changes of warmer, wetter weather and a longer growing season have happened in South Dakota as well, which has helped corn and soybeans dominate the landscape.

While some might view a longer growing season as a positive change, other climate changes have been clearly negative.

Weeds and pests also thrive in warmer, wetter weather, forcing farmers to be diligent about tillage and the use of pesticides. Podoll, who farms organically, has been stymied in his efforts to grow wheat, oats, barley and rye because climate change has made North Dakota more hospitable to plant diseases. Because of this, he grows a smaller suite of crops than he once did.

Chris Studer, communications and marketing director of the South Dakota Farmers Union, said

Damaging flooding, like this scene near Frederick, S.D., in 2011, is likely to happen more often with increasing climate change, according to some estimates.



fluctuations in weather have been harmful to agriculture because they have been so difficult to predict.

A few years ago, extra rain and the floods it caused were a bane to farmers and ranchers.

"When the moisture problems really started in 2007, there were just under 613,000 acres eligible for Prevented Planting payment. In 2008 alone, 1.38 million acres of farmland were eligible for Prevented Planting payment from the federal government," Studer said.

Between 2008 and 2011 the federal government paid South Dakota farmers more than \$1 billion under this system.

The drought of 2012 was equally deleterious.

"It was most severe in southern South Dakota, where a lot of farmers either had small crops or none at all," Studer said.

RESPONSES TO CLIMATE CHANGE

In northeastern South Dakota, however, the drought did not do so much damage, and in fact many farmers had a boom year. The reason why may point to one way for farmers to try to minimize the damage that comes with climate change.

Cropland in northeastern South Dakota made it through the year on subsoil moisture. Edwards counsels farmers to minimize tillage to allow soils to retain moisture, which will help ameliorate the effects of the next drought.

Studer says practicing no-till also minimizes farmers' use of fossil fuels.

"Farmers can implement conservation practices that store carbon in the soil. That's a big way they can have an impact," Studer said.

Edwards also advises farmers "to do more with their land." Land in pasture, for example, benefits from extra rain in a way most crops cannot: Grassland absorbs extra rainfall and puts it into more grass production, while at many times of year extra rain on cropland simply runs off. For this reason, years of extra rain have been

a boon to stockmen.

Fred Kirschenmann, a leading thinker about the future of agriculture, says that in the face of climate change, the focus for farming should be on increasing the resilience of our systems.

"If you want to make your farm resilient for the future, you have to think about it in two ways," Kirschenmann said in a recent interview with *Yes* magazine. "First, there's 'specific resilience': I look at my farm in North Dakota and say, 'OK, in North Dakota now, and in the future, we're likely to have a more unstable climate and to see the end of cheap energy. So how should I redesign my farm, so it can be resilient under those specific new circumstances?'"

"Then there's 'general resilience,' which none of us can predict. We think about what's the larger global impact of climate change, and how we can begin to think about building more diversity and more redundancy into the system, so that we have more flexibility to respond to whatever comes along."

Kirschenmann advises that this effort should start with soil health, so that the soil can bounce back after years of drought or excess rainfall.

The weather suggests business-as-usual might not be adequate: For example, the U.S. Drought Monitor shows that as of Feb. 26, nearly 24 percent of North Dakota and nearly 87 percent of South Dakota was in moderate to exceptional drought.

It looks like the superlatives in our weather reports aren't going away anytime soon. ✨

→ *Christopher Cumo is a freelancer and author of three books and a number of articles, essays, reviews and short stories.*

*Where A Personal Touch
Means So Much!*



STEEL & VINYL SIDING

**SEAMLESS
SIDING & GUTTERS**

ENTRY DOORS



B & E Siding & Windows does exactly what our name says, we sell and install high quality Thermal Line THV composite windows and doors along with Revere steel, seamless and vinyl sidings and Sun Setter awnings. Come take a look at our brand new showroom and let us answer any questions you may have. Call today!

605-225-8782

1-800-643-2528

315 S. ROOSEVELT ST. • ABERDEEN SD 57401 • BESIDINGANDWINDOWS.COM



It's not easy being "green"—especially in our rural communities.

Certain aspects of our lives out here on the prairie make going green more difficult than it is for people in more populated places.

The distances between our homes and our workplaces and schools is great—so reducing driving doesn't happen very easily. There's no convenient public transportation to take instead.

Most towns don't have curbside recycling, and many have no recycling program at all, so if we want to keep our recyclables out of the trash, we have to haul our items ourselves.

And many "eco" options for products are not available in our stores, which pits shopping local versus buying "eco" from elsewhere.

But that doesn't mean we have to give up on green thinking altogether. Many people in our rural communities are doing what they can to be more environmentally conscious, in spite of the difficulty in doing so. (Our pioneering spirit in the face of adversity is still intact, apparently.)

We've compiled a list of ways people in our area are doing great green things. Read on for inspiration!

The LaMoure Green Team is, from left, back row, Madison Bierman, Chantel Johnson, Caleb Dorich, Damien Bentz and Mercedes Bierman, and front row, Jade Wagner, Kennedy Witt, Autumn Mills and Misty Childers. Photo by LaMoure Chronicle

Green Spark 2: Recycle What You Can.

Young people put their muscles into recycling projects

BY HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

REPORTING BY DOUG CARD, BRITTON JOURNAL AND LANGFORD TRIBUNE; BECKY FROEHLICH; ART HAGEBOCK, LAMOURE CHRONICLE; AND GEORGE THOMPSON, REPORTER & FARMER

If you show up at the recycling trailer in Britton, S.D., on the second or fourth Saturdays of the month, you'll see some eager 4-Hers giving a new, muscles-required definition to the term "paper pushing."

The trailer holds paper of all kinds: newspapers, junk mail, school worksheets, cereal boxes, old phonebooks and much more—all of it once destined for the landfill. For the last two years, Marshall County residents have instead brought their paper here, or to various drop-off locations throughout the county, for it to be recycled.

On those designated work days, the 4-Hers push the paper back using brooms and brute force so they can get a full load in the trailer before calling a Mason City, Iowa, paper company to pick up the full trailer and leave an empty one.

"The first time we totally overloaded. We thought we had to fill that baby," said 4-H leader Kari Feldhaus. "It was sinking into the ground."

The person from the paper company who picked up the trailer set them straight—the paper only needed to be four or five feet high. "So we're learning," Feldhaus said.

The 4-Hers in Marshall County aren't the only ones in the region working on recycling projects. Webster and Madison, S.D., and Gwinner and LaMoure, N.D., are among the communities where recycling efforts are either up and running or in the works. And the notable factor in these projects is who is doing the pushing (sometimes, as noted, literally) to get them going: the young people of the community.

These efforts started in various ways—some with conversations with people who live in other

parts of the state or country where recycling is commonplace, some with connections to companies that helped the effort. But all of them at some point received some important forward momentum as young people shared their enthusiasm for the projects.

In Gwinner, Kirstin Kempel, sixth-grade teacher at North Sargent Elementary School, said the city voted to support a recycling program a few years after voting down a similar effort. One

continued on next page

Sixth-grader Chase McFarland moves a recycling bin at North Sargent school. Photo by Kirstin Kempel



LaMoure's Green Team Lobbies for Recycling

Dawn Schmitt didn't know what she was starting when she suggested that her LaMoure High School ecology class look into the feasibility of a recycling program in the town of LaMoure.

"It was something I suggested," Schmitt said, "but they've taken it over—they own it. The students are pretty passionate about it."

The 10th- and 11th-grade students, known as the Green Team, conducted a survey of the community, asking if people would support a curbside recycling program; 95 out of 100 said they would. They did a cost analysis, in which they found that it would cost less than a tank of gas to recycle for a full year, and also a garbage study, in which they found that more than 90 percent of what was in the garbage was recyclable. Now they are working on education: They have put together a PowerPoint presentation for the city council and are planning talks with elementary students and senior citizens on the how and why of recycling.

They found, for example, that by recycling a third of the paper the LaMoure School system uses, they could save 30 trees, according to student Chantel Johnson.

They are also planning to ask the city council to consider the problems of landfills: Once the current one gets full, they'll have to find a place for a new one. And the water that runs off from landfills is toxic: "It could get into our water systems," Johnson said. "It's really harmful. It could harm us and our animals and our crops."

Their presentation in front of the city council is April 1.



Marshall County 4-Hers Kordell Feldhaus and Weston Henschell add paper to the heap in their recycling trailer. Photo by Troy McQuillen.

big difference between the two votes was that in the interim the school had started a recycling program.

The kids, especially in the younger elementary grades, are very dedicated recyclers. "They want to recycle everything," Kempel said, even things that aren't on the approved recycling list.

Those kids took that enthusiasm home to their families, which Kempel thinks affected how their voting-age family members thought about the decision to recycle. The city voted to support a recycling program, even though they have to pay for the service along with their garbage and water bills.

"It was a really big deal that it went through," Kempel said, "and it had a lot to do with the kids recycling in school first."

One reason young people are enthusiastic about

continued on next page



Marshall County 4-H Project Benefits Local Theater

The paper recycling project in Marshall County started through the work of Patty Ogren in Langford. She had tried to get a large recycling trailer in Langford, but she realized they wouldn't have enough volume to make it worthwhile. By working with the Britton groups, however, they did.

They have now been recycling for about two years. So far 186,240 pounds have been recycled, and Marshall County 4-H has received \$4,531 that has gone to support Marshall County 4-H programs and the Strand Theatre digital projector campaign.

"The 4-H families and volunteers who donate their time to maintaining the trailers are to be commended, as are the people who collect and drop off their paper at either trailer," said Jennifer Ringkob, 4-H youth program advisor in Marshall County.

Langford has its own side project for the recycling effort: A small trailer parked in town holds the paper before it is hauled to the larger trailer in Britton. That smaller trailer was purchased through group fundraising efforts,

including a grant that Langford student Kristen Erickson received from the Hershey Foundation.

"Recycling really makes sense. It's just garbage to us, and here someone can benefit from it," Ogren said. She explained that there is no cost to the 4-Hers, beyond the donated labor. "As stewards you don't really want to put this garbage out on the Earth. You'd just as soon use it or recycle. This is just kind of a bonus because you get paid for it."

The group sees this as a good place to start recycling in the community, since it has such a clear benefit. They hope to add recycling for other items someday, even if those efforts may have a cost attached.

From left, Evan Ogren, Trey Jensen, James Erickson, Kade Larson, Alyssa Olson, Tate Jensen, Brent Ogren, Joshua Punt, Zachary Punt, Amber Ogren, Chase Larson, Ryan Punt, and Brian Anderson help with Langford's recycling trailer. All of these kids, except Evan and Brian, are Dakota Kids 4-H Club members. Photo courtesy Dakota Kids 4-H Club

Inset: Jennifer Ringkob

Madison Student Establishes Recycling For School System



Above: Amy Shan

Three years ago, Madison senior Amy Shan attended a People to People Leadership Summit in California. Part of the program there was creating a plan of action for a project she could do on her return to her community. Shan drew up

a plan for recycling, and through some diligence on getting the logistics worked out, she set the plan in motion.

"Now I am proud to say that recycling has become routine at Madison High School," she said.

She first approached the principal for support. Then she had to coordinate the program with the pickup service and meet with the custodial staff to ask them to work with her on the effort.

Even when the bins were put into place, however, there were stumbling blocks.

"Students were not sure of what to recycle, and they had poor recycling habits," she said. "Instead of getting discouraged, I produced a recycling video to put on the school web page and enlisted school organizations to create educational posters."

Shan was honored for her work by being named a distinguished finalist of the national Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. She also received commendation from the South Dakota Senate.

"I would encourage any person who sees the need for a recycling program to implement one," Shan said. "Earth is the only planet we can live on, and we also have to share it with other plants and animals, so we should take responsibility to conserve the planet for future generations."

recycling in a way that adults might not be is because they aren't used to one way of thinking, Kempel said.

"Grownups are in their same-old mode of, 'you do what you've always done.' We don't like change," Kempel said. "Kids understand that this is their future."

Hannah Kilker, one of the Marshall County 4-Hers, put in this way: "We're going to be here longer."

Patty Ogren, who helped get a recycling trailer in Langford as part of the Marshall County paper recycling effort, said kids might be enthusiastic about recycling because they see the need in their community, and they are able to do something about it.

"When we talked about it in our club, our kids were excited to try this," Ogren said. "It's something they can do. It's not hard."

Amy Shan, a senior at Madison High School who started a recycling program in the Madison school system, said she realized after a trip to California that recycling is one way she could make a difference.

"Recycling is important because it is one of the easiest steps that anybody can take to positively influence our environment," Shan said.

She explained that before she started the project, she was very shy, but as she tried to work toward the goal of getting the project going, she came out of her shell.

"Even a teenager can contribute to society," Shan said.

Or, as young people across the region are showing, they might be the ones in our communities who are the best force for positive change. ✨



BLACK KNIGHT



Pools • Spas • Games & Things

826 6th Ave. SE • Aberdeen, SD 57401

605-226-9074

blackknightpools@yahoo.com

Hot Tubs

-Hot Springs
-Limelight
-Hot Spot



Pool Tables

-Olhausen Billards
-American Heritage
-Connelly Billards

Saunas

-Saunatec
-Finnleo



Patio Furniture

-O.W. Lee -Hansen
-Tropitone -Agio

Foosball

-Valley



Shuffleboard

-Champion

Pools



Games

-Darts
-Poker Tables

Hot Tub & Pool Supplies

-Bioguard

Webster Recycling Raises Funds For New Pool

Sometime next summer, when Webster residents are enjoying their new pool, they can do a little thank-you lap for all the community and environment-minded people who set aside their recycling to help make it happen.

The new pool is being financed through a 20-year bond issue and by volunteer fundraising. One of the key components in those volunteer efforts is can and paper recycling.

Volunteers for WAVE, the Webster Aquatic Venture for Excellence, which has spearheaded the effort to get a new pool in Webster, began recycling aluminum cans in 2006 and have raised more than \$12,000. Paper recycling began in December 2010 and has so far raised \$33,000.

More than 660 tons—well over a million pounds—of paper have passed through their project in that time.

Rose Vogl, who is heading up the recycling effort, said people from several other communities drop off their paper in town as they drive through.

Several youth groups are among the volunteers maintaining the trailer, including 4-H groups and the school's student council.

