

# OUR TOWNS

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■ To get a news item published on this page, contact Travis Gulbrandson at 665-7811 (x121) or e-mail [travis.gulbrandson@yankton.net](mailto:travis.gulbrandson@yankton.net)

## A Quilt Made Of Love

### Mission Hill Woman, Daughter's Creation Will Be Ruffled To Fund Son-In-Law's Cancer Fight

BY TRAVIS GULBRANDSON  
[travis.gulbrandson@yankton.net](mailto:travis.gulbrandson@yankton.net)

MISSION HILL — A Mission Hill woman is hoping her handiwork will help her son-in-law in his fight against cancer.

With the help of one of her daughters, Dorothy Sylliaasen has made a quilt which will be raffled off to help pay for the expenses incurred by the treatment of Verlin Larsen's colon cancer treatment. Larsen is married to Sylliaasen's daughter, Patricia.

"I would do anything for my kids, and Verlin is just like one of our own," Sylliaasen said. "We try to help them out whatever way we can. We love him very dearly. So I hope it goes over well for him."

Chances for winning the queen-size quilt are being sold — at the rate of \$10 for one and \$20 for three — by various friends and family members, as well as Larsen Carpet, where the final drawing will take place on July 1.

"I started the quilt last fall, and my daughter Pamela took it over to Indiana for a quilt trip where they do nothing but sew all week long," Sylliaasen said. "Then we took it up to Nancy Zelinka — she does machine quilting — and she's the one who quilted it for us."

Verlin Larsen's battle with cancer has been long and difficult, as the cancer spread from his colon to other organs,

taking a toll on his health and his family's finances.

"He's been fighting it for five years and four months, so things get kind of spendy," Patricia Larsen said. "We go to Sioux Falls every other week for chemotherapy treatments. And when he has surgery, we go up to Rochester."

"I've had 109 rounds of chemo so far, and I've had eight surgeries," Verlin said. "I've been in the hospital I don't know how many times. ... They took out part of my colon and half of my liver. I had my lungs and liver burned with radio frequency ablation."

Sylliaasen hopes the financial obligations will be alleviated somewhat by the fundraiser.

Although people have been buying chances for only a week, it's going "real well," she said.

"The last time I counted how many chances we made up, it was 1,950, and I know my daughter Pam has made some since then," she said.

Funds up to \$2,000 will be matched by Modern Woodmen of America, and up to \$1,000 by Royal Neighbors of America.

Donation jars are also available at some Yankton businesses, and a benefit fund has been set up at Yankton's CorTrust Bank.

Sylliaasen said a benefit like this is something she has wanted to do for a long time.

"Our family has been talking to him for

quite a while, and finally they gave us the OK," she said.

"They wanted to do something right away when he first got sick, but he's not the type of person that likes to take money from people. So he's always said no," Patricia Larsen said. "Now we're having hard times with finances, and I guess this is really our only option for right now."

The Larsens — who live in Yankton and have two children, one in college and one in high school — credit the chemotherapy treatments with keeping Verlin alive, but say they haven't been easy for him.

"I've been sick for half of these five years. I'm sick for a week after I have chemo," Verlin said.

"It's to the point where he can't do anything anymore, like working with his hands," Patricia added. "He's out of breath a lot."

"My body is starting to break down," Verlin continued. "I fought it pretty good for a long time, but I'm starting to lose a lot of strength. Chemo is nasty stuff. I wish that on nobody."

After one and a half years of starting treatment, Verlin had to quit his job with the city water department and go on disability insurance.

His coverage is now slowly beginning to "cut out" he said, no longer covering visits to one of his doctors, an injection he gets twice a month and one of his prescriptions.



TRAVIS GULBRANDSON/P&D  
Patricia and Verlin Larsen hold a quilt that will be raffled off as a benefit to the couple, as Verlin has been battling colon cancer for more than five years. The quilt was made by Patricia's mother and sister.

"They just write another policy and they give me no reason why," he said. Verlin is now on Medicare because he has been ill for so long.

"I'm well-insured, but some of the expenses — prescriptions are \$100 a bottle for some of this stuff," he said. The Larsens credit their family and friends, as well as other local organizations, with helping them stay afloat.

