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JULY/AUGUST 2016

Dakotafire

Plus:
HOVEN FINDS HOPE IN VOLUNTEER SPIRIT
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HISTORY, HERITAGE & HOPE

Celebrations can affirm identity. But what happens when the past is painful?

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ON THE COVER: Loretta Kortan leads a procession of dancers performing a Czech dance called Beseda in Tabor, S.D., during Czech Days. *Contributed photo*

Dakotafire
SPARKING RURAL REVIVAL
ONE STORY AT A TIME.

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Dakotafire is sparking a revival in rural communities of the Dakotas and beyond by encouraging conversations that help rural residents rethink what's happening and what's possible.

Learn more at www.dakotafire.net.

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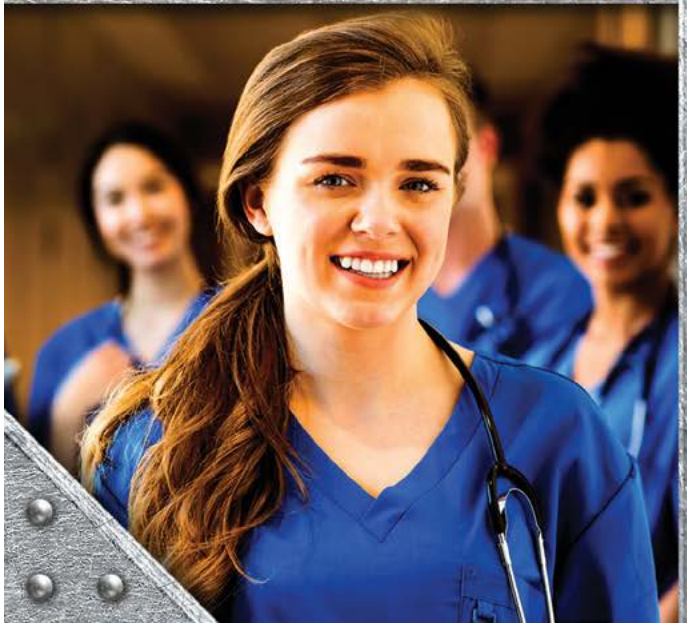

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There's more online! See these stories, plus additional stories as they develop, at **dakotafire.net**.

GERMANY'S PAST SHAPES ITS PRESENT: The way Germany has dealt with its painful past provided Publisher/Editor Heidi Marttila-Losure some food for thought on a recent trip there. The Neue Wache memorial in Berlin, for example, once honored Germany's World War I heroes; in the aftermath of Hitler's Third Reich and World War II, honoring military heroes was no longer as important as honoring "the victims of war and tyranny," as the monument now reads. This statue of a mother holding her dead son was placed at the center of the monument—a reminder that each one who died was someone's precious child. Read Marttila-Losure's column at www.dakotafire.net/firedup.

DELMONT: The community of Delmont, S.D., rallies to keep its heritage alive after an EF-2 tornado shreds several landmarks and sprinkles pieces of the town's history for miles.

BOOKS: Literature about the people, places and events of the Dakotas have a certain lure to outsiders, drawing them to explore our present-day communities and attractions.

LANGUAGE: Language and cuisine are the last bits of culture to leave when an ethnic group dissolves or disperses. Keeping them alive for the next generation can help keep alive a heritage that helps individuals identify with the past that made them who they are.

Changes & opportunities

by HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

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

Thankyou! Thankyou! Thankyou!

Many, many thanks to our latest FIRED UP supporters!

Rick & Valerie Melmer
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Lexi Bierman
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Joe Bartmann

Also: New and renewing members in our May promotion chose **NEIGHBORS** as the topic for the March/April 2017 issue. Thanks for voting!

Dakotafire Media is planning a few changes.

First, starting with the September/October issue, we will no longer distribute the magazine by inserting in weekly newspapers unless we've been able to find a sponsor in that community.

This is a sad announcement for us, as it also means the end of the formal editorial partnership we've had with those newspapers. We've very much appreciated that connection to rural Dakota communities. Unfortunately, this distribution model isn't working financially without grant funding. We still hope to work with area journalists on some stories, but we won't be connecting as regularly.

We have sponsorship agreements in Arlington, Hoven, Ipswich, Roscoe and Redfield. Those communities will continue to receive the magazine through the rest of their sponsorship periods, and beyond, if they choose to renew. We would welcome sponsorship by organizations, businesses or individuals in other communities; the cost is $3.50 per household per year.

If you would like to ensure that your household continues to receive *Dakotafire*, regardless of whether a sponsor is found in your community, we invite you to subscribe ($25/year or $40/two years). You can do so at dakotafire.net/getfiredup.

You can also subscribe to the online version of the magazine, which has the same content as the magazine plus much more, at dakotafire.net/digital-issue-login.

Second, the format of the printed magazine will change. We love our horizontal format, but switching to a portrait format will allow us to print more efficiently.

Change is often hard, but even then, there is often opportunity in it. We have a couple other changes in the works that we'll announce when they are closer to ready—changes we are pretty excited about. Stay tuned.

One thing that will not change is our mission: **Dakotafire Media is still sparking a rural revival in the Dakotas and beyond by encouraging conversations that help people rethink what's happening and reimagine what's possible.**

Thanks, readers, for all you have done to enrich those conversation up to the present! Let's keep them going into a brighter future. ✷

Dakotafire coverage area and points of interest from this issue.

A note from the editor

"History" is almost always the wrong form of the word.

When we start looking at the past of any place, we soon learn that the word should instead be plural. Our places have many "histories"—and "her-stories" too, for that matter.

This is clear this time of year, when the histories of the Dakotas come alive in a vibrant variety of celebrations in communities large and small.