Left: Pacey Grosgebauer moves a recycling bin during recycling preparation at North Sargent school.

Right: Anissah Carlblom, Kaylee Stevens, Meadow Malone, Chase McFarland and Victoria Sandness are among the students helping with recycling preparation at North Sargent school.

Photos by Kirstin Kempel



Small Town of Gwinner Supports Recycling in a Big Way

The list of towns with curbside recycling in North Dakota includes some towns you might expect, like Grand Forks and West Fargo—but also on the list is Gwinner, population 747.

The program started with a conversation between Kirstin Kempel, sixth-grade teacher at North Sargeant Elementary School, and her friend Jennifer Hansana, who works at Dakota Landfill/Waste Management in Gwinner. They realized that they had the resources to do recycling in Gwinner, if they could get people to support the effort.

They knew that the community had not supported community-wide recycling previously, so they focused their efforts on just the school first. With Kempel spearheading the effort on the side of the school, and Hansana managing the effort from Waste Management, the school project got off the ground. People started to realize it wasn't much more effort than putting the items in the trash.

"Waste Management's recycling is really handy—everything goes in the same container," Kempel said. When the discussion about community-wide recycling came up again, they had a significant part of the

community already used to recycling, Kempel said—including the children, who had already adopted the habit as second nature, and wanted to recycle at home like they were at school.

Recycling advocates had several open discussions where they discussed the potential benefits of recycling, and listened to what people thought would be the drawbacks. A lot of the drawbacks turned out to be misinformation, Kempel said.

"Some silly concerns were, 'Oh, it's going to stink,'" she said. She said they explained that with a little rinsing of the food containers before putting them into the bins, there's no odor.

Since the community does have to pay for the service (as a fee on their bill of services from the city), it came down to convincing people it was worth the cost.

"You have to have enough people that really feel that recycling is important enough, that it doesn't make sense to keep putting things in the ground when we can reuse them. Even if we have to pay money to do that," Kempel said. "You just have to have enough people that feel that way about it."



Above: Mary Filipek shows some of the creations she's helped her 4-Hers make with recycled items. Photo by Bill Krikac

Mary Filipek of Raymond, a 17-year 4-H leader, has been recycling creatively with her 4-H youth for many, many years.

"Reduce, recycle and reuse," also known as "the three Rs," are important principles in 4-H, Filipek said.

"A lot of our crafts involve recycling," she said. "It's important to try to reuse items if you can to reduce our trash.

"Use your imagination and be creative. Check out Pinterest—there are a lot of ideas on there."

For one 4-H project, she and her 4-Hers made a snowman pair out of coffee creamer jars and an old sock. First, they washed out the jars thoroughly and slid the plastic sleeve or label off of the jar. Then they cut down four inches from the band of the stocking. The band was put at the top of the jar for the stocking hat

Green Spark 3: Recycle Creatively.

4-H Leader Uses Items Destined for the Trash in Craft Projects

BY BILL KRIKAC, CLARK COUNTY COURIER

and glued on. Not far from the top, yarn was tied to make it look like a stocking hat. A strip of the stocking was cut and folded around the jar's indentation. This became the scarf for the snowman. Movable eyes were added and craft foam made the nose and mouth. Pompon balls were used for buttons.

Another idea she had was to make a marker board out of an old picture frame. Students decorated an old frame to their liking with whatever backing they wanted and then decorated the frame, too. An erasable marker was then tied to the frame with ribbon, so it could be used anytime for a message board. Filipek used this idea for a Mother's Day gift for her second-grade students. She is also a second-grade teacher at Clark Elementary.

Using old text books at school, a centerpiece was made by painting and gluing three books together. The books were then tied and decorated with artificial flowers and candle holders for a unique look. The books were painted gold.

"Another idea our 4-H kids did was to make wall hangings that look like wrought iron. They made them out of strips of cereal boxes painted black and some were curled for scroll-type look. They were unique and looked like metal on the wall," Filipek said.

"Another green project we do is to walk the ditch along a mile area on U.S. Highway 212. We pick up garbage in the ditch every spring and fall." ✨

USED 5TH WHEELS
COMING OUT OUR EARS!

- 17** Non Slides Units
- 6** Small Single Slide
- 15** Large Single Slide
- 2** Large Double Slide
- 5** Triple Slide Units

PRICED
\$2,500 – \$50,000



LIEBELT RV
SALES • PARTS • SERVICE

+25
Travel Trailers

US Hwy 12 West • Aberdeen SD 57401 • 605.225.8400

Green Spark 4: Consider Powering Your Business with the Sun.

Gackle Manufacturer Gets Two-Thirds of Needed Electricity From Solar Panels

BY MELODY OWEN, TRI-COUNTY NEWS



Above: Jeff Enzminger shows the dual electrical meter at their facility. Prior to the solar panels being placed, the business purchased a daily average of 150 kw from the electrical company. After solar panels they have cut purchased electricity by two-thirds.

Looking to trim expenses for their growing business, Jeff Enzminger and James Owen, owners of Double J Manufacturing and Repair near Gackle, N.D., have turned to alternative energy to help manage expenses.

The pair originally looked into wind generators, but they soon switched their focus to solar, which has cost and maintenance advantages.

"Wind generators cost twice that of solar panels to produce the same wattage," Enzminger explained.

Ongoing maintenance and only a five-year guarantee with wind generators also pushed them towards solar panels, which have a 20-year guarantee.

Additionally, solar panels produce electricity whenever the sun shines, even on cloudy, snow days.

"Wind generators are only productive 50 percent of the time depending on the weather," Owen said. "In the summer with the longer days we can produce even more electricity."

With help from Jack Hansen of Enterprise Sales in Valley City to find the best system for their needs, 100 feet of solar panels were placed at the south end of their building. Housed inside of their facility is a converter with a monitor continuously showing the wattage the panels are producing.

On a cloudy day with the panels partially covered from recent snowfall, the system was producing 2,000 watts. At max production, 11,500 watts are produced by the panels and tied into the buildings electrical system.

"We run eight welders, three plasma cutters, an iron worker, chop saw, heat and lights in the shop and are able to produce two-thirds of our electricity with the solar panels," Owen said. The offices and break room are also tied into the system.



Above: Solar panels recently constructed at Double J Manufacturing and Repair north of Gackle. Photos by Melody Owen

Becoming self-sufficient was also a reason for the business partners to look at alternative energy.

"With the electrical companies continually raising their rates, we are able to stabilize some of our expenses with solar power," Owen said.

As the business continues to grow, they are already looking ahead to adding more panels to keep up with their electrical needs.

Enzminger encourages anyone looking into wind or solar energy to do their research: "Look for quality, not ones that are cheaply made."

Owen added, "The cost of solar is coming down as technology improves, and the sun is always there. If you are thinking of going solar, do it!" ✨

→ *Editor's note: James Owen is writer Melody Owen's husband.*



Left: *The Painted Past* is a family affair. Kelsey Waletich is at right; her mother, Pudgie McMahon, is at left, and between them are Waletich's daughters, Grey and Galle Waletich. Photo by Elaine Steen/Steen Photography

Below: An example of Waletich's repurposed furniture. Photo by Troy McQuillen



Green Spark 5: Upcycle.

New Business Reinvents Old Furniture

BY DOUG CARD, BRITTON JOURNAL

Where others might see an out-of-style, perhaps even ugly, lamp or table, Kelsey Waletich sees potential.

Waletich has opened a store in Britton called *The Painted Past*. She hand paints furniture, recycling old furniture into more modern pieces through a variety of methods.

"You can't believe the tons and tons of furniture you can find that would end up in a burn pit somewhere," she said. "It's perfectly fine—just outdated and ugly."

Waletich has always had an interest in decorating and painting old furniture, but

the idea to turn that passion into a business came after her sister became involved with a similar business in Denver. *The Painted Past* is a family affair, as Waletich receives help from her mother, Pudgie McMahon, and her daughters, Grey and Galle.

Waletich enjoys taking something ugly and perhaps destined for the dump into a functional piece of furniture that's beautiful and unique.

"My goal is that when customers buy furniture from me it is something different that can't be manufactured or reproduced, and nobody else is going to have that product," Waletich said. ✨

PAINT WINDOWS DOORS CUSTOM CABINETS OVERHEAD DOORS AUTO GLASS



Home Improvement Has Never Been Easier.

At House of Glass, Inc. we install and service all types of commercial overhead doors and residential garage doors.

Kevin Brick, General Manager
kbrick@hginc.biz
605-225-2010 | 800-658-4708
www.house-of-glass.com



HOUSE OF GLASS, INC.
CUSTOM CABINETS & PAINT
2 N. State St. | PO Box 228
Aberdeen, SD

HOME OF

100%

Finance Approval

Don't wait...Call Today! We can make it happen!



www.piersonford.com
701 Auto Plaza Drive
605-225-3720 or
1-800-627-1237

Green Spark 6: Go Geothermal.

Many Buildings in Faulkton and Groton Use Geothermal Heating and Cooling, and Organizations are Enjoying the Savings

BY GARRICK MORITZ, FAULK COUNTY RECORD, AND PAUL KOSEL, GROTON DAILY INDEPENDENT

We can't change the fact that Dakota winters get pretty cold, and Dakota summers get pretty hot.

But deep underground, the temperature stays the same: about 45 degrees.

This is the key to how a geothermal heating/cooling system works.

Three elements are needed for a geothermal system: a ground loop (a system of fluid-filled pipe buried down past the frost line under the ground), a heat pump (something that extracts heat from the fluid in the pipes) and a delivery system. The delivery system can either be conventional ductwork, if the system heats air, or another system of pipes, which circulate water through the building and release the heat that way.

And what's wicked cool, pun intended, is that all that needs to be done to cool the building is to reverse the process.

Home- or businessowners can expect to pay two, three or even four times the initial startup costs for installation of a geothermal heating/cooling system than what they might pay for a natural gas/propane system. But case after case has shown that the initial high costs have been worth it.

USDA Service Center

In 2005 the Farm Service Agency and the Faulk County Conservation District moved into a new building designed as a catchall center for these Department of Agriculture offices. When this government building was designed, a geothermal heating/cooling system was part of the plan.

"We were the first, though I don't think a lot of people realized it at the time," said executive secretary Sandy Bowar. "The heat is nice and even throughout the building, and the 'air conditioning' keeps us nice and cool... You can set the thermostat to different settings

in different parts of the building as well. Our computer room, for example, we need to keep cooler... We can keep it cold in there without affecting the rest of the offices in the building. We almost never touch the thermostat, even from summer to winter—set it to what we want and the machine does the rest."

St. Thomas Catholic Church

In 2006, St. Thomas Catholic Church was the first building in Faulkton to be retrofitted for geothermal heating/cooling. That's right, retrofitted. The modular nature of the system means that most existing structures can be converted.

"Our parish has been very, very satisfied with the geothermal apparatus," said Father Joji Itukulapati. "In the past, parts of the building were very warm and other parts were very cold. Now it is all very even, one temperature throughout, whatever we tell it to be. Every winter we have saved money and the savings have totaled somewhere between \$8,000 and \$10,000 since it was installed. It's been a good long-term investment for our parish, and we have been able concentrate on other building projects, such as remodeling the kitchen."

Father Joji said that the project got a lot of attention, both locally and regionally.

"After we made the change to geothermal, several others did as well locally, and not just places here in Faulkton. Parishes in Hoven and Aberdeen came to look at our machines and eventually did projects similar to ours. In Faulkton, too, both the hospital and the courthouse followed our example. I like to think that we were a positive influence throughout the area."

Groton Area School District

The Groton Area School District added on to the high school building in 2009.

From top, Father Joji Itukulapati at St. Thomas Catholic Church, Jay Jahnig at the Faulkton Area Medical Center, and Tom Waldner at the medical center are all pleased with their geothermal systems. Photos by Garrick Moritz



“The district decided to go with geothermal because it was projected that we would be recapturing our heating costs back in savings in 7-10 years,” said Superintendent Laura Schuster. “We also had the area needed to drill the geothermal wells.” The area used was the old skating rink, which is now the school parking lot.

Thirty-six wells were drilled.

“I believe we are currently using 28-30 of them,” Schuster said. “Extra wells were drilled in case any go bad, which can happen.” They also have some room to expand the system, she said.

Measuring the savings is difficult because they also added on to the building, she said, but she said she’d recommend looking at geothermal for any future projects.

Faulkton Area Medical Center

In 2007 the old Faulkton Memorial Hospital closed its doors and became the new Faulkton Area Medical Center in a whole new complex. That complex was designed with a geothermal heating system in place.

“The ‘central air’ system only requires a fan to bring the cold air to the various parts of the building,” said Jay Jahng, FAMC Administrator. “The AC is almost free and the heating is more efficient than anything I’ve experienced before. In the summer, it’s almost too cold!”

Jahng also mentioned that the hospital’s maintenance chief Tom Waldner is also a big fan of geothermal, so much so that he had it installed his own home. Waldner said he got a deal he couldn’t pass up and even did some of the installation work himself with a borrowed backhoe.

“There is just no comparison to a gas or propane heater,” he said. “It’s way out of their league. My own home is heated for less than a dollar a day. I honestly don’t know why anybody would do anything else. I suppose I can understand why people might be put off by the higher cost of installation, but if you are building a new home, there is no reason not to spend the extra few thousand to get it installed. It’s a no brainer.”

Waldner said that it’s all humid air as well, not the dry air you’d get from a gas rig, which means fewer bloody noses and static charge on the carpet. Waldner said the systems are low maintenance, and they are green enough to get a tax break.

“I just set it to 75 and forget about it,” Waldner said.

“Sometimes there will be a fault or a reset, or something that has to be adjusted, but then nothing’s perfect. Ultimately, it’s a really good system.”

Faulk County Courthouse

“It works great, and it’s as green as Kermit the Frog,” said Jason Ferguson, maintenance officer at the Faulk County Courthouse.

“Work for our project started back in the summer of 2010... The geothermal heating and cooling system serves both the County Courthouse and the Sheriff’s Office and County Jail, and it’s located in what used to be the old boiler room of the jail. The total cost of the project was about \$700,000, but the county commissioners received grant money for about half that cost. I’d say it’s saved the county thousands of dollars. The system does a really good job, with a thermostat for every office to control just how hot or cold they want it anytime during the year.”

Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel and Groton homes

Andrea Snoozy Bahr of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel in Groton recently tore down the old building and is in the process of putting up a new funeral home.

“I went with geo because of the cost to heat/cool a building of that size (close to 9,000 square feet),” Bahr said. “I have 13 wells and three units along with a backup furnace.”

A number of homes in Groton have recently converted to geothermal. According to David McGannon of McGannon Plumbing, Heating and Cooling in Groton, geothermal equipment has improved a lot over the past 10 years.

“The compressor units can be housed inside and don’t have to be exposed to the outside elements,” McGannon said, and added that on average, geothermal is 350 percent efficient. “For every dollar spent, you’re getting \$3.50 worth of heating and cooling.”

Some electric companies offer reduced prices for geothermal. In Groton, a geothermal system with electric backup gets an 8-cent/kwh rate. If there is a natural gas backup, then the rate drops down to 5-cent/kwh.

In all it seems that if the choice to go geothermal can be both environmentally sound and economically friendly, it becomes no choice at all. ✨



From top: Jason Ferguson at the Faulk County Courthouse and Sandy Bowar at the USDA Service Center both say their geothermal systems require little adjusting, no matter the season.

Green Spark 7: Find Common Ground on Net Metering.

Legislation Didn't Pass This Year, But Supporters Will Look for Another Avenue to Help Renewable Energy Producers Get Paid for Excess Generation BY LANA BANDOIM



Above: Don Kelley and his wife, Kim.
Photo courtesy Dakota Rural Action.

The electricity that Don Kelley and his wife, Kim, use at their home in the Black Hills of South Dakota does not come from a distant power plant. Instead, it comes from the sun, through photovoltaic cells on their home.

As the vice-chair of the board of directors for Dakota Rural Action (DRA), he has been actively involved in the efforts to bring net metering to the state. Kelley's own system doesn't tie into the electrical grid and so wouldn't be affected by net metering, but his experience with solar power and other forms of eco-friendly energy have convinced him that alternative energy can be viable in South Dakota—especially, Dakota Rural Action contends, if a net metering policy made it more worthwhile for consumers.

Net metering is a policy that allows consumers who generate their own electricity to have special billing arrangements with utility companies. If the consumer creates more energy than the household is able to use, the electricity goes back to the grid for other users. South Dakota is one of only four states in the U.S. that does not have some type of net metering policy. (The others are Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee.)

Dakota Rural Action initiated the legislation to bring net metering to South Dakota by writing House Bill 1207.

"DRA's Community Energy Development committee decided to investigate this issue in view of rapidly rising electricity rates for our members around the state," Kelley said. "Much of the new revenue is scheduled to expand

coal-fired generation of electricity. Our group believes that South Dakota should be taking greater advantage of renewable solar, wind and other alternative energy sources while giving those farmers and urban residents who generate electricity at home or at their businesses full credit for any excess electricity they send back to the grid. We feel that it's time to join the 46 other states with such an energy policy in place."

House Bill 1207 faced strong opposition from the Public Utilities Commission and the South Dakota Rural Electric Cooperatives. Sabrina King, the lobbyist for Dakota Rural Action, has been joined by other members of the organization to support the bill. However, the House Energy and Commerce committee deferred the bill and recommended that the DRA work with utilities to find common ground, so Dakota Rural Action plans to work on a new proposal for 2014.

A representative from the Public Utilities Commission said its opposition to the plan is based on concerns that net metering will lead to price increases. The utility company would be forced to purchase the excess energy created by consumers and pay the retail price for it. This would lead to higher expenses for the utility company and eventually create higher rates for all residents.

Don Kelley said DRA is willing to work with the utilities on a net metering policy that would be agreeable to them as well.

"We believe that there are those in the industry who feel as we do that renewable energy needs much more development and that small-to-medium-scale distributed generation has much to offer," Kelley said. "One of the

appeals is that new, distributed sources of energy can make use of existing transmission capacity, whereas large wind farms, for instance, would require establishing major new transmission lines.”

Kelley said concerns about increasing rates are unfounded based on the research.

“We have ample evidence from studies done in other states that a net metering system not only works well, but that it results in no significant rate increases for utility customers,” Kelley said. “In the rest of the country where net metering has been adopted, local business has been stimulated by the increased demand for renewable energy system installations.”

Kelley said utilities actually benefit from net metering in several ways: They can decrease the need to purchase more generating capacity, losses from lines from distant power plants are less, and peak demand is reduced.

“Some studies have actually shown a net economic benefit to utilities from the adoption of net metering,” he said.

Support from residents is growing as Dakota Rural Action shares more information about the benefits of renewable energy sources for communities, Kelley said. The organization plans to continue working with utilities to bring net metering to the state. ✨

→ *Lana Bandoim is a freelance writer and editor. Her work has appeared in publications ranging from Yahoo! News to Technorati.*

Net Metering in North Dakota

North Dakota has had a net metering policy since 1991. Customers of investor-owned utilities (but not municipal utilities or electric cooperatives) can have systems of up to 100 kilowatts in the program. “If a customer has net excess generation (NEG) at the end of a monthly billing period, the utility must purchase the NEG at the utility’s avoided-cost rate,” according to the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency.

LEARN MORE



OUR REGION'S LEADER IN HEALTH CARE

MORE LOCAL **SPECIALISTS**—
MORE **SERVICES**—
MORE YEARS OF **EXPERIENCE.**

Avera 
St. Luke's Hospital

Hospital ▪ Long-Term Care ▪ Clinics

Sponsored by the Benedictine and Presentation Sisters

(605) 622-5000 ■ **www.AveraStLukes.org**

Green Spark 8: Get an Energy Audit.

BY HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

Does your house feel a little drafty? It's a common situation in houses in the Dakotas, where many homes were built before energy efficiency was a construction priority.

As an energy auditor for GROW South Dakota, Dan McNeil travels around the northeastern part of the state, helping homeowners figure out what efficiency improvements would yield the most in cost savings and added comfort.

GROW South Dakota offers home energy audits to any homeowner for a fee. McNeil says his visits last from three hours to more than five, depending on the size of the house and other factors.

"Sometimes you start digging, it takes you a while to figure out what's going on with the house," McNeil explained. With many of those large homes, "I won't say they were constructed poor, but maybe weren't constructed the best for energy savings. We try to figure out a way we can get in there and stop some of that cold air."

He evaluates the windows, the level of insulation in the walls and attic, and the efficiency of the furnace. He also conducts a blower-door test, which simulates the effect of a 20 mph wind on the house. Sometimes during that test he can physically see where the air is getting in.

Then he plugs all that information into a software program, which is preloaded with the typical cost for some of the recommended improvements. This allows him to provide homeowners with the savings-to-investment ratio so

they can do the upgrades that will do the most good.

In our area, three areas typically yield the most savings, according to McNeil:

- **Houses don't have adequate insulation around their foundations.** "The savings there can be pretty significant," McNeil said.
- **Attic insulation is inadequate.** What he typically finds is that homes have almost no attic insulation to up to eight inches. "Our standard is 16 inches," he said, explaining that evaluation and experimentation has shown that in our northern climate more insulation is worth the cost.
- **Leaks allow air infiltration.** McNeil has seen this especially for homes with the rock-and-rubble foundations that were popular in the early 20th century when many old farmhouses were built. "They are extremely leaky," he said of those foundations.

McNeil said they find an average of \$400 of yearly savings, and for big farmhouses they sometimes find \$1,000 to \$1,600 in annual savings. And many of the fixes don't cost a lot to do.

"If you look at where things are headed with gas and oil prices, the more houses we can get to and touch, the better I think we'll all be overall," he said. ✨

LEARN MORE

The fee for an audit is \$35 an hour, which also includes travel time to and from your home. To schedule an energy audit through GrowSD, call (605) 698-7654.

SALES PARTS SERVICE

Aberdeen
605-225-6772

Webster
605-345-3391

Redfield
605-472-2540



Why we
don't
recycle
glass here,
and what it
would take
to keep it
out of the
trash.

GLASS IS NOT
GARBAGE

BY SUZY GIOVANNETONE COPE

I grew up in northeastern South Dakota, but when my husband suggested moving back to Aberdeen, I was initially reluctant. I loved California, and one small but not insignificant reason for that was the way the state made it easy to take care of the environment.

I grew up learning about reduce, reuse and recycle, but did not actually put this knowledge into practice until I embraced a simpler way of living on the West Coast. Buy less, find a new purpose for old items, and recycle used-up items or containers instead of sending them to the landfill.

Recycling in California is simple: Store up your tin, aluminum, plastic and glass. Take your goods to the nearest recycling kiosk, not more than a few blocks away. Walk away with a few bucks after the clerk weighs and processes your recyclables.

Our family began the recycling process again after getting settled in Aberdeen. We found a place for cardboard, paper, aluminum, plastic and metals, but we threw our glass in with our garbage, as we did not know of a location that would take it.

By accident, I discovered that the local Target will accept glass recyclables. Put your glass into the correctly marked bin and Target will ship it off to their main distribution center for further processing. But the bin is small—if even a significant segment of Aberdeen's population tried to recycle there, not to mention people from the surrounding region, the pile would soon overflow into the checkout lanes.

Surely, there had to be other options for glass recycling in the Dakotas. What's keeping us from recycling our glass?

Here is what some people around the region and the nation have to say about the potential for glass recycling here.

CONTAMINATION HEADACHES

Mike Erickson, owner of Dependable Sanitation in Aberdeen, S.D.

Mike Erickson has been recycling for nearly 40 years. He said that his Aberdeen location does not currently accept glass, though their Mitchell, S.D. facility does. The Aberdeen office tried to recycle glass about 15 years ago but chose not to continue.

The last time Dependable Sanitation shipped a truckload of glass to Shakopee, Minn., the entire shipment was rejected because of a few pieces of ceramic material and a tiny makeup jar. This type of glass does not melt at the same temperature as bottle glass.

"It needs to be the right kind of glass and cannot be contaminated," Erickson said. "Contaminates in glass are plentiful because there are so many different types of glass."

If you can screw a lid on a glass container, you can recycle it, according to Erickson, but collecting enough glass to ship is time-consuming. The Aberdeen area simply does not generate enough glass to ship often. A lot of manpower is required to collect, load and ship glass when there is a risk of little to no compensation at the end.

Another cause of concern at Dependable Sanitation is worker safety—since handling broken glass puts workers at risk for cuts or eye injuries, Erickson said.

A BREAK-EVEN PROPOSITION

Jessica Balak, Renaissance Recycling in Jamestown, N.D.

Jessica Balak is very passionate about keeping recyclable items out of the landfill, and part of that is accepting glass, which Renaissance has been doing for more than four years. Recycling glass brings in little profit, and requires intense work in crushing, loading, cleaning and refining, but the company thinks the process is worthwhile.



Mike Erickson, of Dependable Sanitation, handles curbside pickup of recyclables for several cities. Photo by Troy McQuillen



Jessica Balek says Renaissance Recycling is passionate about keeping things out of the landfill. Photo by Troy McQuillen

"We pretty much break even with glass, but if it keeps it out of the landfill, we are happy to process it," Balak said.

Getting started in the glass recycling business is expensive, Balak explained: Finding a supplier willing to purchase the collected glass is the first difficult step, and second is having plenty of storage space to hold the glass until enough has been collected to ship.

"If you ship any less than 45,000 pounds at a time, you will lose money," Balak said.

To increase the potential profit, the glass must be as refined as possible, but each color of glass must be crushed and stored separately. Workers at Renaissance have to completely sweep and clean the area between each color of glass that is crushed. The process is time-consuming.

Balak does not think safety is an issue for the employees at Renaissance, who takes proper precautions by wearing goggles and gloves. Workers handle the glass material gingerly to avoid the danger of flying broken glass.

The city of Jamestown does not provide curbside pickup for recyclables, so patrons bring all of their

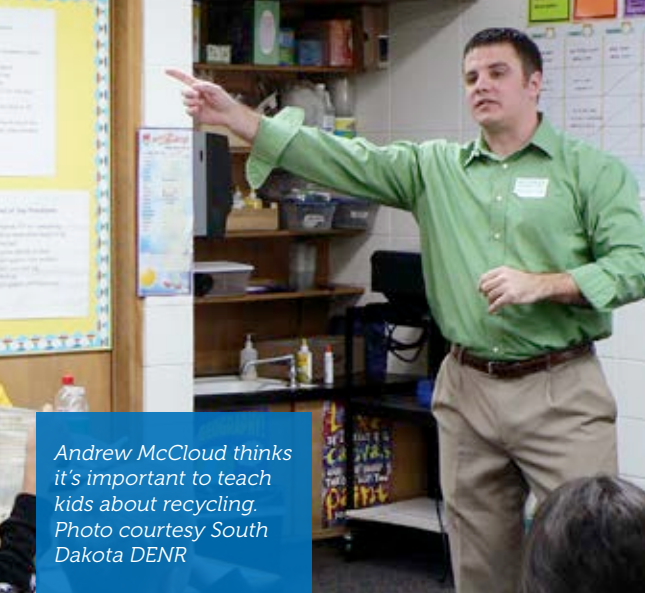
materials to the facility and are responsible for sorting them. And Jamestown residents aren't the only ones: Some regulars travel from Bismarck and Dickenson to recycle their glass at Renaissance, Balak said. She thinks many people may not be aware that glass can be recycled, and the community should do more to inform residents about the benefits of glass recycling.

HEAVY AND PRICEY TO HAUL

Andrew McCloud, an environmental scientist with the South Dakota Department of Environment and Natural Resources Waste Management Program; recycling coordinator for the State of South Dakota.

If there was a market for glass in South Dakota and if it were more profitable, there would be increased participation in glass recycling within our state, according to Andrew McCloud. South Dakota has a small population and naturally generates smaller volumes of recyclable glass.

The processing centers that receive glass from local recycling facilities are all located out of state, which increases transportation costs to ship the material. High transportation costs lead to less



Andrew McCloud thinks it's important to teach kids about recycling. Photo courtesy South Dakota DENR

profit. Overall, glass recycling is not affordable for South Dakota.

"When you have low volume rates and high transportation costs mixed with a low market value, glass recycling in our state can be very challenging," McCloud said.