"If it wasn't for our families, we wouldn't be in this house right now, basically," Patricia said.

"We've pretty much emptied out our savings," Verlin added. "We sold our boat. We sold some life insurance. We've had a

lot of people help us, but this (benefit) is really going to help. ...

"It's things like that that help you realize people do care. It brings out the best in some people," he said.

Chances for the raffle can be purchased from Kim Larsen (665-2067), Pam Epp (668-0855), Dorothy Sylliaasen (665-7267), Carmen Doering (664-5012), Charity Hento (661-2421), Karen Morales (661-2581), Kristina Kopejka (665-0124) and Betty Larsen (665-9482).

The quilt will be on display at Larsen Carpet, located at 212 Walnut in Yankton, until the drawing.

## FORUM

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migrate dramatically?"

International students contributed \$17.6 billion to the U.S. economy in one year, Mendez said. According to the most recent figures, international students and their dependents contributed a total of \$2.17 billion in one year at USD. The figure stood at \$142,000 for Mount Marty College in Yankton.

In addition, Mendez noted that USD faculty includes professors from around the world, bringing a unique perspective.

Mendez fought back tears as she showed pictures of illegal immigrants who unsuccessfully tried to cross the U.S. border. In the last 10 years, 3,000 Mexicans have died crossing the border, Mendez said. She told of a family where the man went to Arizona, and his decomposed body was found eight days later.

Mendez noted that private citizens, particularly the Minutemen, patrol the border. According to the Web site [www.minutemanHQ.com](http://www.minutemanHQ.com), the organization defines itself as "a national citizens neighborhood watch securing the American border."

The Minutemen's stated mission is "to secure United States borders and coastal boundaries against unlawful and unauthorized entry of all individuals, contraband and foreign military."

The lengthy absence of many Mexican men working in the U.S. has influenced their families back home, Mendez said. In Mexico, 25 percent of the families are run by women, she said. The figure climbs to 33 percent in Mexico City.

Immigration laws have tightened up greatly over time, O'Rourke said.

From 1900-20, more than 20 million immigrants entered the U.S. But from 1917-24, quotas were enforced for particular groups of immigrants. More regulations were enforced with the 1952 Immigration and Naturalization Act.

Anti-immigrant sentiment is nothing new, O'Rourke said. She pointed to the strict immigration

laws at the turn of the 20th century. Specific actions targeted the Chinese and Catholics, particularly the Irish.

Currently, immigrants can enter the U.S. only through family-based or employment-based means, O'Rourke said.

"People ask: Why don't they immigrate legally? And why don't they get in the country like my ancestors?" she said. "Back then, (immigrants) were asked 29 questions, and all they had to do was show the required \$30 and ticket before they could board the boat."

No formal immigration path exists in much of Latin America, O'Rourke said. "The truth is, if you are in Central and South America, there is no such office and no such line," she said.

O'Rourke called for comprehensive immigration reform.

"We need to address future workforce needs and the existing unauthorized work population," she said. "We need a workable employment eligibility verification system. And we need a screening process to ensure fair employment eligibility."

Americans are not being displaced by foreign workers, O'Rourke said. On the contrary, immigrants are helping the economy by offsetting fewer domestic workers and retiring baby boomers, she said.

A study conducted by the National Academy of Sciences showed the following, she said:

- The average immigrant annually contributes \$1,800 more in taxes than he/she receives in benefits. Over their lifetimes, immigrants and their children will each pay an average \$80,000 more in taxes than they will receive in local, state and federal benefits combined.

- Immigrants benefit the U.S. economy overall, and they may add as much as \$10 billion to the U.S. economy each year. It is estimated that the total goods and services that all immigrants consume through their paychecks,

plus all that they produce for their employers, is close to about \$800 billion.

- Taxes paid by undocumented immigrants go into the SSA's "suspense file," when the Social Security number does not match SSA's records. In 2002, the suspense file grew by \$56 billion in reported earnings, with about \$7 billion in Social Security tax and \$1.5 billion in Medicare tax paid.

This tax contribution represents about 10 percent of the current Social Security surplus — the difference between what is being collected in Social Security taxes and what is being paid out in benefits.