But even on a local level, that word "history" probably doesn't apply. The starting points of settlers' histories vary, even if they landed on the same plot of prairie. And the stories of the Native people who lived there before European settlement are also part of that place's larger story.

Local experts advise us to remember as we celebrate our histories that the story we love to tell may not be the only one. And it may have developed an artificial glow with age.

"Nostalgia can be a kind of trap, because everyone remembers 'the good old days' as better than they were," said Brenna Gerhardt, executive director of the North Dakota Humanities Council.

And yet, done well, commemorating the past of a place can have many positives. As we build a better understanding of the path behind us, we can build a better path to travel today.

—Heidi Marttila-Losure

The power in our histories

by WENDY ROYSTON

reporting for festival stories by REBECCA FROEHLICH

Looking to the past helps us understand who we are.

When immigrants came to settle the prairie, they knew they were becoming Americans—but that did not mean they always gave up the customs they brought with them.

"In some of these communities (there's) a really great tie to that history—the old country, so to speak," said Jay Vogt, historic preservation officer for the South Dakota State Historical Society.

"I think there's a very deep pride in where people come from, whether or not they are Swedish, Norwegian, German, Finnish, Czechoslovakian, or American Indian—there's a lot of feeling that we have a history that we brought with us, and that whole idea that we can cherish that and continue to celebrate it, even as we are all truly Americans."

The Dakotas were settled relatively recently—many here can recall who was first in their family on local soil. And the Dakotas were among the latter half of states admitted to the union (the 39th and 40th, both on the same day, Nov. 2, 1889). Both of these factors play a role in the number of ethnic festivals held here throughout the year, according to Vogt.

"For a lot of us, it seems like history is almost within memory, so I think there's part of us that really appreciates that closeness, in terms of our history not being that far away," he said.

Brenna Gerhardt, executive director of the North Dakota Humanities Council, said celebration of histories and heritages are celebrations of not just what was left behind and what has resulted, but also the middle time—when people in the Dakotas found commonalities to help them through the transitions into their "new world" together.

People from the same homeland "banded together in a different country, where they didn't know the language, they didn't understand the political structure and the culture," Gerhardt said.

Those ethnic ties gave them strength and resilience, she said, and that's part of why they are still honored, "even though we're mostly assimilated into the broader culture."

Celebrating those bonds and the history of Dakota people is important, according to Vogt, for reasons that transcend the idea of finding people who look alike or who may have shared ancestors.

"It's part of our past—part of who we are," he said. "I think … there are certain elements that come with you

TABOR, S.D.

Courtesy photo

Czech Days

For nearly 70 years, the community of Tabor, S.D., has celebrated its predominantly Czechoslovakian heritage around farmers' schedules, with a Czech pioneer village, kolache baking, polka dance-off, and Czech Days queen, prince and princess pageants. The two-day festival benefits Tabor's economy and sense of community. "Almost every resident has a part doing something, whether it's working in the halls serving meals, preparing meals, or putting up benches around Main Street," said event chairman Dennis Povondra, adding that "it's a tourism boost to our community and our state." Next year's festivities will be June 15-18. *www.taborczechdays.com*

that come from your past, in terms of your ethnic background and why you see the world the way you see it," such as a "natural" inclination to expect the world to run on a rigorous, reliable schedule, or "shortness" of tempers.

"It's part of becoming who we are," Vogt said.

Sharing our past helps others understand us—and themselves.

Just as attending your hometown festival can deepen understanding of your own history, experiencing a history different from your own can provide a view of the world through others' eyes.

That happens in a big way every

Continued on page 6

FAULKTON, S.D.

Photo courtesy Faulk County Record

Wild West Days

Independence Day in Faulkton, S.D., has long been a "royal" event, held in the Pink Castle built by John A. Pickler, who is known as South Dakota's first congressman and one of Faulkton's first settlers after the Civil War. Pickler and other Civil War veterans called their Fourth of July celebration Wild West Days, and the community continues to hold the event every year, with a theme focusing on some element of frontier life. "It's like walking back into 1890," said Jodi Moritz, president of the Faulk County Historical Society. The event features fireworks, bull-riding, and a parade. Every few years—including this year—the event is extended to July 1-4, to accommodate an all-school reunion.
faulktoncity.org

Continued from page 5

summer in the Dakotas, when out-of-staters—and even those from other nations—visit the two states.

"This part of the country … really speaks to … the values of Americans—that patriotism, and our love of our state and our country and our history and where we've come from," Vogt said. "There's a certain mystique or romance about the West—whether it's the cowboys or the American Indians or the farmers or the settlers. … There's a lot of interest in how the West was developed and came to be."

Locals sometimes joke that outsiders, who often come to South Dakota primarily to check Mt. Rushmore off their "bucket lists" of things to see and do in their lifetimes, believe Dakotans live in log cabins and farm by horse and plow. Once they arrive here, they find that is no longer is the case, but they are able to see and do those "pioneer" things at various museums and festivals throughout the two states.

"They don't want to see the Disneyland version of reality. They want to see the real thing," Vogt said. "I think that's why a lot of the museums in South Dakota attract a lot of people—they've got the real stuff."

Tourists' eyes are opened to a wide, open landscape of possibility.

"Coming here, to the sweeping plains, and being able to see as far as you can look, you can imagine the people coming here, whose goal it was to be farmers and ranchers, and that they see this vast, flat area and think" about the ease of putting down roots, both literally and figuratively, Vogt said. "I think those were just a phenomenal draw for those people."

The vastness can be just as awe-inspiring for people today, he added. "Driving across the state, people are just flabbergasted at seeing what a sunflower field looks like all in bloom." ✷

FREDERICK, S.D.