McCloud, who is passionate when it comes to educating our children about the importance of recycling, would focus on the things we can recycle. The best thing we can do is to teach children from a young age about what can be recycled or re-purposed, he said: "By practicing reduce, reuse, and recycle in your everyday life, you can create a positive change and environmental impact in our state."

CRUSHED GLASS WITH A PURPOSE

Karen Stearns, Glass Advantage, West Fargo, N.D.

When Glass Advantage started in 2006, only two other companies in the nation did what they do with recycled glass: Produce abrasives for cleaning, and also glass filtration media for household and industrial pools. They also manufacture tumbled glass for landscaping purposes, which can also be put into flooring and countertops.

Today, other similar companies have started up, but it's still a difficult business.

Karen Stearns, who has been with the company for almost seven years, said the company has yet to show a profit.

"The costs are high," she said. "Electricity, manpower and the maintenance costs are huge. Glass is a hard object and is hard on equipment."

Also included in the high operation cost is ensuring emission compliance. Other businesses that have moved next to their facility had concern about the emissions from the glass refinery Stearns said. Glass Advantage is now compliant with the emissions created from processing the glass, but the cost to do so was huge.

Glass Advantage ships products to distributors throughout the United States and Canada. One distributor has begun shipping the water filtration media to developing areas of South America for the purpose of providing clean water to remote communities. Not only does glass filtration purify water, but the filtration system is environmentally friendly, uses less material and is more cost-effective

in the long run compared to conventional systems, Stearns said.

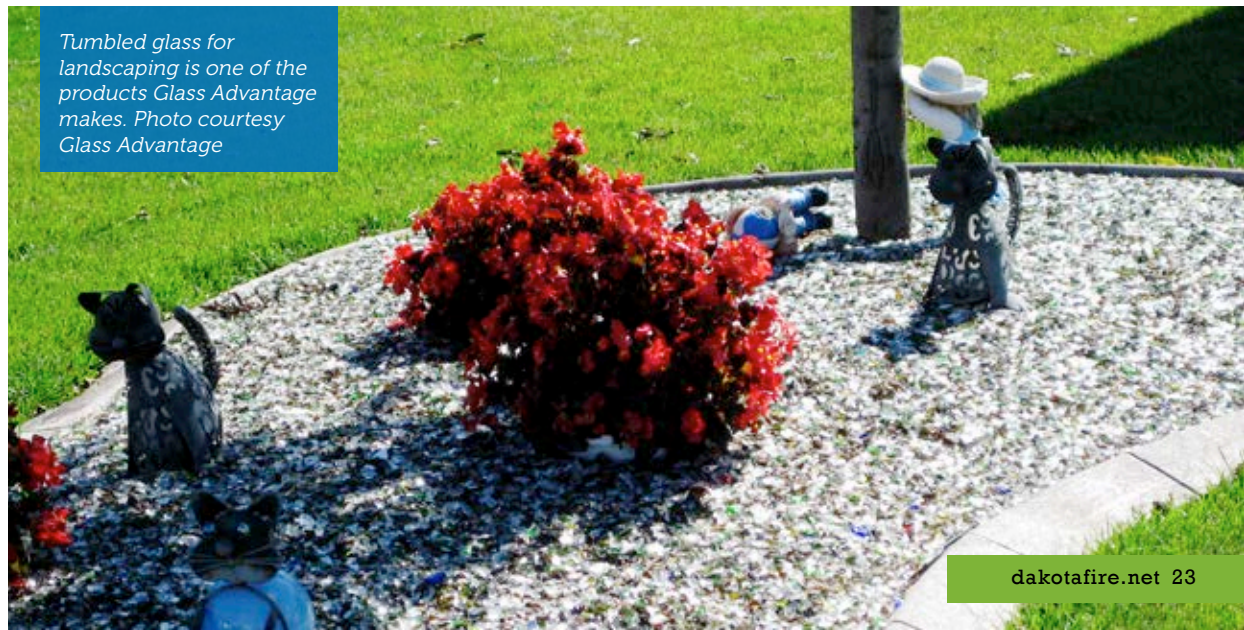
All of the products manufactured at Glass Advantage are earth friendly, Stearns said: "Glass is inert and does not carry harsh toxins." Crushed glass grains do not pose a health threat to individuals handling the material she said, and glass water filtration material does not trap bacteria.

Stearns said many Dakotans are not aware that companies such as Glass Advantage exist.

"There is no encouragement to recycle glass," she said.

Stearns thinks glass recycling would quickly take off if bars and restaurants were required to recycle all of the glass bottles they throw into the garbage. Currently, most of the crushed glass that they receive comes from homeowners, not businesses, from counties in western Minnesota. The facility shares the shipping costs with the counties in order to receive the crushed glass.

Glass Advantage is always willing to connect with recycling professionals to negotiate an agreement to purchase recyclable glass, she said.



Tumbled glass for landscaping is one of the products Glass Advantage makes. Photo courtesy Glass Advantage

Glass tiles and Nazar evil eye charms are among the artistic items made from recycled glass at Bedrock Industries. Photos courtesy Bedrock Industries



FROM GLASS TO ART

Chris Munford, manager of Bedrock Industries, Seattle, Wash.



According to manager Chris Munford, the employees at Bedrock Industries in Seattle, Wash., are not just there to put another use to glass. They are passionate about building a connection with the community.

Bedrock uses recycled glass to create tile, mosaic glass and a multitude of custom art works. The company began in 1993 when the original owner discovered she could fuse consumer bottle glass and form it into attractive tile.

Bedrock built custom machinery for processing the glass on site. Because of this, they are able to control the raw material flow. Glass can be received in any form and processed down into sand. The goal is to process the glass so it can be used in its natural color: No dyes are used to color any of the glass material at Bedrock.

People bring their bottles, washed with labels removed, to Bedrock and are compensated at 20

cents per pound for their glass items. While other facilities pay to get rid of glass, Bedrock pays to receive it.

Bedrock essentially uses a method of reverse marketing to keep the community involved in the business. Customers and contractors frequently contact the company inquiring about specific types of glass that are accepted. The most commonly used material includes bottle glass, window glass from manufacturers, colored plate glass, art glass from glass blowers and stained glass.

"We can't use everything, but we are open to seeing what is out there and seeing what we can do with it," Munford said.

When people bring in their glass, they can stop in the gift shop and see the end products that can be created from it.

The Seattle-based company employs about a dozen people. As a small company, 110 tons of glass is recycled every year. While Bedrock is a for-profit company, they have more of a non-profit feel to their work.

"For us, it feels like a really good thing that we are doing," Munford said. "The products are good for customers and the environment. We are able to employ people and provide living wages."

Munford said it might be difficult to replicate their business model in the Dakotas, since it is a niche market and requires enough consumers willing to spend a little more on their products. But Munford said the people they sell to think it's worth the extra cost.

"The customers like supporting a green product," he said.

WHAT CAN WE DO HERE?

High maintenance costs, finding ample storage space and high transportation prices are the barriers to recycling glass in the region—but that doesn't mean keeping glass out of the landfill is impossible.

Today we have opportunities to partner with existing organizations or create our own opportunities to manufacture new products from recycled glass. Even if recycling representatives are reluctant to become involved in the business of glass, there are a few things we can do to keep the material out of the landfill:

- **Reuse glass containers repeatedly.** Glass can be rinsed and reused for a lifetime. Strive to find new purposes for your jars and containers.
- **Challenge local businesses and bottling companies to reuse their own bottles.** The idea of sanitizing glass bottles and refilling is commonplace in other countries. It does not hurt to get people thinking about another potential method of reducing glass waste.

We can start with thinking creatively about how to reduce and reuse in our own lives—and if enough of us are thinking that way, maybe we can scale up our thinking to address the needs of the whole region. Who knows? Maybe we could start our own practical-yet-artsy glass recycling companies here in the Dakotas.

Take that, West Coast. ✨



→ *Suzy Giovannettone Cope is a homeschooling mom and freelance writer in Aberdeen, S.D. She volunteers as an advocate for people experiencing homelessness in northeastern South Dakota.*

NEW TRANSMISSION LINE WOULD INCREASE CAPACITY

Some wind projects now stymied by lack of lines.

PAUL KOSEL, GROTON DAILY INDEPENDENT



A new electrical transmission line may be coming to the horizon near you.

The proposed line will run 150 to 175 miles between a new substation in Ellendale, N.D., and a substation near Big Stone City, S.D., and the companies behind the project have narrowed the possible routes to three main options. Public meetings were held in communities near the proposed routes during the last week in February to get input on those route choices.

One of those meetings was held in the Groton High School gym, where representatives from Otter Tail Electric and Montana Dakota Utilities, the owners of the project, were on hand to visit with landowners.

Mark Hanson, a project spokesman, and Dean Pawlowski, project manager, were the facilitators of the presentation. The 345 KV transmission line will cost \$300 million to \$340 million, to complete and once construction begins, it should take three

years to complete, becoming energized in 2019. This is one of 17 projects in the works in the Upper Midwest.

The reason the new line is planned is because the current transmission system is getting full. This new line will increase capacity. It will off load the smaller transmission lines so new wind generation facilities can be hooked up through the smaller lines.

One impetus for the companies to look into a new transmission line a few years ago was the energy generated by new large-scale wind projects in North Dakota, which would mean that electricity would flow southeast from the wind farms along the new transmission line to larger population centers. Since then, the oil boom in the Bakken region of North Dakota has affected the situation, and at some point the flow of electricity may need to go northwest to serve the Bakken's increasing electrical needs, according to Pawlowski.

The design process should take until 2016, but Pawlowski said that the final route application should be submitted to the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission by late spring or early summer.

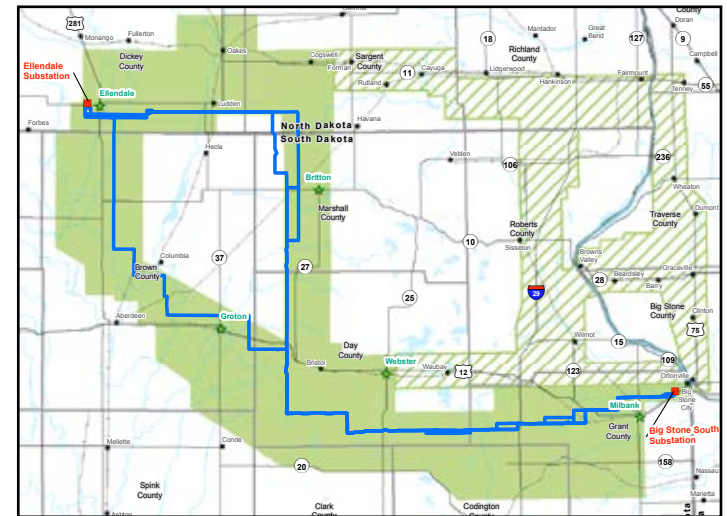
"Be patient as we work through the process," Pawlowski said. "We think we can work with the landowners. We rarely use eminent domain."

The lines require 150 to 180 feet of right of way, depending on the type of pole used. Landowners would receive payments for the use of the land. Farmers could still farm under the lines.

One meeting attendee questioned why the line would not be dug underground, given current technology. It was pointed out that due to the size of the line, cooling stations would have to be added every quarter to one half mile and that would make the project eight times more costly.

Other meetings were held in Ellendale, Webster, Britton and Milbank. ✨

Left: Monte Sippel, Bob Walter and TJ Harder look over the maps of the proposed route. Photo by Paul Kosel/Groton Daily Independent



Above: The blue line shows the proposed route options for the new transmission line. The green areas show those still under consideration, while the green hashed areas show routes no longer being considered for the line. Image from www.bssetransmissionline.com

LEARN MORE

For more information about the project and to sign up for newsletters, go to www.bssetransmissionline.com.

In April, Dakotafire will publish some considerations for landowners who are slated to have transmission lines on their property—watch for it in a participating newspaper or on Dakotafire.net.

Come in as a Patient,
Leave as a Friend.



**Dentistry affects every smile, every kiss,
every meal for the rest of your life.**

When you visit our office, your smile is our top priority. Our entire team is dedicated to providing you with the personalized, gentle care that you deserve.

Part of our commitment to serving our patients includes providing information that helps them to make more informed decisions about their oral health needs. This website is a resource we hope you'll find both useful and interesting.

Contact us today!

Dental Center
David Lee Merxbauer, DDS

1021 Circle Drive
Aberdeen, SD 57401
605-725-0800

www.thebestdentalcenter.com



Green Sparks From Your Neighbors, Via Dakotafirecafe.com

We asked on Dakotafire Café what our readers are doing to be green. Here are their great ideas:

Green Spark 9: Recycle and Make Money for Your Community.

The Webster Area is doing some neat things:

1. Recycling paper and aluminum cans to help fund the new aquatic center in Webster, thanks to the hard work of Webster Aquatic Venture for Excellence (WAVE). Not only is it an innovative way to raise money, but it's also a great way to kickstart recycling in Webster.
2. Recycling Campbell's soup labels, Land O' Lakes milk and orange juice caps and Box Tops for Education to help raise money for Webster Area School. With brands like General Mills, Pillsbury, Green Giant, Nestle, Kimberly-Clark, Land O' Lakes, and more, it's hard not to save these to help our school!

I hope these fundraising/recycling ideas help other communities!

—Melissa F2

Green Spark 10: Use Reusable Bags.

You've heard Kermit the Frog say, "It's not easy being green." But, it really can be—especially with reusable bags!

Why? It can save you money. Many stores now offer discounts for customers that bring their own bags! You can often find a free bag from a promotional fair, or pick one up for \$1 at a local store. Taking your own bag can help lessen the clutter in your home (no plastic bags!).

You can also use those same large reusable bags to reduce trips to and from the car: Instead of carefully balancing all of the items you're bringing somewhere (family gathering, road trip, boat ride, work, etc.) put them in a reusable bag and carry it to and from the car.

—Melissa F2

Green Spark 11: Encourage New Mothers to Breastfeed.

I breastfed both of our kids. There was no waste from formula packaging, and I did not have to throw out bottles of formula that were not completely consumed within a certain period of time.

