

Tanagers' Nest News

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Time to Reconnect!

by Jon Frey February. 27, 2024



It's been an interesting winter at VHS! First off, let me take a moment to apologize for the absence of the past two newsletters! We value the opportunity to reach out and share all that is happening in our building ... and it has been plenty... but first the rush of the start of a new semester followed by transition in our own front office and suddenly we look up and March is upon us! The winter activities and sports seasons are coming to a close, track athletes are training in the hallways and now 70+ degree

weather is happening all around us and I'm left scratching my head wondering where the winter went!

This edition of the Tanager's Nest News will contain updates on the upcoming registration process for all grades - including 8th grade, a quick update and recap of winter activities and athletics, a Career and Technical Education update, FAFSA and scholarship information as well as information for seniors as the all-important *graduation* is looming!

So, jump in and hang on as it has been a few months and there is a lot to share!

Thanks!

Jon

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Tanagers Display Academic Prowess

by **Jon Frey** on Feb. 9, 2024

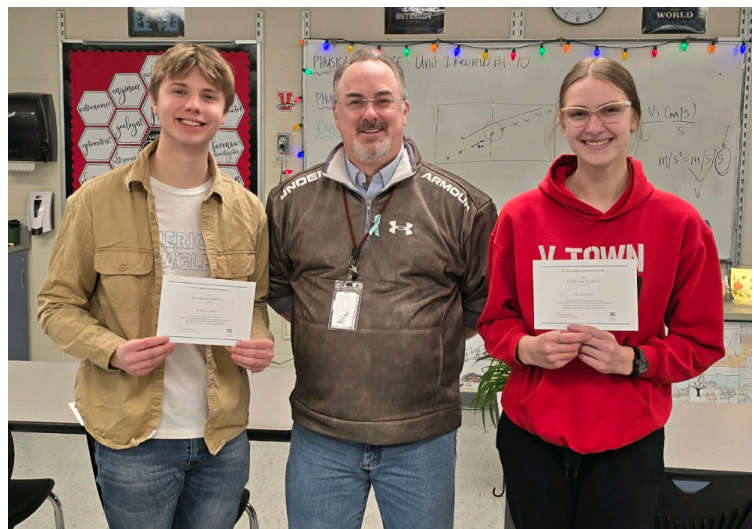
It gives us great pleasure to announce that Vermillion High School hosts TWO National Merit Scholarship finalists for 2024 out of the overall field of just over 7000 finalists, nationwide!

Broden E. Askew & Nina D. Jordre

Also worthy of recognition, Huixin “Niu Niu” Zhang was recognized as a commended student, having just missed the cut as a semifinalist.

These individuals are outstanding representatives of their school and their class! Please join us in wishing the two of them congratulations on a job, very well done!

Winners of the National Merit Scholarship will be announced via notification through their schools in April through July.



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The New Voice in the Office

by **Jon Frey** on Feb. 27, 2024

While we spent much of the month of February down one team member in the office, I am pleased to share that Ashley Steeneck has agreed to join our office staff! Ashley brings a *wealth of experience* working in both the *financial services* (no pun intended) and medical billing fields. She and her husband, Brad have two kids currently in the Vermillions School District and their oldest was a member of our Class of 2023 and currently attends South Dakota State University, in Brookings.

Ashley will serve as my primary assistant in the building while also supporting the teachers and students as they have needs in the office, as well. Jasmine Stewart remains your primary contact in the Attendance & Activities Office as she works in support of Mr. Huska and our students in her varied roles there. Rebecca Olson continues in the Student Services Office supporting Ms. Suing, Mr. Hayes and Ms. Goggin and our students there.

Feel free to stop by or call any of these helpful individuals if you need the assistance of the offices they serve!

Teacher Feature!

This month, we feature Brittany Sudbeck, our *Spanish* teacher.

Brittany Sudbeck - Spanish Teacher

Where is home? Yankton

Where did you get your (post-HS) education? USD

How many years have you been teaching at VHS? Overall? 3rd at VHS; 9th overall.

What classes do you teach? Spanish 1-4.