Photo by Heidi Marttila-Losure

Finn Fest

Frederick was named after a Finnish railroad clerk, Kustaa "Frederick" Bergstadius, and many of Frederick's first settlers were Finnish. The Finns who settled northeast of town in the late 1800s soon re-established the mid-summer celebrations they missed from their homeland. Those events were held until the 1970s. In 2008, the Frederick community revived the tradition, with some updates—including a traditional bonfire on the water, which on still water gives the illusion of burning down as well as up. The bonfire, an ancient tradition, was intended to keep evil spirits away from the upcoming harvest. (Nowadays people just enjoy the view.) The event includes a parade, Finnish games, Finnish music and a wife-carrying contest. The 2017 event will be June 23-25, held in conjunction with Frederick's all-school reunion.
www.finnfest.net

VIVIAN, S.D.

Photo by Heather Core/ Lyman County Herald

Syttende Mai

The American flag is not the only red, white and blue banner flying proudly in Vivian, S.D. Each Syttende Mai—or May 17—the American and Norwegian flags fly harmoniously, in respect for Norway's Independence Day. The predominantly Norwegian town of 100 swells to more than 200 for the day, when attendees dine on lutefisk, meatballs, lefse, mashed potatoes, boiled cabbage, creamed peas, fruit soup and desserts such as fattigman, kransekake, krumkake and rosettes. Rosmaling—painting objects with floral patterns—is offered, and fiddlers, dancers and pianists perform. All guests are welcome. "For that day, all of them are Norwegian," said Vern Larson, chairman of the "UFFDA Crew" that organizes the annual event.
www.facebook.com/UffdaCrew

DELMONT, S.D.

Courtesy photo

Kuchen Festival

Each September, the community of Delmont—and its neighbors—gather "in the kitchen" to celebrate the area's rich German flair. "We make it a living tradition by providing people with a way to keep the tradition of having kuchen in your household." The Delmont Historical Society teaches the art of creating the German pastry—a sweet, yeasty cake filled with custard or fruit, according to the organization's president, Earla Strid. The day also includes a traditional meal of brats and kuchen; a quilt show; a craft show; and a visit from Mr. and Miss Kuchen, who are selected in a pageant for children ages 3 to 18 about a month before the festival.

www.delmontsd.org/kuchen_festival_and_twin_rivers.htm

DELMONT, S.D.

Twin Rivers Old Iron Harvest Festival

What began as a small farmyard gathering to revive the threshing bees of old has turned into the annual Twin River Old Iron Harvest Festival, complete with corn-picking, butter-churning, sheep-sheering, fiddlers, agricultural history presentations and more. "We want to show (the younger generations) how it used to be," said Glennis Stern, president of the festival, who hosted the initial backyard threshing gatherings.

www.delmontsd.org/kuchen_festival_and_twin_rivers.htm

How do you create a *living* tradition?

by WENDY ROYSTON & HEIDI MARTTILA-LOSURE

When the celebration of a history or heritage is done well, it takes on a life of its own.

"If you can find a way to really integrate those celebrations and festivals into your communities, and bring that there, you're going to attract people from the outside," said Brenna Gerhardt, executive director of the North Dakota Humanities Council. "That brings more ideas, that brings more excitement, that makes your community alive, and it makes it interesting, and it sparks a curiosity." And the same ethnicity can be celebrated effectively and flourish in more than one community, "because one town does German Days one way, and the way another town does German Days is going to be different, because it's a big country, and there are a lot of things happening there and a lot of traditions."

Here are some suggestions for keeping a community's history alive and vibrant.

1 Bring the culture to life more than once a year. Many communities are good at putting on a great festival for a weekend in the summer. But that often limits the cultural learning—what happens in that culture over winter holidays, for example? Celebrations at different times of year may not have the crowds of summer gatherings, but they have the advantage of creating a more intimate experience for locals, which can foster a deeper understanding that can make summer festivals more successful.

2 Consider art and architecture. The town center of Leavenworth, Wash., is modeled after a Bavarian village and draws thousands of tourists each year (and interestingly, the town had no Bavarian history until a small group of women decided to start celebrating that culture). The ambiance of a place can share a certain culture even when no event is going on—and cultural architecture becomes a valuable asset when a festival is happening. If designing whole buildings isn't in the cards now, consider smaller touches, like a maypole or ethnic art.

3 Engage the old. Knowledge of a community's culture resides in their memories; talking to them can enrich cultural sharing for everyone. Celebrating that culture can also become a way of honoring those elders and what they still contribute to the community.

4 Engage the young. "Once kids see their parents and their families engaged in those things, they realize it's important and (they) should be interested in it," Gerhardt said. The more young people know about their heritage, the more they realize it's a part of who they are, not just an entertainment opportunity at a festival each year. Younger generations should be invited to not just attend, but also to plan events—and their ideas should be embraced. Invite young people to take leadership roles, rather than making them earn their rank.

5 Engage everyone. "Make sure that the vision doesn't belong to one person—that the vision is shared by the community, and that all members are invited to participate in whatever manner they wish," Gerhardt said.

6 Keep teaching. When surrounded by a different culture, languages and cuisines need a focused effort to be kept alive. Consider offering classes in cultural skills to community members.

7 Keep learning. Now, more than ever, Gerhardt said, the opportunity exists to actively engage in cultural exploration. "We live in an era when you can travel broadly," she said. "That living tradition that we're still connected to this other country that you can still visit … brings it back into the present." ✶

What happens when histories collide?

Celebrating history in the Dakotas is not always straightforward. Some of the moments of history that descendants of European settlers celebrate as positive turning points of opportunity bring up painful memories for those who were here first.

by WENDY ROYSTON

"What non-Indians think is important in American history is not necessarily seen by American Indians as a positive result or accomplishment," said Jay Vogt, historic preservation officer for the South Dakota State Historical Society.