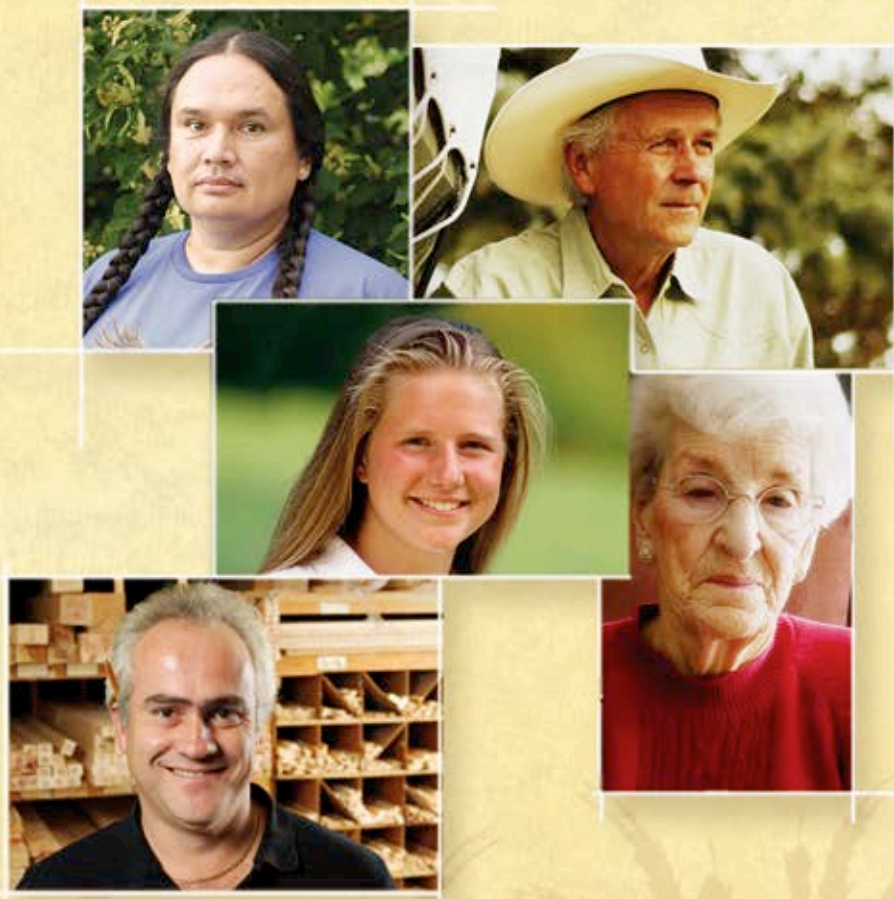
—Suzy G

CAN YOU HELP FEED THIS GREEN SPARK?

The Gettysburg EMTs have a couple collection points in town and residents put their aluminum cans in the bins. We raise anywhere from \$1,000 to \$1,200 a year. However, it is a task to transport the cans to Pierre, and it is time-consuming. We have heard that there is a company in Aberdeen that actually goes to the collection site and picks up the cans and transports them to the recycling center (for a fee of course). Does anyone know if that is true and how to contact them? Thanks for your help.

—Gayle Kludt, [GWBDC gwbdc@venturecomm.net](mailto:GWBDC.gwbdc@venturecomm.net)

FIREBACK



COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE
quality of life in South Dakota
FOR A QUARTER CENTURY



CONTACT US TODAY TO LEARN OF THE MANY WAYS
TO LEAVE YOUR LEGACY IN SOUTH DAKOTA

BY CHRISTOPHER CUMO

Grassland is going, going...

Armed with John Deere's steel plow, 19th-century European settlers to America broke the prairie sod, planting corn, wheat and other small grains.

Farmers were so efficient at this work that the tall-grass prairie of what is now the Corn and Soybean Belt disappeared, according to Carter Johnson, professor of ecology at South Dakota State University. All that remains is the mixed- and short-grass prairies of the arid west and north, and the Dakotas are one of their last great reserves.

But they may not be for long. The conversion of grassland to cropland never really stopped, and just lately the momentum has accelerated, as high crop prices and the risk reduction of crop insurance make grassland hard to leave alone.

Since 2008, the United States has lost 23 million acres of grassland and wetlands, much of it from the Great Plains, including the Dakotas. The trio of corn, soybeans and winter wheat has done the damage. Of these 23 million acres farmers have planted corn (newly adapted to tolerate drier conditions) on 8.4 million acres, soybeans on 5.6 million acres, and winter wheat on 5.2 million acres.

A recent study that looked at grassland conversion to cropland in five states (the Dakotas, Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska) showed the most conversion happening in the Dakotas, east of the Missouri River. "Our results show that rates of grassland conversion to corn/soy (1.0–5.4 percent annually) across a significant portion of the US Western Corn Belt are comparable to deforestation rates in Brazil, Malaysia, and Indonesia," according to study authors Christopher K. Wright and Michael C. Wimberly ("Recent land use change in the Western Corn Belt threatens grasslands and wetlands," published Feb. 19 in the Proceedings

of the National Academy of Sciences journal).

This loss of grassland is feeding into a larger trend of less livestock on the land. Several meetings have been held across South Dakota in recent months as farmers and ranchers discussed how they could keep livestock as a significant part of South Dakota agriculture.

But the grasslands also serve other purposes, according to Marissa Ahlering, a Natural Conservancy prairie ecologist. The prairies of Minnesota and the Dakotas support 40 percent of the bird species of North America, according to a Natural Conservancy publication. The grasslands also keep and build soil, filter water, and serve as big sponges during wet times to prevent flooding.

Those benefits are hard to measure against a benefit that's measured constantly and announced several times a day: The price of Yellow No. 2 corn.

Doing What Is Profitable

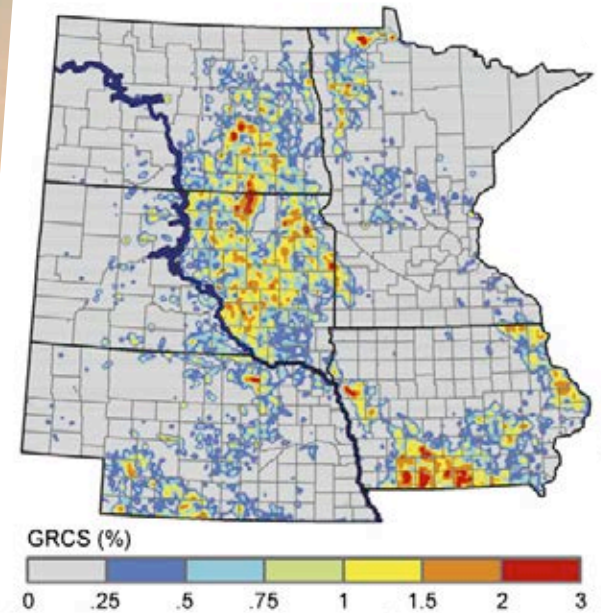
The economics of modern farming, with high input and equipment costs, mean that more land being farmed by fewer farmers makes the math work out more favorably. And crop prices, even if they have come off their record highs, mean farmers are searching out cropland wherever they can find it—including in what had been pastures.

Some observers take a pragmatic approach to the loss of grasslands. They note that when crop prices are high farmers convert grasslands to crops. When crop prices are low farmers are apt to leave land in grass, perhaps renting it to ranchers. Right now, however, the momentum is on the side of high prices.

"Due to the fact that 40 percent of the U.S. corn crop is used



"If the USA values wildlife and natural habitat, we are going to have to pay for it."



to produce ethanol, crop prices have skyrocketed and have had the consequence of encouraging more land to be taken out of grass," notes Ted Helms of the North Dakota State University Department of Plant Sciences.

This transition doesn't faze Helms. "I believe that landowners have the right to do what they want with their own land," he said.

Alan Dexter, professor emeritus at North Dakota State University, agrees.

"Farmers will do what will make them the most money in the long term," Dexter said. "Economics drive land use in most situations where the land is privately owned."

Woody Barth, president of the North Dakota Farmers' Union, joins this chorus, believing that farmers and ranchers have the right to use land as they wish. He admits that recent years have witnessed a conversion of prairie to cropland. This is to be expected because the search for profits dictates land use.

Barth sees the value of this conversion because the production of lots of food keeps prices low, making consumers happy. The production of lots of food also allows the United States to export to consumers worldwide. Agriculture is the chief reason that the

earth can sustain 7 billion people.

Yet as eager as he is to see farmers profit, Barth does not wish to lose all the grasslands in the Dakotas.

"We are good stewards of the land," he said.

Farmers and ranchers will preserve grasslands for income and the enjoyment of future generations. Farmers, Barth said, appreciate the value of striking an ecological balance between grasslands and cropland.

He even sees a role for government in voluntarily enlisting farmers to the cause of grassland preservation, but he is against government mandating how farmers use land in the fulfillment of some idyllic vision. If government were to arrest the conversion of grasslands to crops, the cost would be high.

"If the USA values wildlife and natural habitat, we are going to have to pay for it," Helms says.

Dexter has a similar mindset.

"If the government wishes to preserve an uneconomical prairie situation, then the government will need to purchase land or pay the owners an amount similar to what the landowners would earn through other more profitable land uses," Dexter said.

Left: Scene from Lake County, S.D. Photo by Joshua D. Boldt

Right: Absolute change rate from grassland in 2006 to corn or soybeans in 2011 (GRCS). The area in red has undergone the greatest change." Image from Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences Journal, Feb. 19

continued on next page



Landowners Could Affect Grassland Conversion

While it is true that many farmers are lobbying to convert grassland to cropland of their own accord, others are feeling pressure from the landowners they rent from to make the conversion.

The difference between grassland and cropland rent is significant: In Clark County, S.D., for example, the 2012 average rental rate for cropland was \$108 an acre, while the average rental rate for pasture was \$28 an acre.

When landowners, many of whom no longer live in the area, and some of whom have purchased the land as an investment, see the difference in rental rates, they may not consider much else.

But landowners have the final say in how their land is used. For those interested in preserving grassland, convincing landowners that keeping some land in grass is a wise investment of a different sort might be the most effective use of resources. —*Heidi Marttila-Losure*

Above: Scene near Reynolds Slough in Lake County, S.D. Photo by Joshua D. Boldt

Though some argue that government policy is supporting the conversion of grasslands to cropland, Scott Faber, Soren Rundquist, and Tim Male, coauthors of a 2012 report called “Plowed Under,” suggest that crop insurance is responsible for the tilling of a great deal of grassland, noting that the insurance removes the risk of planting crops on land that might otherwise have remained in grass.

Crop insurance is currently heavily subsidized by the federal government. With the expected end of direct payments, crop insurance subsidies will likely be the largest government subsidy most commodity farmers receive once the new farm bill is settled.

What’s the motivation for change?

Dexter does not see the ecological danger in this situation. He points to drilling for oil in North Dakota as far more destructive than all the conversion of grasslands to crops over the years. Farmers have actually done well in mitigating environmental problems like wind and water erosion, notes Dexter. Dust storms, once common in North Dakota in the early 1970s, are now rare.

Jim Ringelman, director of conservation programs at Ducks Unlimited, is reluctant to use an ecological argument to preserve grasslands because farmers are businesspeople who think in terms of profits not environmentalism. In a society driven by capitalism, an environmental argument may not make headway. The preservation of ranching is, he believes, the strongest argument for the retention of grasslands.

Unlike Helms, Ringelman sees a role for government in halting the loss of grasslands.

“Our elected officials should understand the economic, social, and environmental value of maintaining healthy, fertile soils,” he said.

After all, grass is what gave the Great Plains its marvelous soils, Ringelman and Johnson agree. When a grass plant dies, it, including its fibrous root system, decomposes to enrich the soil with organic matter. It is this organic matter that nourishes crops.

Johnson worries that farmers may be squandering soils that took millennia to form in the rush to make a quick profit. Moreover, the Dakota grasslands host bees and other pollinators part of each year, observes Ringelman. Without the grasslands we would have no bees and no crops that depend on insect pollination, which includes one-third of all crops, including most fruit.

Ripple effects from loss of grass

The value of grasslands goes beyond economics. Lisa McCauley, a postdoctoral researcher at South Dakota State University working in cooperation with the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center in North Dakota, notes that the demise of the grasslands affects wetlands as well, causing them to drain. In a process that she calls “consolidation drainage,” small wetlands in an area



Bobolinks' numbers are declining due to a loss of habitat. They generally nest in grasslands. Photo by Joshua D. Boldt

drain to form a single wetland. Whereas North Dakota once had a large number of wetlands, the number has shrunk, though each remaining wetland is larger.

This process has led to greater stability in the water level of wetlands, but at a cost. In the past the small wetlands dried during arid weather, leaving a niche for shorebirds. Now the remaining wetlands, retaining water year round, no longer attract shorebirds. Waterfowl also languish because the new wetlands harbor fewer aquatic invertebrates to serve as food.

According to Faber, Rundquist and Male, the loss of grasslands threatens the survival of the swift fox, the sage grouse, the prairie chicken, the whooping crane, and the mountain plover. In the Dakotas, the deterioration of wetlands that McCauley describes may cause waterfowl populations to decline nearly 40 percent.

"It would be a crime to lose all that biodiversity and historical value," Johnson says.

Preservation strategies

One solution to this problem may lie in more, not less, government. The federal government holds grasslands in the Dakotas, notes Johnson. The Fish and Wildlife Service, a government agency, has additional grasslands.

Unfortunately there is not enough money to pay all the farmers who might sell their land to keep it in grass.

By getting marginal land out of production and into grass, the government encourages farmers to crop the best land.

Faber Rundquist, and Male advocate the passage of a farm bill that would require farmers to protect grasslands and wetlands as a precondition to receiving crop insurance.

But it's possible that there's also a less-government solution: Some have argued for eliminating crop insurance subsidies altogether, which would put the risk of farming marginal land on the farmer. Eliminating the ethanol mandate would also have the effect of dropping crop prices, making it less appealing to convert grassland to cropland. Neither of those solutions is likely to be popular in rural communities, especially those that have seen a significant rise in incomes related to the ethanol industry.

Nonprofits may have a significant role to play. Johnson notes that the Nature Conservatory holds grasslands out of production. Ducks Unlimited, Ringelman hopes, will one day be able to offer carbon credits to farmers and businesses that preserve grasslands.

Grassland advocates may have to speak up, however. Right now, crop prices are making the most persuasive argument. ✨



**WHERE
THE PAST
IS PRESENT**

*Dedicated to telling
the story of the
Dakota prairie and
its inhabitants*

**21 S. Main St | Aberdeen, SD
605.626.7117
www.dacotahpraiemuseum.com**

Gallery and Gift Shop Hours:
Tues-Fri: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sat-Sun: 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Office Hours:
Mon-Fri: 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Green Spark 12: Make Sleeping Mats From Plastic Bags to Help the Environment and Others.