Did you always want to teach or did something lead to you teaching after first doing something else? I first thought of being a teacher when I was in 2nd grade, but then I thought of other things. I really wanted to be an editor of some kind of publication. Then I studied criminal justice in college for a while, but ultimately I realized I wanted to pursue Spanish education.



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Do you coach any sports? Do you sponsor any activities or clubs? No.

What is your favorite part of teaching at VHS? The students. I love my content area, but the students make it fun and they give me hope for the future.

Anything else? I love to knit and do my nails. My husband's name is Grant Nielsen. We have two boys, a 7- and a 2-year old. We also have two dogs, a Jack Russell terrier and a Chiweenie.

Important Dates & Information for Spring Semester

- March 13th - **Early Dismissal at 1:30 PM** - PLT Day
- March 14th & 15th - **No School**, Spring Break
- March 18th - Term 4 Begins
- March 28th - **Early Dismissal at 1:30 PM** - PLT Day
- March 29th - April 1st - **No School**, Easter Break
- April 17th - Midterm for T4
- April 18th - Senior Health & Wellness Day - 8:30-10:00am - VHS Main Gym
- May 1st - Senior Awards Day Presentation - 2:00pm, VHS Auditorium (Public Welcome)
- May 6th & 7th - Semester Exams (Seniors ONLY)
- May 11th - Graduation - 1:30pm, Sanford Coyote Sports Center at USD
- May 14th & 15th - Semester Exams (Grades 9, 10 & 11)
- May 16th - Final Day of School - 1:30pm dismissal.

Important Dates & Information for Fall Semester

- September 10th - Picture Day
- October 9th - Picture Retakes Day

Senior Health & Wellness Day

by **Amy Askew, School Nurse** on Feb. 28, 2024

It's that time of year again... We're making plans to schedule Senior Health & Wellness Day here at VHS, The plan will be to host it the morning of April 18th from 8:30-10:00. This is a graduation requirement at VHS as it





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fulfills a SD Department of Education requirement for formalized training of CPR. Like years past, we will host three separate sections of education, approximately 25 minutes each:

- Hands only CPR with Amy Richardson, ATC (AHA Instructor)
- Health Education presentation with Anthony Burbach, PA-C
- AED demo/first aid presentation with Ty Murray, Vermillion Firefighter/EMS

Students who miss this session will be required to complete a make-up session prior to taking part in graduation practice or the graduation ceremony. **We ask all members of the graduating class to mark this date on their calendars and do not miss out!**

Tanager Pride ... INSIDE!

by **Jon Frey** on Mar. 1, 2024

I've said it often in my tenure as Vermillion High School principal, "this is a great gig," and, I mean it. Yes. It is true there are headaches associated with this job, just as there are with any job. However, yesterday was one of those days that just helped encapsulate all that goes into the pride and love I have for this school and this community. Here's what I mean:

It started out as a typical Thursday morning with a staff meeting followed by the opportunity to collaborate with the English Department on a plan to help freshmen transition to high school. The discussion was my favorite kind of conversation; student-focused and open-minded. It was a positive, collaborative group of educators tackling an important issue as we work to continually improve student performance and graduation rates. From there, the discussion would lead to gathering feedback from the superintendent, the curriculum director, counselors who help me build the master schedule and a number of other sources as we work under the pressure of a looming registration deadline. The collaboration of this staff is second to none. In my 30th year as an educator, I've never felt more connected to a team with the same goals and interests.

Toward the end of the day, a young man stopped in the office. He had a scheduled appointment for a brief meeting and a photo. While this was a brief moment on my calendar over the course of the day, it was a very important moment in his life and I wanted to make sure we could capture that. You see, he was the newest addition to the VHS class of 2023. A student who had fallen a little off pace over the course of his four years, but who stuck with it and saw this process through to the end. He completed his final credits a week or so before and yesterday was his day to come in and claim his diploma! We were all so proud of his accomplishment - as we are of all graduates. However, while most of our

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seniors get the big stage in Sanford Coyote Sports Center for graduation, this young man was going to settle for the principal's office on a Thursday afternoon and take a congratulatory photo with the principals and his mom. These moments take many forms, but they are those little tidbit reasons that contribute to the entirety of why we do what we do in this line of work.