"I think that's something we need to be sensitive to, because we are all South Dakotans, whether we are of European descent or American Indian."

Yet, the paths that people took to the identity of "South Dakotan" or "North Dakotan" have been very different—and some arduous paths left scars. If the past is still affecting the way Dakotans live, then it still matters, according to Vince Two Eagles, a writer and member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, or Ihanktowan Dakota Oyate, from Wagner, S.D.

"As long as we're alive, it's going to matter, as long as we have children that remember that they're Native people, that there's a history," he said. "That's history that's thousands and thousands of years old."

When Native and European cultures collided on the prairie, the histories—which are, really, the stories we choose to tell about the past—from that time are not always told with a view toward the full truth. The full truth can be painful, whether a person was on the winning or losing side of the conflict. And yet, ignoring that fuller truth can feel like an affront today—that the story that has shaped one's identity isn't being recognized.

"I think it's fair to say that you need to embrace what the history is, talk about it, and commemorate those events," but maybe not "celebrate" them, Vogt said.

"There's nothing wrong with talking about the history and about how there are different points of view. … It's how it happened, and we can't necessarily beat ourselves up about it, but I think we need to be truthful about what happened and embrace it. History is history, and there are oftentimes different perspectives, depending upon the people involved."

Gerhardt said it's important to teach students all of American history—especially as it relates to local areas.

"We need to go beyond statehood and talk about the people who were here before then, and who are here now, and we need to come to terms with what happened," she said. "So many times in North Dakota, when things are uncomfortable, we choose to not talk about it and ignore it, because we're a polite society, but this is … a neglected part of the conversation all too often."

North and South Dakota have begun the process of recognizing the importance of Native Americans in local history, though many Native leaders would say there is more to be done.

Two Eagles pointed out that learning and communication opportunities lie in exploring others' cultural beliefs.

"In any relationship, you have to grow, and you have to feel familiarity and compassion to accept each other's—not only similarities, but differences, as well," he said.

Then, people from the two cultures can come together to solve universal issues.

"We have a diversity of culture and race here in South Dakota that should be seen as an asset, rather than the other way around. In order to do that, of course, you have to begin to think in terms of a multicultural … worldview that (acclimates) you to everybody, where discussion leads you to common goals for everybody," Two Eagles said. "Our journey here on this world is so short. To me, it's really about service to other people in our communities and service to the other generations that are coming. We bring them here, but we'd better figure out ways to take care of them. Taking care of children is not to teach them how to be racist. It's teaching them how to work together, to listen together, to plan together, and to take action together in a community that's going to be good for everyone." ✷

DICKEY COUNTY, N.D.

Education Day at Whitestone Battlefield

Education Day at Whitestone Hill State Historic Site is the North Dakota Historical Society's annual opportunity to teach elementary and middle school students about the Dakota Uprising, a two-day conflict between Gen. Alfred Sully and the Yanktonai, Dakota, Hunkpapa Lakota and Blackfeet in September 1863 that resulted in the deaths or injuries of nearly 200 Native people and 60 soldiers. The event includes hands-on presentations, in which youth learn skills such as hide tanning, as well as experience performances, including hoop dances. Whitestone Hill State Historic Site was unnoticed until a man collecting buffalo bones happened upon human remains there, according to Jeanette Robb-Ruenz of the Whitestone Hill Historical Society. Monuments were erected for the soldiers and Natives killed in the massacre in 1909 and 1942, respectively. This year, Education Day is Sept. 3.

www.facebook.com/WhitestoneHill

Columbus Day an example of clashing histories

by WENDY ROYSTON

For most Americans, Columbus Day has devolved into a good day to buy appliances, with retailers (and elementary schoolchildren) being about the only ones to do much to celebrate.

But when it was established in 1937, Columbus Day was intended to have a higher purpose—to recognize that the 1492 arrival of Italian explorer Christopher Columbus to what he called the New World "was when the United States, as we know it today, started," according to Jay Vogt, historic preservation officer for the South Dakota State Historical Society.

For American Indians, the day instead marks the beginning of an invasion that destroyed their way of life.

The losses for Native people started almost immediately.

"The Doctrine of Discovery at that time postulated that you couldn't claim to have 'discovered' land if it was already occupied at the time by other human beings … so (Europeans) declared the Indian people to be 'non-humans,'" in order to be able to claim they had "discovered" America, according to Vince Two Eagles, member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe, or Ihanktowan Dakota Oyate, from Wagner, S.D.

Two Eagles has tried for years to petition the federal government to do away with the national Columbus Day designation. "I know that's an uphill battle, but that goes to show you how one side sees the 'discovery' of America as a good, positive thing that should be celebrated, and you have the other side—the side that lost."

In 1990, South Dakota became the first state to recognize the second Monday in October as Native American Day, when the rest of the nation celebrates Columbus Day.

The newer South Dakota holiday is "dedicated to the remembrance of Great Native American leaders who contributed so much to the history of our state," Vogt said, citing the state law creating the observance. "It was definitely a statement that the Legislature must have been making … that we're embracing the fact that we have this great American Indian population in this state, and it supersedes, in some ways, three little boats to claim the arrival for Spain."

While the name change hasn't changed a whole lot about celebration of that day in American history—particularly because calendars not produced in South Dakota still bear Columbus's name—Two Eagles said it's important to focus on the progress that is being made.

"All that does is masks and under-pins the Columbus Day celebration in this country, so we don't have any serious conversation or dialogue about that issue and how that affects the relationship between not just the Indians in South Dakota, but all over the country," he said. "What we have to do, I think, is look at the progress being made, and not so much sit and lament about what was (and) negative outcomes, and have a little faith in ourselves and believe in ourselves as human beings—that we want the same things. It basically comes down to—we all want love, and we all want to be loved."