BY BECKY FROEHLICH

How often do you run errands in a week? Chances are, each time your purchases come home in plastic bags.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States consumes about 380 million plastic bags each year. Only 5 percent of these are recycled—and the majority that is disposed of can take up to a thousand years to decompose.

Some concerned citizens have created a simple way to harness that hardiness against the elements for a positive effect. Plastic bags can be reused to create waterproof, weather-resistant sleeping mats. By crocheting strips of the bags together, you can create a flexible place to sleep that absorbs warmth while it wicks away moisture.

The Orphan Grain Train, a charity that provides food and clothing to those less fortunate worldwide, creates such mats. Milbank, S.D., hosts one Orphan Grain Train station and uses the bags that clothing donations come in to create sleeping mats. These mats are sent all over, from South America to Eastern Europe. During the past tragedies of Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Sandy, these mats were especially necessary during times of relocation for victims. They provided a clean and efficient way for those affected to be able to receive needed sleep and rehabilitate.

For the last two years, I have taught the Mary Martha Guild at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Madison, S.D., the techniques for creating these mats. It's a fun process that you can do even while watching TV—it's easy, and still a great way to help others in need. ✨

→ *Becky Froehlich is a student at Madison High School.*

SUPPLIES

- Grocery bags
- Scissors/rotary cutter
- 8 mm or larger crochet hook

DIRECTIONS

1. Flatten out a plastic bag, matching up the sides. Cut the seam off closely



2. Cut the majority of the bag into approximately four strips. These strips should be 3"-4" in width. Recycle the unusable handles and the seam.



CONTACT

The Orphan Grain Train, which has a branch in Milbank, S.D., accepts sleeping mats for a variety of humanitarian needs. For more information, contact the Milbank branch manager, Jeannette Stensland, at 605-432-5612, or go to www.ogt.org.

3. Take two strips to begin the looping process. Thread one loop through the other, and then one end of the second ring through itself.



4. Pull tight, and continue this process with your other loops.



- When this chain of loops becomes long enough, use the crochet hook to chain stitch it until at least 36" long. Use a loose single stitch and crochet until 6' long.



These are two examples of progress in this craft and the finished product. You can stitch in pleasant patterns or place colors randomly. Either way, substance is serviceable over style in this project. The people these mats benefit would appreciate your effort either way, and the environment will certainly thank you.



STUCKE RESOURCE GROUP
ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

Chris Stucke

605) 228.5789 | ABERDEEN

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| ■ Battery Backups | ■ Faxers, Copiers & Printers | ■ Servers |
| ■ Cable Boxes | ■ E-Readers & Tablets | ■ Shredders |
| ■ Cell & Landline Phones | ■ Monitors & TVs | ■ Switches |
| ■ Computers, Laptops & Notebooks | ■ Phone Systems | ■ ALL CORDS & ACCESSORIES |
| | ■ Routers & Switches | |

HOW Can You Get Started?

- **We'll schedule on-site removal of equipment, no need to prep or sort.** HDD removal for secure destruction of assets can be conducted on-site before removal.

WHY Use SRG?

- **SAVE TIME & MONEY for your business.** Reduce or even eliminate landfill disposal scale fees, PLUS the expense of diverting your staff to haul it.
- **RESPECTING the ENVIRONMENT.** We process E-waste instead of wastefully disposing & returning precious materials back to manufacturers.
- **COMMUNITY Trust & Investment.** Refurbished equipment is donated to non-profits to help them meet their goals. We also provide an identity-theft prevention drop-off program.
- **FREE ACCESS to Used Parts Inventory.** Clients get any available parts to maintain their current equipment, at no cost.
- **TEAMWORK.** SRG's regional recycling partners institute zero-landfill policies — everything is refined and 100% reused.

MAIN STREET BRITTON:

BY HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE
REPORTING BY DOUG CARD,
BRITTON JOURNAL

PHOTOS BY TROY MCQUILLEN;
DOUG CARD

Powered by Women





ANGELA GRUPE, PREMIER TAX



CYNDY GRANDPRE, FLOWERS & FUDGE
and WENDY BLEGEN, COMPUTER BEAGLE



MELINDA NELSON and
PAULETTE KELSEY, ZINNIAS



DIANE LENTUSCH and CHERYL IMPECOVEN,
MARSHALL LAND & TITLE CO.

"In the last 10 years there has been tremendous growth (in Britton)—ballparks, library, swimming pool, the school built on an arena. It's going in the right direction."

"Almost every one of us has a good man and family that is proud of us and backing us all the way. And that is what makes it worthwhile."
—Grandpre

"I'm a firm believer in build it and they will come. If there's a reason to road trip, women will do it." —Nelson

"Community support is important. The local lenders, attorneys and realtors are very good to work with. We all help each other, which makes the job much easier." —Impehoven

Take a walk down Britton's Main Street (after you find a parking space—it's pretty busy most days) and you'll start to notice two things.

The first thing is the friendly smiles and warm welcome you receive when you walk in the doors of Main Street businesses. The second thing: Most of those smiles belong to women.

Through some combination of chance and choice, Britton's Main Street runs in large part on woman power.

This is true in the places you might expect, like Dizzy Blondz, where owner Jeanie Amacher and her daughter Kelsi Heer cater to women. But it's also true at Wells Fargo, where manager Shelly Kadoun

can help you get a loan, or at Butler Insurance, where Nikki Zuehlke and Robin Jones will assist you with crop insurance needs. Even at Ultimate Health Chiropractic, where Dr. Charley Larson will keep your back in good order, Dr. Charley turns out to be a petite mother of a boisterous 2-year-old.

No one is exactly sure why Main Street has become what some, according to Zuehlke, jokingly call "Britton's chick mafia." But the women ventured a few guesses.

It could be that the success of Dizzy Blondz has done something to set the tone as welcoming for women. The store opened in 2006 with jewelry and handbags, and Amacher and Heer have since expanded (filling up all their available space, and

punching a hole in the wall to spread into a room next door) to carry all sorts of other things: home décor, kitchen items, toys and much more. They draw a clientele from a wide area, according to Amacher.

In addition to her flower arranging, Cyndy Grandpre at Flowers & Fudge also has items intended for browsing, with several craft vendors displaying wares in the store. And in the past year two more shops designed to catch a woman's eye have opened on Main Street: The Painted Past, where Kelsey Waletich transforms ugly furniture into funky works of art, and Zinnias, where Paulette Kelsey and Melinda Nelson have filled brightly painted rooms with gifts and works of art from local crafters and artisans.

The like-minded businesses are considering some specific marketing to promote Britton as a destination for women's shopping outings, Nelson explained, like a traveling shopping trip branded with "In a Van ... Without a Man."

"We just have so many women doing such awesome things in this town. Everything's just taking off," said Kadoun, who will celebrate her 10th year in Britton in November. All of these efforts build on one another, she said. "We've heard nothing but good things about these businesses. It gives your town more to offer, which brings more people in."

Margie Hagenson of Garage Sales Forever

said Britton is adding businesses the right way. "Everything is different. None of us are in the same type of selling," she said. "(The stores all complement each other."

Grandpre suggested one reason women are so numerous on Main Street might have to do with the fact that because many of the typical job openings in the community are the kind more typically filled by men, in agriculture or at Horton's Manufacturing, for example (though of course there are some women in those places too), some women have had to create their own jobs.

"We are survivors and protectors," Grandpre said.

If so, they are following the advice that

accountant Susan Wismer gave to the local high school graduating class 25 years ago, "when I was young and idealistic," Wismer said: She told the graduates not to specialize if they wanted to leave open the option of coming back to their hometown. "To survive in a small town you have to be a generalist ... That way, if you decide you'd like to try life in a small town again, you don't have to count on someone else to give you a job. You can create your own."

Even if it was idealistic, she and her sister, Becky Weber, followed her advice 10 years ago, when they bought Britton Bookkeeping and Tax Service. And so have others, including Dr. Larson at her



ANGIE WURST, JUST A TEAZIN



MERANDA BUER and DANI YELKIN,
HAIR EXPRESSIONS



SANDRA L. GRESH and REVA METTE,
BRITTON REAL ESTATE



DR. CHARLEY LARSON,
ULTIMATE HEALTH CHIROPRACTIC

"Small communities are a wonderful place to start a business because people are so generous and willing to help you succeed."

"Owning a business in a small community has lots of good qualities. You know most of your clients and build a bond with them." —Buer

"It is important for us to give back to the community."
—Gresh

"Talking to other people outside of the community, they are just surprised how much Britton has."



SARAH GRUPE, BETTER BODY MASSAGE



KELSEY WALETICH, THE PAINTED PAST



KELSI HEER and JEANI AMACHER, DIZZY BLONDZ



MARGIE HAGENSON, GARAGE SALES FOREVER

"Without this community I wouldn't be the business that I am today. Britton is a great place to live and work, and my business is more than I could have ever imagined."

"I don't believe there is another town that could be any more supportive than the town of Britton has been for me!"

"My husband, Jeff, always said we were dizzy blondes and he nicknamed Kelsi 'Dizzy' when she was little. So our name came out of that and he is a great support system to us. He also does many small things at the store and gets paid by raiding the candy by the cash register." —Amacher

"There's so much talent in this town... Everything is different. None of us are in the same type of selling. To me, they complement each other."

chiropractic office and Sarah Grupe, a massage therapist at Better Body Massage.

GENDER ISSUES? TRY BENEFITS

Many of the women entrepreneurs said they'd had no problems because of their gender, though a few said there were some snags at first.

Kadoun said some older customers were used to having their money issues handled by a male banker, but most of them adjusted pretty quickly. Melissa Stark of Off the Wall Signs said some customers weren't sure that a woman could get their semi truck signage to be good enough, but her work soon proved she could handle the job, she said.

If anything, the women said their gender gave them some advantages. Jones from Butler Insurance said she thought some customers might be more willing to stop in because they knew she and Zuehlke were easy to talk to. Cheryl Impecoven said being detail-oriented, which women often are, helps in their business at Marshall Land & Title Co.

Wisner said she and her sister had jobs on the farm as young women, which makes a difference in their lives today. "We grew up in a man's world, and so have always identified more with their business frame of mind, and get along well with most that way," she said.

The one area where women faced challenges

was in balancing work and family life. Dr. Larson chose not to start her business until after her daughter was born, for example. Sandra Gresh of Britton Real Estate had to spend many weekends away from home in the early years as she was getting her certifications. "As a wife and mother it was hard not to be there for family," she said.

Many women said having support from their husbands and families was vital to making their businesses successful.

"I was nervous at first to start my business in a small town, not knowing what kind of response I would get, but my family and friends encouraged me to follow through with it, and I am glad I did,"

Sarah Grupe said.

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

All of the women spoke of the importance of giving back to the community. They serve on many local boards, including a very active Chamber of Commerce. Nelson, from Zinnias, told of serving the park board recently, when she and Kelsey gave out copies of the Malcolm Gladwell book *The Tipping Point*, telling people they were almost at that point when Britton would become a destination: "We need to become a place that people drive to

and not through," she said in their role then.

And the women fill many other community niches as well: "If anyone wants to know about youth sports, come to our office," Zuehlke said, explaining that between the two of them, she and coworker Jones pretty much have all the activities covered. Angela Grupe of Premier Tax is also the gymnastics coach, and Jeanie Amacher taught drill team to hundreds of girls over the years.

They all help out in the ways they can help best. Wendy Blegen, who runs her Computer Beagle tech help business out of a room in the Flowers & Fudge

store, said Grandpre is especially good at getting people on board for community projects. "She has a way of pulling you in—getting you to help, volunteer or whatever," Blegen said.

But in addition to helping the community at large, these women see it as very important to support one another. For the most part they don't see one another (or the minority of men in business on Main Street) as competitors.

"Jeani (Amacher) used to do banners," Stark explained. "She wanted to get out of that. Now she sends everybody down my way. And if I know of a



MELISSA STARK and HARVEY,
OFF THE WALL SIGNS



SHELLY KADOUN, WELLS FARGO



ROBIN JONES and NIKKI ZUEHLKE,
BUTLER INSURANCE



SANDY LEHR, VFW

"I was actually working at Cliff's One Stop (before starting my business). I was the morning smile. They either wanted to strangle me, or they loved me. I got to know a lot of people. I think it actually helped my business here."

"If you don't have community support, you don't have the great things that this town has to offer. You can't sit back and complain about it. You have to get up and do something."

"I heard someone call it the Britton chick mafia... I'm pretty pro-Britton." —Zuehlke

"It's a challenge for a woman to be in business, but don't be afraid to try it. I would encourage all women to be in management or own a business."



CINDY BREMMON, QUARVE DRUG

"I've been in business for 32 years in a wonderful community and still enjoy the people I see every day."



ANDI REDDAY,
SPICE IS RIGHT BISTRO

"I have had a few challenges but I don't think really because I am woman, but more because I am not originally from the Britton area—but I feel like it's my home away from home now and love the community and its people."



LANA WIETGREFFE,
HURLEY AND ASSOCIATES

"Every new successful small business in our little communities makes them more vibrant and alive."



ELAINE STEEN,
STEEN PHOTOGRAPHY

"It's nice to work in a small town because everybody knows everybody else, and the people support you and what you're doing."



BECKY WEBER, SUSAN WISMER
and MOLLY ANDRESEN,
BRITTON BOOKKEEPING AND TAX

"We grew up in a man's world, and so have always identified more with their business frame of mind, and get along well with most that way." —Wismer

way I can help someone else, I'll do it."

Waletich said community support has been vital to getting her painted furniture business going. "From advertising, sending their customers to my store, as well as donating furniture and odds and ends, the support has been amazing," she said.

They also advocate shopping locally and do as much of their own shopping locally as they can.

"A small community has to work together," Angela Grupe said. "Otherwise it can't survive. You see that so much more in a small community than in a big community."

THE MORE THE MERRIER

When asked if they had advice for others considering starting a business, the women spoke with one voice: "Go for it."

Sure, they offered a few caveats: Angela Grupe reminded people to get their papers in order before they dove in, and Wismer cautioned people to make sure they value their time when they start a business.