Immigration reform is needed for homeland security and the rule of law, O'Rourke said. The lack of federal action prompted passage of the Arizona law targeting illegal immigrants, she said.

"In Arizona, it's a thorny issue. They are trying to implement their own kind of immigration policy," she said. "What happens if Arizona's law spreads? You will have color 'swatch' justice."

Under such a law, authorities will target Hispanics while the blonde, blue-eyed illegal immigrant will not be stopped, O'Rourke said. "They are just as illegal, but they will stay under the radar screen," she said of the white citizens.

Not all illegal immigrants sneak or swim across the border, O'Rourke said. She told the story of a family who shipped their belongings to the United States, then drove across the border from Canada.

O'Rourke noted one of her conventions won't be held in Arizona because of a boycott of the new law. And Mendez said she hopes the atmosphere becomes peaceful

on all sides rather than escalates into violence.

USD professor Jose Flores, who was in the audience, noted the Arizona law could easily affect the state's large population with Hispanic heritage.

Arizona legislators likely gave way to pressure from constituents in passing the new law, O'Rourke said.

"We have seen it before in our history, and it's what we are seeing in Arizona," she said. "These legislators have many constituents who have fear, stereotypes, misconceptions and hate. There is silence from others who are not motivated by fear and prejudice, but these legislators listen to the loud constituents."

Not all immigrants are Hispanic, Dai said. She noted the large number of Asian immigrants who have started businesses and become part of the American dream. These newcomers have become especially important in counteracting the loss of population in the Rust Belt of the Midwest and Northeast, she said.

"They have had outmigration (in these cities) for two decades,"

she said. "The immigrants move to abandoned cities and help local governments get more tax dollars."

The influx of immigrants has created fear and resentment among people who see the newcomers as undermining the American fabric, O'Rourke said. While many Americans resent seeing multi-lingual signs, she noted no official language exists in the United States.

"I tell the story of a young couple with a small child who emigrated to the United States," she said. "Because children learn much faster, here is a 5- or 6-year-old child who is doing the translation for the parents."

O'Rourke pointed out that her hometown area in northwest Iowa has benefited from immigrants from a variety of nations. "In Sioux County, they have a very thriving

economy because of the immigrants. The schools would collapse without the immigrants," she said.

While the new Arizona law is closely watched, a Hispanic woman in the USD audience noted that racial profiling already exists for her son in Texas.

"My son is frequently stopped and has to carry his ID with him," the woman said. "He knows the language and has served in the U.S. Army. He has lived in the United States all of his life, but he has to prove he is a U.S. citizen because he looks different."

O'Rourke said she hopes racial profiling and documentation doesn't become part of everyday life in the United States.

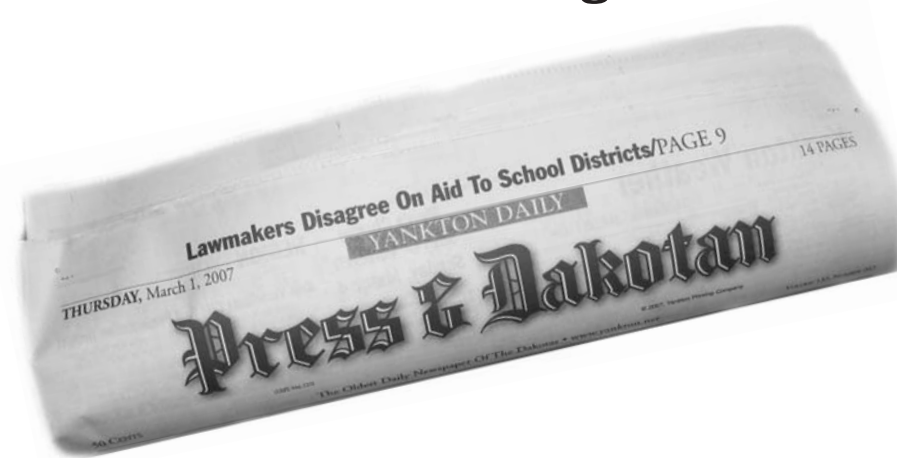
"We don't have to carry an ID to prove who we are. We can just walk around," she said. "To see that change is a terrible thing."

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