Similarly, since 2011, North Dakota has celebrated the first Monday of October as First Nations Day, but still celebrates Columbus Day with the rest of the country.

"It's great first step," said Brenna Gerhardt, executive director of the North Dakota Humanities Council, but added that so far it seems to be just a day on the calendar date, not a celebration. "The conversation needs to lead somewhere. … We shouldn't stop there, and we shouldn't pat ourselves on the back." ✷

YOUR TURN

Has your community addressed colliding histories? What were the challenges, and what has worked to help the community come together? Share your stories at **forum.dakotafire.net**.

The Dakotafire

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A VENTURE IN SUPPORTING LOCAL

This booklet is part of an experiment. And, if you choose to be, you are one of the participants in it.

We at Dakotafire Media go into this experiment with two questions:

What would happen if we supported Dakotans' local shopping efforts with a guide to locally owned places in the Dakotas? This guide aims to connect "local" supporters with the businesses that want to serve those shoppers.

What would happen if local businesses helped to market one another?

A year ago, we learned a new word from Arlington friend Jason Uphoff: "coopetition." Uphoff quoted writers Adam Brandenburger and Barry Nalebuff in a column: "Some people see business entirely as competition. They think doing business is waging war and assume they can't win unless somebody else loses. But business is both co-operation and competition. It's CO-OPETITION, a word coined by Ray Noorda, founder of ... Novell: 'You have to compete and cooperate at the same time.'"

Our hypothesis is this: If local businesses all help to market one another, they will all do better. We are encouraging, say, a fabric store to ask shoppers if they are ready for a meal or some ice cream, and mention the restaurant down the road. The antique store in one town could inquire about their shoppers' route home, and mention another awesome place for antiques on the way.

This kind of collaborative marketing is common among wineries; we aim to try it among local Dakota businesses.

We want to hear from you, experiment participants! Share what you are learning in the comments at **dakotafire.net/directory**.

Happy local adventures to you!

—Heidi Marttila-Losure,
Dakotafire Media publisher/editor

ABERDEEN, S.D.

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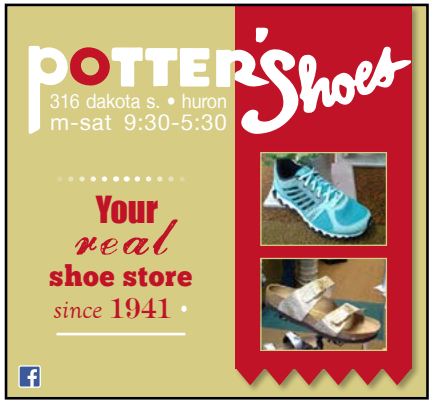

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A water line project has streets in Hoven torn up this summer. But in this case, as in other projects in Hoven, the work should lead to a better future for residents.

Hoven

story & photos by WENDY ROYSTON

The town filled with hope

A sense of community is alive in the tri-county town of Hoven, S.D.

"Volunteerism is what built this community," said Vern Rausch, a local rancher.

Rausch, who is among a handful of people who could be called "Mr. Hoven" because of his involvement and interest in so many facets of the community's livelihood, said volunteerism has been necessary to keep up all of the amenities built over nearly a century.

"The first thing that very first priest did when he came was that he went around with his horse and buggy and he built a four-story, great big, square, boardinghouse," Rausch said of the Rev. Anthony Helmbrecht, who is credited as being the mastermind behind the parochial school that provided the only primary education in town until 2000, followed by the "Cathedral on the Prairie," which draws visitors from around the nation and the globe, and then Holy Infant Hospital, which closed in 2010. "Once you get them, it takes a lot of volunteer work to keep them up."

The American Legion, the hospital, the schools and the Catholic school all have had organizations such as the Legion Auxiliary or the PTA that supported their efforts.

But all that work is what keeps the cost of living in rural America lower.

"People put their own chairs away," he said. You don't hire that done. … That's why things can be done cheaper in a small town."

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And that's why, he said, the community that has shrunk from a population of 511 in 2000 to 406 in 2010 has recently rallied to "harvest Hoven's potential" through an organization with that name focusing on housing, health care, businesses, youth and day care—and why he's confident its efforts will make a difference for Hoven's future.

"All we need is a group to identify the needs, and then everyone else will follow," he said. "That's a characteristic of our community."

A future afire from yesteryear's blaze

When the community's 74-year-old high school burned down due to an electrical malfunction over Memorial Day weekend two years ago, the town immediately rallied, unwilling to let its future go down in flames.

"People were gathered on the streets," Rausch said, his voice thick with emotion, "and people were sticking money in my pocket, and they said, 'We want to help. We want this back.'"

From those initial dollars, a fund was started for items not covered by the district's insurance policy.

Because school had just let out for the year—graduation ceremonies had been held the weekend before—staff had just inventoried every computer, desk, book and pencil in the facility. Though those lists were destroyed by the fire that started in the attic of the unoccupied building, they were more easily reconstructed because they were fresh on employees' minds, according to school secretary Kim Hoerner.

The community of Hoven, S.D., is "Harvesting Hoven's Potential" through the work of a community survey and subsequent community initiatives. Leaders of the group's five initiatives—housing, health care, business, youth and day care—gathered recently to talk about the vision they and others have for the future. They included (back row, left to right) Kim Hoerner, Tom Garrity, Vern Rausch, Kevin Hageman, Sara Colombe, (front row) Sara Johnson, Gloria Duenwald, LaDeen Krueger and Krystal Stuwe.

"We've got more than we thought we would have—way more," Hoerner said. "But there are still things we realize we're missing every day."

The past two years, Hoven High School students and staff have reported to the Holy Infant Hospital building, which had closed four years prior, due to financial hardship. That timing is more than a coincidence, according to locals.