From a brief graduation ceremony to a drive to Menno, SD for what was a highly anticipated girl's basketball game with the prize being a berth in the state tournament! While I could spend a great deal of time writing about the talents of our Tanager cagers, I'll leave that to David Lias and the Plain Talk. I want to talk about our student section at the game!



Photo courtesy of Vermillion Plain Talk

I love tournament time and the game of basketball as a whole. It's part of what makes spring such a tremendous time of year. However, last night our student section - led by members of the boys basketball team - rose to the occasion in a *huge* way! The sheer number of students attending, the volume and strength of their voices, the t-shirts that managed to properly spell out T-A-N-A-G-E-R-S ... all

combined with a level of class and appropriateness that makes me so proud to lead this school. I've worked in four high schools over 30 years. These schools ranged in size from 4000 students to 400. No student body has ever impressed me more than ours and I mean this sincerely. Other schools students will act inappropriately at times or squeeze in a cheer that is not appropriate and while some of this is just "kids being kids," what matters is how they respond after they are reminded what is considered to be appropriate. This is where our students shine. They listen, inquire and they follow directions. Our students know how to act appropriately and represent their school and community with pride and with class. Our students set the standard in the Dak XII, in Class A, in South Dakota. Our students show the Tanager Pride, that is INSIDE. This is why, "this is a great gig!" I'm proud to be a Tanager!

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Activities News

As of the writing of this newsletter, we do not know the outcome of the boy's basketball region contest with Lennox. The girl's basketball team capped a tremendous season with a strong run through the playoffs earning a berth in the Class A State Basketball tournament to be held in Brookings, next week. Our debaters are competing today and tomorrow at the SD SDHSAA State Debate tournament in Watertown. Senior Nina Jordre is

currently a 1st alternate in Lincoln-Douglas debate to attend the National Speech & Debate Tournament this June to be held in Des Moines, IA. The Tanager gymnasts capped their season with an 8th place finish at the SDHSAA State Gymnastics meet in Pierre with senior Serena Gapp placing 11th in the All Around. Our Tanager wrestlers just returned from State having qualified four including for the first time, a girl - Blair Merkwan, who joined Padraig Fulton, Michael Roob and Rollie French at the State Meet in Sioux Falls. Roob and French both earned podium finishes, each placing 4th! The Tanagers showed off their quick wits at the Dell Rapids/Brandon Valley Quiz Bowl, placing 1st out of 34 teams! Congrats to Laiken Barta, Holly Nesmith, Varun Kadarkaraisamy and Joaquin Dominguez on a first rate performance! Lastly, USD hosted the annual Art Wars competition for art students and our senior, Brilie Mayer placed 2nd!

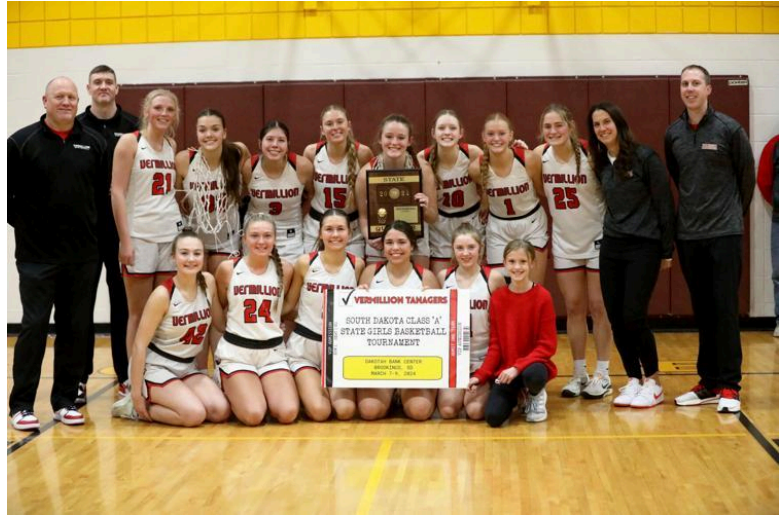


Photo courtesy of Vermillion Plain Talk

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Student Services News

SD Opportunity Scholarship

Starting in Fall 2023, the SD Opportunity Scholarship provides up to \$7,500 over four years to a qualifying student who attends an eligible higher education institution in South Dakota. The scholarship is distributed at the beginning of fall semester and the other half is distributed at the beginning of the spring semester:

- \$1,500 – 1st year of attendance
- \$1,500 – 2nd year of attendance
- \$1,500 – 3rd year of attendance
- \$3,000 – 4th year of attendance

There are two ways a student can become eligible for the Opportunity Scholarship:

Option 1:

- Be a resident of South Dakota.
- Have an ACT Composite or Super Score of 24 or higher. · Complete the high school course requirements with no final grade below a “C” and a cumulative high school GPA of 3.0 prior to graduation.
- Attend an accredited university, college, or tech school in South Dakota.
- Enter the program within 5 years of high school graduation.

Option 2: (has a higher ACT requirement, but no curriculum or GPA requirement)

- Be a resident of South Dakota.

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- Have an ACT Composite or Super Score of 28 or higher and meet the ACT college readiness benchmarks scores equaling or exceeding 18 for English, 22 for Reading, 22 for Math, and 23 for Science.
- Attend an accredited university, college or tech school in South Dakota.
- Enter the program within 5 years of high school graduation.

Participating Institutions:

- Augustana University
- Black Hills State University
- Dakota Wesleyan University
- Dakota State University
- Lake Area Technical College
- Mount Marty University
- Mitchell Technical College
- National American University
- Northern State University
- South Dakota School of Mines & Technology
- South Dakota State University
- Southeast Technical College
- University of South Dakota
- University of Sioux Falls
- Western Dakota Technical College

For additional information on the SD Opportunity Scholarship, please click [here](#).

Summer and Fall Dual Credit

The application for summer registration will open March 1st and registration for fall courses will open April 1st. We would like to have all applications in by **May 15th** as this helps lower the stress of trying to apply just before classes start after we return from summer break.

Dual credit gives eligible students the chance to accelerate their education by enrolling in classes to receive both high school and college credit. You can find our dual credit basics document, along with other important information, on the dual credit webpage at <https://ourdakotadreams.com/high-school/dual-credit/>.

There is a wide variety of courses for students to choose from, including courses offered online, on campus. See Mr. Hayes if you have questions.



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(Clarification of the differences between dual credit and advanced placement or AP: dual credit are courses students take at or sponsored by a college or university to obtain general education credit. There are currently two AP courses offered at VHS of Advanced Chemistry and AP Biology. Students elect or choose to take an exam towards the end of the second semester and then depending on their score, they could potentially earn college or university credits.)

Student Services Important Date Reminders

ACT Testing

Test Date	Registration Deadline	Late Registration Deadline	Standby & Photo Upload Deadline
April 13, 2024	March 8, 2024	March 22, 2024	April 5, 2024
June 8, 2024	May 3, 2024	May 17, 2024	May 31, 2024
July 13, 2024	June 7, 2024	June 21, 2024	July 5, 2024

FAFSA

Hopefully, seniors and senior parents have all had the chance to review the [2024-25 FAFSA form](#). If you haven't, it is available for completion and has been working consistently for most students. However, the federal government has not processed any submitted 2024-25 FAFSAs. An announcement on 1/30/2024 states they will not be ready to process FAFSAs, or send them on to schools, until the first half of March.

What this means for students is, if they made a mistake on the FAFSA or need to add another school code, they will not be able to make this correction until mid-March when their FAFSA is processed. For postsecondary institutions, this means they will not be able to create and send 2024-25 financial aid offers until April.

We realize this may cause some frustration, as well as delay, deciding on a postsecondary institution. We will keep you posted as we hear any additional updates.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to Student Services.

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[READ MORE ON OUR WEBSITE](#)

Vermillion High School

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