But for the most part, they encouraged people to follow their entrepreneurial examples.

Amacher advised potential entrepreneurs to be

creative and figure out their own niche, and then go the extra mile on customer service. "Britton has done just that, and we have a wide range of products for sale," she said, "which creates a great shopping experience."

Don't be afraid to fail, Stark said. "I almost was paralyzed by the fact I might fail, and I almost didn't take the chance because of that." And if she had, she would not be where she is today, in a job she loves, she said.

"Don't have regrets later," Blegen said.

"If you are passionate about what you do, it almost always works out," Impecoven said. ✨

SOME OF THE REGION'S MOST ADVANCED WEBSITES ARE DEVELOPED RIGHT HERE IN ABERDEEN

Large college website with an extensive content management system



Custom-built online store featuring the Dakota language

Regional news magazine site with multiple contributors



Custom inventory management and mobile rental equipment check-in



If you've spent thousands on office signage but haven't invested in your website, you're missing a lot of people. Today's customers turn to the web first for information, and a well-designed, modern website is a crucial part of your success. Get online with a website that meets you and your customers' expectations, and stand

apart from your competitors. We have over 12 years of experience creating great websites for clients large and small. We are honest, upfront, and won't confuse you with geek-speak. Come talk to us, and we'll show you how a new or upgraded website can grow your brand and get you noticed. Call today!

WEBSITES BRANDING LOGOS ADVERTISING DESIGN VIDEO PRODUCTION



MCQUILLEN CREATIVE GROUP

(605.226.3481) mcquillencreative.com

From Doug Card, Editor of the Britton Journal:

People frequently are amazed when driving into Britton and seeing the number of cars parked on Main Street. Some days it's even difficult to find a parking spot.



That's not the norm for small rural communities, and I think it speaks well for the can-do attitude and sense of community that our business people and residents exhibit.

But it's not an easy task to keep a community viable for its children and grandchildren to come back to if they so desire. It takes hard work and a willingness to work together.

We think you can see that from an active Chamber of Commerce, a progressive school system, a highly regarded healthcare and wellness center, and community leaders who are proactive. That proactive thinking has resulted in a new school arena, track/football facility, swimming pool, library, and baseball/softball complex—all examples of making sure the community continues to be a welcoming place to live, work, and play.

This Dakotafire issue also highlights a unique feature of the community in that many of those movers and shakers on Main Street are women. The guys on Main Street are in the minority. How fortunate we are to have them as part of the foundation of our community.

We would like you to come and check us out. Visit our unique stores and shops and grab a bite to eat. While you're here, plan a long weekend and take advantage of the water recreation, hunting and fishing, or visit historic Fort Sisseton.

We're confident that it won't take long for you to see why we're so proud to call Britton home! ✨

10 DAKOTA DAY TRIPS

We've all had days when we just want to jump in the car and get away for a little R+R, or a little adventure—not far from home, but not in our own backyard, either. Luckily, folks in the James River Valley have a variety of options for Dakota day drips—though once you get there, you may want to stay a little longer! Read over our picks, then go to DakotaFireCafe.com/Dakota-day-trips to add your own.”

By KIM SCHMIDT, public and media relations manager, N.D. Department of Commerce – Tourism Division; and MARIANNE MARTTILA-KLIPFEL, curatorial assistant, Dacotah Prairie Museum

COTEAU DES PRAIRIES LODGE IN HAVANA, N.D.

Coteau des Prairies Lodge near Havana treats guests to an authentic ponderosa pine lodge decorated with local artwork, rustic wood furniture and all the amenities of a modern home. The 14-bedroom facility will comfortably accommodate 45 guests and is sure to be a destination for outdoor enthusiasts, crafters, quilters, family gatherings and the casual traveler. Many recreational opportunities are nearby; Sica Hollow and Fort Sisseton are within a half-hour drive.

www.cdplodge.com

SHEYENNE OAKS HORSE AND RV CAMP

Nestled in the rolling hills of the Sheyenne National Grasslands of southeast North Dakota, Sheyenne Oaks is a great place to enjoy nature: Horseback riding, hiking, golf and canoeing are just a few minutes away. The area is similar to the Missouri Ozarks, but on a smaller scale. Bertha's Cabin is an enhanced feature. It was built in the early 1900s, but is newly remodeled with running water, electricity, kitchen, bathroom and front and back porch. A hot tub on the back porch provides a relaxing end to the day. The cabin sleeps four. Staying in a teepee (with electricity and running water) will be another lodging option, starting this summer.

www.sheyenneoaks.com/index.htm

Sheyenne River Valley



PHOTO CREDIT: NORTH DAKOTA TOURISM/SCOOTER PURSLEY

SHEYENNE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAY

The 63-mile byway runs from north of Valley City south to Lisbon on Highway 21 in eastern North Dakota. It features rolling grasslands and woody hill country in the Sheyenne River Valley. The road winds past miles of breathtaking springs, woods and historic sites, following ancient Native American footpaths and pioneer wagon trails. Quaint towns and farmsteads lend an Americana charm. Enjoy the many “mom and pop” shops along the way. One highlight of the drive is Fort Ransom State Park near the historic town of Fort Ransom. Five can't-miss sites along the byway:

- Lake Ashtabula/Bald Hill Dam
- Valley City Historic Bridges Tour/Medicine

Wheel Park

- Fort Ransom State Park/Village of Fort Ransom
- Sheyenne State Forest
- Wadeson Park/Walker Dam

FORT RANSOM STATE PARK

Fort Ransom State Park in the scenic Sheyenne River Valley of southeastern North Dakota has a scenic overlook high on the valley slope that affords a spectacular view of this unique area. Canoeing is popular on the Sheyenne River during the summer, and snowmobiling and cross-country skiing are major winter activities. The park offers 887 acres, modern and primitive camping, comfort station, campsite reservations, sewage dump station, picnicking, hiking and cross-country ski trails, amphitheater, biking, horse corrals, canoe and kayak access and rentals. Fort Ransom also offers high-tech treasure hunting called geocaching.

For more information on geocaching in Fort Ransom, go to www.parkrec.nd.gov/parks/frsp/frsp.html

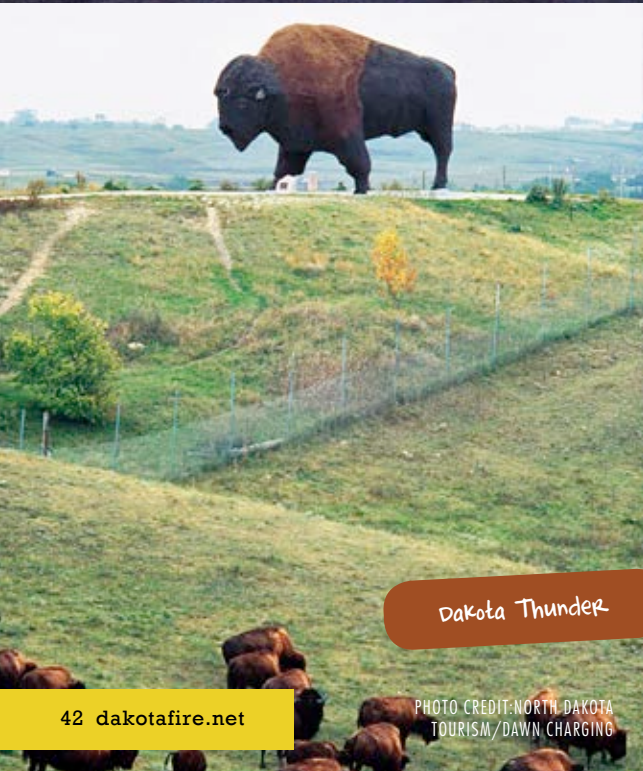
DAKOTA THUNDER: THE WORLD'S LARGEST BUFFALO

Perched atop a hill along the edge of Jamestown, N.D., the World's Largest Buffalo has been standing watch over the “Buffalo City” and greeting travelers cruising along Interstate 94 since 1959. The 26-foot-tall, 60-ton concrete giant was designed and built by Jamestown College art instructor Elmer Peterson

Pheasant City Drive-In.



PHOTO CREDIT: PHEASANT CITY DRIVE-IN



Dakota Thunder

PHOTO CREDIT: NORTH DAKOTA TOURISM / DAWN CHARGING

as a way to pay homage to the animal that once roamed the Northern Plains. It was dedicated in 1960 by then-Gov. Nelson Rockefeller of New York in a ceremony that garnered national attention. For the past 53 years, the World's Largest Buffalo has been one of the Midwest's most popular roadside attractions. To mark its 50th birthday in 2010, the World's Largest Buffalo received the name Dakota Thunder. Make time to also see the rare white buffalo and to peruse the National Buffalo Museum and Frontier Village, and detour into town to see the Saint James Basilica.

www.tourjamestown.com

DRIVE-IN MOVIE THEATERS

Several towns within easy driving distance have drive-in movie theaters—places where, as the Midway Drive-In puts it, you can “see the stars from your cars.” Enjoy the nostalgia, as well as the film!

Midway Drive-In, located “midway” between St. Lawrence and Miller, S.D. The theater was built in 1953, and the screen was rebuilt in 1968 after a strong gust took it down during a movie. (No report on if they happened to be showing “Gone with the Wind.”) Open Memorial Day through Labor Day. For movie listings, go to www.midwaydrivein.info or call 605-870-0108.

Pheasant City Drive-In Theatre, Redfield, S.D. The theater was built in 1953 and still uses the old gas popcorn popper that started with the facility that year. “It still makes the best popcorn around,” according to their website. Open June through September. For more information, call 605-472-1999 or 605-472-1453 or go to www.galluptheatres.com. Listings are available on their Facebook page: Search for “Gallup Theatres.”

Pheasant Drive-In, Mobridge, S.D. A storm took down the big screen overlooking the Missouri River in June 2012, but the theater was operational again by August with a new backdrop. Open June through early October. For more information, call 605-845-2021 or go to their Facebook page: search for “Pheasant Drive-In.”

DE SMET, S.D.

If you haven't visited famous author Laura Ingalls Wilder's little town on the prairie lately, it may be time to go again. Take the Laura Ingalls Wilder Memorial Society Tour (www.liwms.com) to see original homes of the Ingalls family and then continue on a driving tour around town to visit sights mentioned in Laura's books. Also consider checking out Ingalls Homestead-Laura's Living Prairie (www.ingallshomestead.com), an open-air living history museum offering many old-fashioned family activities and displays. (NOTE: The Memorial Society Tour and Ingalls Homestead are different entities and have separate entrance fees.) During the first three weekends in July (5, 6 and 7; 12, 13 and 14; and 19, 20 and 21), end the day by taking in the Outdoor Laura Ingalls Wilder Pageant (www.desmetpageant.org). Tickets are required but may be purchased at the gate. This year's script is “The Little Town on the Prairie.”

Also visit the Depot Museum & Harvey Dunn School (the schoolhouse attended by painter Harvey Dunn and made famous by his painting “After School”). Brookings is less than an hour's drive away, with many more museum options. Schadé Vineyard & Winery is also along this route, offering South Dakota-grown wine tasting and vineyard tours (www.schadevineyard.com).



Ingalls Homestead- Laura's Living Prairie

PHOTO CREDIT: SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

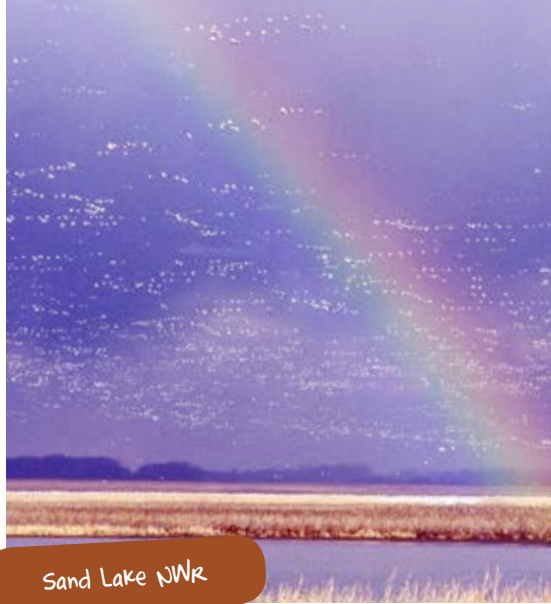


Coteau des Prairies

PHOTO CREDIT: SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

COTEAU DES PRAIRIES REGION, SISSETON, S.D.

Enjoy the beauty of the Coteau des Prairies and Glacial Lakes in the Sisseton, S.D., area. Get a bird's-eye view of three states atop the 75-foot Joseph N. Nicollet Tower (www.sissetonmuseums.org), 3.5 miles west of Sisseton. Admission is free; an interpretive center is also on site. Then enjoy a short drive (10 miles northwest of Sisseton) to check out Sica Hollow State Park, offering natural beauty, a self-guided interpretive foot trail, picnic and camping opportunities (gfp.sd.gov/state-parks/directory/sica



Sand Lake NWR

hollow). A park entrance fee is required. Other state parks are nearby: Fort Sisseton Historic State Park, Roy Lake State Park and Pickerel Lake Recreation Area. Several sites in the area have significance to Native American history and spirituality (www.oyatetourism.com). If you are in the area July 5-7, the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Wacipi, or powwow, is not to be missed (www.sisseton.com/events.php?month=7&year=2013).

ORDWAY PRAIRIE AND SAND LAKE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, NORTH OF ABERDEEN, S.D.

This daytrip will require a bit of imagination, but you'll almost be able to step back in time. A fifth of the North American continent was once grassland, and little of it remains to suggest expansive it once was. A visit the Samuel H. Ordway, Jr. Memorial Preserve (<http://bit.ly/XZtV7Z>) 10 miles west of Leola, S.D., can start to give you an idea. Here buffalo still roam the prairie, and you can find teepee rings where Native Americans once stayed. The visit also has an ultra-modern touch: The new building at the preserve is LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified, which means it



Buffalo Ridge Resort

PHOTO COURTESY BUFFALO RIDGE RESORT

meets certain criteria in green building practices. Then drive about 50 minutes east on S.D. Highway 10 to Sand Lake National Wildlife Refuge, a haven for wildlife of many kinds. One dramatic sight is the migration of the massive flocks of Canada and snow geese each spring and fall. Check the migration reports on the refuge's website (www.fws.gov/sandlake/migration.htm) before you go to see what kind and how many birds are moving through the area. Don't forget your binoculars. In both places, you can hunt for pasque flowers, the South Dakota state flower, in early spring: The sign that winter is losing its hold.