"It was kind of a blessing in disguise" that the hospital had closed prior to the fire, said Mark Weber, president of the Hoven School Board. "We sent our people over there to start cleaning it up, and it was a good fit. It wasn't perfect, but nothing is going to be perfect."

In fact, the town, consisting of nearly all Catholics—it is said that maybe a handful of families practice any other faith—believes the fire was actually a gift.

"The good Lord burned that school down for us," Rausch said. "Because all the neighboring towns are building new schools, five years from now, or 10 years from now, we'd have had the old school (and) the kids would have gone to all of those new schools. Now, we are going to have the new school, and the insurance is paying for it, whereas the other districts have struggled to make theirs work."

The $5.1 million project, covered mostly by insurance, includes new administration offices, cafeteria, concessions stand and school-community wellness center, plus adds climate control and a sprinkler system to the elementary school. It is set to open this fall, putting the elementary and high school students on the same campus for the first time.

Still, "building a new, multimillion-dollar school" with just 118 students, "you've got to have some optimism," Rausch said. "We just dodged a bullet."

"We're pretty proud of what we have, and we want to keep it," Weber agreed. "We can't lose our school, because if we do, pretty soon, the tumbleweeds are going down Main Street, and our businesses are very important too. ... We know in Hoven that, if you lose your school, you lose more than you can imagine. Most of the social events surround the school"—especially during the winter.

And, in Hoven, support for the school has been primarily a private endeavor for many years. Until 2000,

the only elementary school in town was St. Anthony's Catholic Elementary, where families from Hoven and elsewhere paid $200 tuition annually. The public school purchased that building, and for the first time offered public elementary education.

"It was a tough, tough deal," according to Weber, who spent his own early education with the Catholic sisters, "but it turned out all right."

Still, most of the funds for the school district come from local contributions. The Hoven School District is one of just a few in the state for which the state education aid program does not apply, because the local tax base generates enough money, according to state guidelines, to adequately fund education, based on local enrollment. The district currently has two opt-outs on its tax rolls to help carry that burden, and the recent change in school funding "kind of puts a pinch on things" more than ever before, according to Weber, because the state did away with a separate fund for teacher pensions, from which Hoven could draw.

A health care evolution

While the closure of Hoven's 67-year-old Holy Infant Hospital and Hoven Medical Clinic in 2010 was seen as a blow to the community, a part-time chiropractor has made it his mission to see that the community's wishes are honored in regard to access to local health care.

"The Hoven community is very persistent in their hopes of acquiring primary care. They've done multiple surveys, and having a primary care clinic—preferably with lab and X-ray—always seems to be at the higher priority … wish list for the community," said Dr. Nathan Kadlec, who began practicing two half-days per week from within Holy Infant Hospital in 2009.

He continues to practice there now that the building houses the temporary high school, but he is purchasing a building on Main Street, which he plans to extensively remodel, with the plan to move in around the time school opens for the year. But he hopes not to be there alone.

Kadlec is working to recruit a primary care provider to share the space with him, and plans to remodel the building to suit the needs of the provider or group that sees Hoven as a good fit. He hopes to have the medical

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Superintendent Bob Graham and Buddy moved to Hoven, S.D., a year after the high school burned down. Twice retired, Graham said he envisions spending a few more years at work, helping students and staff adjust to the new building, set to open in August, before retiring for good. Buddy is an unofficial service dog to students experiencing medical, emotional or behavioral turmoil during the day.

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provider(s) found and ready to work within a year.

The chiropractor said communities like Hoven and Ipswich are his passion.

"I'm pursuing this not just for the betterment of myself, but also for my patients and that community," he said.

So far, no plans are in place for the three-story hospital building. There is talk about industry or hospitality, but the community knows the iconic building constructed during World War II soon may no longer take up half a block of Main Street.

Prepared for emergencies

The city of Hoven laid groundwork in 2011 to keep emergency medical services flourishing in the town into the future.

Jill Cody and Brady Hartung approached the Hoven City Council, asking whether they would add paramedics to the city's ambulance service. The city agreed to the request, paying $25,000 for each to be educated, in exchange for a five-year, rotating-weeks call contract to the city, plus $50 per day for call pay and $18.50 per hour when they're on a run.

Francis Karst, a Hoven City Council member who served on the ambulance crew himself, said that, while paying ambulance workers isn't necessarily the norm in rural communities, it's important. Plus, it's an incentive to giving up the hours it takes to earn the certifications necessary to then give up the time to respond to the calls and drive 20 minutes or more to get to a neighboring hospital.

"It's a long way to the hospital, and everybody's got friends and neighbors that get into a car wreck or (have a medical emergency) and they need help," he said. At one point, the EMT rolls dipped to eight, but there's always been someone willing to step up to help. "We'd start a new EMT class, and everybody would talk to somebody. I'd always say … 'You might save your kids from choking with the Heimlich maneuver, or with a broken arm/broken leg, you'd know what to look for. Take the course! It's free! The city's going to pay for … the knowledge you're going to gain out of it."

The city pays all three of its on-call emergency personnel—an EMT (paid $175 per week for call, and $15 per hour for a run); a registered nurse ($175 per week, plus $18.50 per hour) and a driver ($100 per week, plus $10 per hour). It's a system that has worked to keep the service staffed, and the communities of Hoven, Tolstoy, Caska and Lebanon covered by two ambulances.

Investments

The city of Hoven is investing millions of dollars into several projects to upgrade the community for future residents.

"If you don't keep up the water, the sewer and everything else, eventually it's not going to work," and the community will continue to shrink, according to Mayor Jack Feldmeier.

This summer's project include a shared Main Street-Highway 47/20 reconstruction project, and an upgrade to the city's sewer and water lines. With

Quality emergency care has become even more critical in Hoven, S.D., than it once was, since the 2010 closure of Holy Infant Hospital (in the background). The city council's progressive emergency services program has kept the town that now is 25 miles from the nearest hospital alive with emergency medical technicians, emergency vehicle operators, and now paramedics. Paramedic Brady Hartung, EMT Kurt Rausch, EMT Blair Ruckman, Paramedic Jill Cody, and EMT Anna Marshall all are members of the Hoven Ambulance crew.

the high school construction also happening at the end of Main Street, Hoven is getting a major facelift, and construction is a major topic of discussion.

"Eighty-five percent (of the population) is elderly people, and they're going to need help," Karst said, so it's important to not just keep the people who already live in Hoven there, but also bring in younger folks. "The farming communities have been making money to beat heck the last five to 10 years, and we're hoping that the next-generation sons will take over, the parents will move to town and build houses. If we keep all of the commodities here," Hoven should be a welcoming place for all generations to live.

Harvesting Hoven's Potential's housing initiative team is working to ensure that housing options in town match the

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Rural communities must invest today in the services that the community will need tomorrow, in order to have any hope of surviving outmigration to larger cities, according to Hoven, S.D., Mayor Jack Feldmeier and council member Francis Karst.

Plains Commerce Bank, which began as Bank of Hoven, S.D., more than 80 years ago, continues to house its main office in Hoven, because "we grew up from our roots here," according to Executive Vice President and Branch Manager Chuck Simon.

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desires of the people wanting to move in to work there.

"We do seem to have a shortage of housing in the area in order to grow and bring in people who can help the community expand and have longevity to it," said Kevin Hageman, chair of the housing initiative team. "There's certainly workforce housing, adequate to raise families in ... (though) there are certain amenities that maybe people would like to have that aren't there."

Some of the 40 employees at Associated Milk Producers, Inc., where Hageman is manager, drive as far as 50 miles to get to work.

"They're willing to drive, but if they found something adequate here, they would come here, so we're trying to secure some of that housing," Hageman said, adding that, once employees settle in another community, it's harder to move them to town. "They get their families established, (and) they plant roots there."

Harvesting Hoven's Potential

Those with roots in Hoven know the potential of the community.

"Some of us are old enough to remember when we had good times and things were flourishing," Rausch said. The loss of the hospital was "like a death to the community, because there were so many jobs we lost. It was a domino effect: It took the pressure off the drugstore, we eventually lost the drugstore, and it was just one thing after another happening. Then, the school burned down. So it is time to do something."

The group said the future of Hoven lies in its youth, so members are committed to investing in the amenities that tie kids to communities.

"We can't do anything in this community without the youth," Rausch said. "I don't care whether we put on a Christmas concert or what we do. We have them do the hard work—carry the chairs and serve the tables. … They all learn to work together like a big family—the older ones take care of the younger ones, and they all learn to share."

That's a characteristic not found in the youth of all small communities.

"The kids here in Hoven are very

much givers," said Krystal Stuwe, who recently moved her own family of 10 to town from a neighboring community. "They have been taught well. ... I think it's just something that has been given to these kids—that's been (modeled) to them."

Though the youth population of Hoven is small, the community group is working to increase recreation opportunities. The pool is maintained and run mostly by a committee of parents, with a $25,000 annual contribution from the city. An after-school physical education/mentoring program, jump rope and 4-H all are among the considerations for youth engagement that are being considered based on community survey results.

"So much of what people wanted was involved in 4-H, so we didn't want to reinvent the wheel," Stuwe said. "We drive so much, as parents. It's exhausting. That (sports cooperative with Gettysburg) is a good thing for us, but, man, everybody is tired. It draws so much out of our community that, to drive one more day, or to do one more thing, it's just hard."

With too few young girls to have a softball team, a coed baseball team has been created, and it plays against teams from other towns—most of which are all-boy teams. Over age 12, ballplayers head to Gettysburg for teener ball, but Hoven is looking to form its own team in the future.

"For now, this is what works," said LaDeen Krueger, head of the youth initiative team. "And it's not just about sports—it's about keeping them active and something to do."

Finding a niche

Since 2014, Hoven has had the luxury of a service that at one time was unheard of in rural communities. Faith Thorne, a master groomer with 26 years of experience cleaning and trimming dogs, cats, rabbits, lambs and gerbils, moved to Hoven from Chicago with her husband, to be closer to his Gettysburg family.

The couple built a new building on Main Street, and Thorne has found herself comfortably busy at Precious Pets.

Aberdeen groomers are booked two

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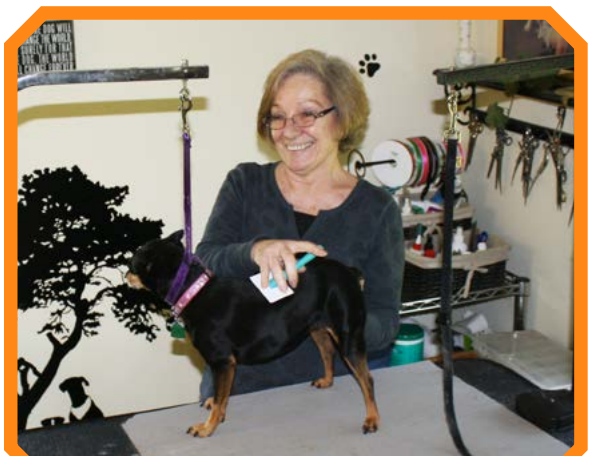

Faith Thorne, who worked as a dog groomer in Chicago until moving to Hoven, S.D., three years ago, said she enjoys the slower pace of rural America, but has no shortage of work, because dog grooming appointments are hot commodities in the area.

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to three months in advance, so she keeps a stack of business cards in their clinics, and they refer clients to her routinely.