BUFFALO RIDGE RESORT, GARY, S.D.

This resort was once the South Dakota School for the Blind and has been completely renovated into a peaceful, history-rich location for relaxation or celebration. Guests can stay either in the Herrick Hotel or at the campground. Outdoor areas for formal and informal gatherings abound, and walking trails around Lake Elsie beckon, with two waterfalls, sand beaches and babbling brooks. The Rock Room Bar and Grill offers an intriguing ambiance for dining. The resort also boasts fishing in eastern South Dakota's only trout stream.

www.buffaloridgeresort.com/index.html

We know we've missed many! What's your favorite Dakota day trip? Is there a place near your own stomping grounds that's worth a detour? Tell us about it! Go to www.dakotafirecafe.com/dakota-day-trips to add to the list! ✨



Farmers Take Out Shelterbelts

About 75 years ago, farmers from Texas to North Dakota were at work on a significant project: planting trees to stop the prairie wind from carrying off their topsoil.

Those farmers had watched, helpless, as the dust storms of the 1930s gave dramatic evidence to the damage that 50 years of short-sighted farming practices had wrought. President Franklin Roosevelt is credited with putting forward the plan to plant shelterbelts all along the drought-stricken Great Plains to slow down the wind. Some criticized the plan to plant trees in the “Great American Desert,” but others took to it with the zeal of a crusade.

“No forestry project was ever closer to the hearts of those who were dedicated to its conduct, or to the farmers and others whom it directly benefited,” writes Paul H. Roberts,

former director of the Prairie States Forestry Project, in the 1977 book *Trees, Prairies and People* by Wilmon Henry Droze.

In recent years, and especially last fall when an early harvest left farmers time to work on side projects, many of those trees so eagerly planted in the 1930s are being uprooted. No one keeps track of exactly how many shelterbelts or windbreaks have been removed, but several Natural Resource Conservation Service employees said they would guess significantly more are being taken out than planted.

“Almost every time there is a sale or land auction, one of the first things they do seems to be to clear that land in the name of efficiency,” said Grady Heitmann, district conservationist for Faulk County, S.D. ✨

See the rest of the story: www.dakotafire.net/?p=3347

Flocks in Need of Shepherds: Finding Ministers Can Be a Challenge For Rural Congregations



Above: *The Rev. Tim Koch serves Concordia Lutheran in Cresbard and Immanuel Lutheran in Wecota. “People are people—rural ministry, inner city, it doesn’t matter. You are going to deal with a lot of the same issues,” Koch said. Photo from the Concordia Lutheran website.*

pastor, so the pastor of a joint parish in Andover and Ferney is leading services for them. There are not enough hours on Sunday morning to get to all the churches, so St. John’s is worshipping at 6 p.m. Saturday instead.

Alternating church times may remain into the future. The church has come to the difficult conclusion that it can no longer support a full-time pastor.

“Our goal is to keep the door open as long as we possibly can, and we will find a way to do that,” Zuehlke said.

As mainline churches across America struggle with declining membership, rural churches often face an additional problem: The difficulty of calling and keeping a pastor. Cost is a significant concern, as health care costs and the amount of debt seminary graduates bring with them have both skyrocketed at the same time that membership numbers have declined. But making the math work is just part of the challenge.

Don’t come to St. John’s Lutheran Church in Britton, S.D., on Sunday morning for worship—you will be about half a day late.

The church recently lost its full-time

See the rest of the story: www.dakotafire.net/?p=3048

LEARN MORE

And also see parts two and three in the rural church series:

- “Rural churches’ survival sometimes depends on crossing denominational boundaries”: www.dakotafire.net/?p=3175
- “Rural churches, built for a different era, look for ways to stay relevant”: www.dakotafire.net/?p=3221

DEF FLUID ON SALE
ONLY \$2.20 PER GAL



NEW
ORDERS
SAVE \$0.05
PER GAL

Performance Oil is located in Aberdeen, Mobridge, Roscoe, Zealand and Wishek ND. We are a large distributor of Diesel Exhaust Fluid, Fuel and carry most major brands of Oil, Shell, Castrol, Mobil, Chevron as well as regional brands. With our Fleet of trucks and dedicated workers we can deliver what you want when you want it. Give us a call and start saving today!

- Premium AG/ Road Diesel
- Gasoline
- Diesel additives
- Diesel Exhaust Fluid
- Bulk Oil
- Storage and Containment
- Oil Dispensing Systems
- DEF Tanks, Pumps

Performance Oil

38420 US HWY 212 | Aberdeen SD, 57401 | Office 605.225.6100 | Mobile 605.200.0605



**Crop, Pasture,
Fungicide, Insecticide,
Herbicide, Fertilizer**
NO JOB IS TOO BIG OR SMALL

Performance Aerial

38420 US HWY 12
Aberdeen SD, 57401
Office 605.229.2400 | Mobile 701.351.5066

Marshall County Land Sale Smashes Record

A land auction held Feb. 13 has been the “talk of the town” in the Britton area.

A total of 1,852 acres of land owned by the late Bill Kadoun of Britton brought a total of \$10.3 million and smashed previous records in the county for dollars paid per acre.

St. Claire Farms of Tulare paid \$10,500 per acre for a 156.87-acre tract in Miller Township (\$1,647,135) that dwarfed the previous record of \$5,000 per acre for land sold in Veblen Township north of Veblen for 160 acres in 2012. The average per acre cost of the sale last week was \$5,733. Marshall County Assessor Shannon Lee said that there was a sale for about \$7,000 per acre in Hickman Township near Langford in January, but that sale had not yet been recorded at the Courthouse.

Auctioneer Jan Vold hadn’t known what to expect from the Feb. 13 sale.

“With the history of land bringing record prices in the Groton and Bath areas, plus what land has been going for across Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota, it was anyone’s guess,” Vold said. “I think there are a number of factors including our excellent crop and livestock prices, and we now have crop insurance that we never had before that can guarantee an income off the land. With low interest rates people are also looking for something that they can see out there rather than just something on paper.” ✨ —*Britton Journal*

FIND MORE ONLINE: The full versions of all of these stories, plus many more stories from around the region, can be found at www.dakotafire.net.

Faulkton Student's Work Against Obesity Attracts Film Crew



Kyle Ortmeier with other FHS students Allie Lowinske, Dade Monroe and Kaitlin Heitmann are filmed having lunch at Faulkton High School. Photo by Faulk County Record

Kyle Ortmeier brought a few guests to school with him on Friday, Jan. 25: a documentary film crew.

In charge was producer Sarah Olson, working on a documentary co-produced by Katie Couric, CBS News, and Laurie David, producer of *An Inconvenient Truth*. They have been working on a documentary since this past spring that will showcase to the nation the truly pandemic problem of childhood obesity.

“This goes back to my work on the Youth Advisory

Board from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation,” Ortmeier said. “I had no idea that this was coming until about a week before they arrived.”

Ortmeier said that aside from focusing on several case examples of morbidly obese young people, they were looking for people fighting against the trend and people who were finding solutions to the problems.

Investigating the Alliance for a Healthier Generation put them on Ortmeier’s scent.

“I really got a good feeling from Sarah when I talked with her about doing this,” he said. “I wouldn’t have agreed to it otherwise, but I think that this documentary could make a big difference in making this country healthier. This is my home, my community, and I wanted to show it off well, show people why I love it and why I’m proud to be from here, and I think we did that. There are very few schools across the country that have an outright ban on sugary drinks.”

Ortmeier said that from what he was told they are hoping to finish production by spring in time for a few of the summer film festivals, and from there to either a movie theater run or a television broadcast or both. ✨

—*Faulk County Record*

Clark School Board Moves Forward with Opt-Out Plans

The Clark School District 12-2 is preparing to opt out in 2013. This means that the school district cannot operate on the revenues generated by the maximum levy for the school’s general fund, in the opinion of the administration and the school board, and will choose to opt out of the tax limitation freeze.

At the January meeting of the Clark School Board, Superintendent Brian Heupel and Business Manager Heidi Sigdestad detailed the gloomy financial future of the district.

The bottom line is that the projected fund balance at the end of the 2013-14 school term would be \$82,670,

if all variables remain the same. A financial figure of this amount is not enough to carry forward into the following school year.

Heupel explained and reiterated that this situation did not happen overnight; it has been ongoing the entire millennium, and at this point, all future cuts will involve programs, not just personnel.

As reported by the *Yankton Press & Dakotan*, at least 71 of South Dakota’s 152 school districts, about 47 percent, approved an opt-out for the 2012 tax year. ✨ —*Clark County Courier*



Area Roads a Concern in SE ND

The condition of local roads was a major topic of discussion at a January meeting of area county commissioners in LaMoure, which was also attended by state legislators.

Roads were the largest item of concern. Some had suggested that the fines for overweight trucks go to the county to fix the roads. It was pointed out that the constitution already says that all fines are to go to the schools. Someone else suggested that the fines be increased as a way of deterring overloaded trucks. This was put in place so that an entity cannot use fines as a cash cow.

The local legislators all were in agreement that the counties in the east need to fix their roads as well as the counties in the west. They all said they would work hard to get what funding they can.

Attending the meeting were commissioners and elected officials from LaMoure, Dickey, Richland, Sargent, and Ransom counties.

Thirty-three percent of South Dakota's major roads and 23 percent of North Dakota's are in poor or mediocre condition, as was reported by Dakotafire in "Roads are a constant concern" last fall. ✨ —*LaMoure Chronicle*

We can model, "Would it work if we wanted to..."

Ag Producers today utilize

UP-TO-DATE and ACCURATE DATA, with ANALYTIC TECHNOLOGY and POWERFUL VISUALS to help maximize their potential and make WISE DECISIONS to MANAGE their production, business, labor and marketing.



Your estate and succession plans deserve the same, don't they?

Without a MASTER PLAN MODEL mapping your financial situation you may not be planning your income, tax, retirement, estate or succession for the most effective harvest.

Founders of The Written Master Plan. We help you and your family clearly understand your financial planning options and work with you to develop a strategy that leaves you in control so you can move forward living with confidence. Our team of over 25 professionals are here to help manage your plan toward a successful result. **Call us today and request a good listening to.**

www.SchwanFinancial.com
Aberdeen, SD • 320 6th Avenue SE
800-456-1349 • 605-225-1047



Schwan Financial Group LLC
THE COMPLETE PLAN PEOPLE

ESTATE AND SUCCESSION ~ ANALYSIS, MODELING, PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT
INCOME ~ MODELING, PRESERVATION, ENJOYMENT & TRANSFER

Securities offered through Kovaack Securities, Inc. a Broker/Dealer Member FINRA/SIPC. Investment Advisory Services offered through Schwan Financial Advisors, LLC a registered Investment Advisor. Kovaack Securities, Inc. and Schwan Financial Group, LLC are not affiliated. OSJ office 320 6th Ave. SE Aberdeen, SD 57401. (605) 225-1047

ALL THAT REMAINS OF DEISEM

BY TROY LARSON



COURTESY TROY LARSON

Since starting a website about North Dakota's ghost towns and abandoned places nearly ten years ago, suggestions about places to visit have been rolling in. One of the suggestions we've received on more than one occasion is a place called Deisem, N.D.

So in July 2012, with my business partner and fellow photographer Terry Hinnenkamp, we set out for Deisem. Driving through LaMoure County just south of Jamestown, we turned onto what can only loosely be described as a "highway" — Highway 34, northwest of Edgeley. We discovered what was once a bright yellow line dividing two very narrow lanes is now barely visible, and gravel pokes through the asphalt in places. Traffic is nearly nonexistent.

We arrived to discover this church is all that remains of Deisem. The location is remote. We were on site for about a half-hour on a Saturday afternoon, and we didn't see a single car pass by.

According to reports by fans on our Facebook page, Deisem was quite a happening town back in the day, and was home to a well-respected general store, which is long gone. There are various foundations hidden in the tall grass on the former Deisem townsite, though, remnants of a town now lost.

This church was reportedly a Seventh Day Adventist church, and it is now in very tenuous condition. If it survives another heavy snowfall, we'll be surprised. In hindsight, we were quite foolish to explore the inside at all, and we would strongly recommend you

admire it from the outside if you should decide to visit. It could collapse at any moment.

According to *North Dakota Place Names* by Douglas A. Wick, Deisem was founded in 1880. The post office was established in 1907, but was closed for good when the store it was housed in burned to the ground on Jan. 30, 1943. The end came officially in 1984 when the railroad pulled up stakes.

As we left Deisem, I took one last look in the mirror, all too aware that we may have photographed the town for what may turn out to be the last time. At least we will have the pictures to help us remember the place that was once a center of faith and life in a little town on the prairie called Deisem. ✨

→ **Troy Larson** is a radio industry professional from Fargo, and co-founder of *GhostsOfNorthDakota.com*. His first book, *Ghosts of North Dakota: North Dakota's Ghost Towns and Abandoned Places*, is available now exclusively at *GhostsofNorthDakota.com*

SEND US YOUR POSTCARD

In each issue of *Dakotafire* and regularly online at *Dakotafire.net*, we will feature a "Postcard"—a short, evocative story about an event, person or place, written as if you were telling the story to a friend. Some ideas: hunting stories, the highlight of a big basketball game, or a moment in history. Story must have a photo to accompany it. Digital images (a minimum of 1000 pixels wide) are preferred; you can also send a photo by mail. E-mail submissions to heidi@dakotafire.net, or mail to **Dakotafire Media, Postcard Submission, PO Box 603, Frederick, SD 57441.**



The old church at Deisem in LaMoure County, N.D., has been abandoned for years. It's one of many places from North Dakota's past that Troy Larson has captured over the years on his Ghosts of North Dakota blog.



Need to Bank on the Go?

Your money is at your fingertips with the free Dacotah Bank mobile app.



Come in. Call. Click.
(800) 881-5611
dacotahbank.com

 **MEMBER FDIC**  Insurance and Trust
not FDIC Insured.

DACOTAH BANK
*Here for you.*SM

BANKING ♦ INSURANCE ♦ MORTGAGE ♦ TRUST