"I'm glad I'm not that busy, because if they call in the morning, I know that what they really want is to get their dog done that day," Thorne said.

Even when a second groomer opened up shop on Main Street almost simultaneously to Precious Pets, Thorne kept busy. Now, that groomer has closed, and others are opening in neighboring communities.

"It's nice working alone," she said, after she "spent more time fixing problems" than working with animals when she employed four groomers, a bather and a brusher in Peoria, Ill.

Built by faith, maintained by love

Hoven is known for the expansive, ornate "Cathedral on the Prairie" that sits on Main Street, across from the elementary school, and next to the former Holy Infant Hospital building.

St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church is the parish home to 230 families in a town said to be 98 percent Catholic. Visitors from around the globe come annually to take in the massive columns and intricate paintings that fill the Bavarian-style structure.

The church was built in the 1920s to replace a smaller, wooden church that had been struck by a tornado. The Bavarian priest at the time, the Rev. Anthony Helmbrecht, "always told us that God, family and education were the three most important things in life," according to lifelong parishioner RoseMarie Reuer, so a school with boys' and girls' dormitories for out-of-towners was built first. Helmbrecht suggested each family contribute $1,000 to the church-building fund, but the 75 families pooled $250,000, and the priest worked with a Bavarian architect who had settled in Wisconsin about the time that he came to Wisconsin from Bavaria to attend seminary.

"I think that's a little God incident," Reuer said.

In the 1970s, the walls of the church began peeling, and the plaster was cracking, and contractors were called to evaluate it.

"The first two that came said, 'Plaster it, paint it, and forget it,'" Reuer said. "We didn't want to do that, because we remembered our grandparents talking about building this church. The third one came and looked at it." A third contractor said the work would take seven years to complete. "He wouldn't sign a contract for ($500,000), because he knew it would be more than that."

The parish council wasn't sure how to proceed, but the priest told the congregation they would do the work themselves.

Parishioners set to work, recreating 50 replicas of stencil patterns. A local artist custom-mixed paint to keep the historic details of the church. "God placed (artists) here for a reason," Reuer said. Another painted the Last Supper engraving on the high altar, which once was plain white marble. In all, the renovation took 20,000 volunteer hours over four years.

Throughout St. Anthony's history, "God has provided," according to Reuer and her sister, Alice Simon, who has been an organist for the church for more than 60 years. The untimely death of another sister, Agnes Reuer, 13 years ago even resulted in a sizeable "gift" to the parish.

The two Reuers were scheduled to show two journalists from St. Paul the church, but Agnes, who had returned home from a car accident and subsequent surgery the night before, did not arrive for Mass. RoseMarie was summoned to the hospital, and was disheartened to find that the photographer had followed her.

Just a couple hours after Agnes's death, she gave the tour anyway, feeling a duty to the out-of-staters.

The following day, a large photograph of her dying sister receiving Last Rites appeared on the front page of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

A few days later, the blessing arrived, in the form of a letter from a woman in St. Paul who had been touched by the story. And her gift of $80,000 happened to be exactly what was needed to cover the cost of installation of a replacement communion rail at the front of the church.

Reuer said the dedication of the people of Hoven to the church—and the community—and the faith that God constantly provides for the needs of both, is a testament to their Catholic upbringing.

"You learned of so many saints that had tough lives … but they still had such faith in God, and I think that really just resounded with you," she said. ✶

Sisters Alice Simon, left, and RoseMarie Reuer have celebrated family and community milestones in St. Anthony of Padua Catholic Church for six generations. They and deceased sister Agnes Reuer have proudly hosted numerous tours of the "Cathedral on the Prairie."

Thinkers, doers gather to share innovative #RuralX(perience)

by KRISTIN BREKKE VANDERSNICK

Whether the success story of your rural community is a well-developed plot, a rough-draft outline, or still an idea waiting to be committed to paper, organizers of the RuralX Summit say this event will have value for you.

"Anyone who believes in rural possibilities and has a desire to do something about it" is invited to the event, July 19-20 in Aberdeen, according to Beth Davis, president of Dakota Resources, the organization behind RuralX. "Bring your questions, your ideas, your curiosity, your stories, and let's have a conversation. Let's meet each other where we are on the journey to make our rural communities better places and learn from each other."

Davis said the "come as you are" event is perfect for community leaders, volunteers, economic developers, business owners, educators, students, farmers, ranchers, entrepreneurs—anyone who's part of the rural experience (#ruralX).

RuralX attendees "should return to their communities with tangible, actionable plans, and the resources and a supportive network to turn those plans into realities," according to Davis.

The summit will follow a creative, evolving process, with some experiences designed by participants in the moment.

Learn more or register at www.dakotaresources.org/ruralx.

Rural X speakers

Emily Pilloton, the teacher behind Studio H (www.projecthdesign.org), an in-school design/build class for middle and high school students that created a farmer's market pavilion and other needed projects in North Carolina's poorest and most rural county, will talk about her view of rural.

Becky McCray and Deb Brown, nationally recognized bloggers, rural advocates, and masterminds behind the website Saveyour.town, will join forces to deliver humor, inspiration and practical advice on shaping a brighter future for rural communities.

Hugh Weber, CEO of OTA, an effort to connect and celebrate community-builders in the "-ota" states (the Dakotas and Minnesota), will discuss the region's untapped possibility.

Eileen Briggs, executive director of Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Ventures, a reservation-wide strategic project addressing poverty alleviation, will be part of a panel addressing innovation.

South Dakota's own **Jim Woster,** a speaker and agricultural advocate known in part for his 13 years reporting livestock prices on KELO TV, will give the closing keynote.

Editor's Note: Dakotafire Media is looking forward to being involved! We will help harvest the ideas that emerge during the summit.

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