

Wins

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Grant program. The grants are expected to train 220 individuals in high-demand career fields. Officials say there are approximately 800 such job openings in South Dakota.

Yankton, through the Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC), will receive a \$107,500 grant to purchase a mobile training unit that will haul industrial-grade equipment. It will be used to help train dislocated workers, unemployed individuals, under-employed adults, high school students and upgrade the skills of currently-employed workers.

Josh Svatos, the general manager of RTEC, told the *Press & Dakotan* that he is excited to get the grant.

“It increases our training capacity and the things we can do locally and regionally,” he said, noting that, in addition to Yankton, the unit will be used in Winner, Gregory, Lake Andes and Freeman.

“It will allow us to do mobile welding and (computerized numerical control) training,” Svatos said. “We’re looking at getting into high schools, but we’re also looking to create a quasi-training site out in Gregory so that we can fill the demand for their workforce and ours, too.”

Daugaard praised the RTEC initiative while addressing the audience.

“We’re going to get portable equipment that we take to the high schools,” he said. “Wouldn’t that be smarter than having every

high school invest in welding machinery and spending that money times (the number of schools)?”

It’s part of a recognition that South Dakota needs to expose students to more information as they prepare to enter the work force. He noted the number of students who enter universities or technical schools without knowing what they want to do.

“Well, shame on us for not giving them good information about what their opportunities are, such as giving them career cluster camps where they can explore health care, manufacturing, engineering, accounting or whatever it is,” he said. “Shame on us if we don’t help them understand where the job demand is, so they don’t go four or two years and get a degree that they’ve gone into debt to get and then get out and find out (they can’t get a job). We need to do better, and we’re going to do better.”

During Wednesday’s proceedings, Daugaard also took the opportunity to recognize that more than 2,000 South Dakotans have earned National Career Readiness Certificates (NCRC). NCRC is an assessment-based credential used to verify an individual’s core employability skills. It measures three essential areas: reading for information, applied mathematics and locating information.

Specifically, he honored John Backhaus of Vermillion and Lonnie Pinkelman of Tyndall for recently obtaining the workplace credential.

Backhaus was not present, but Pinkelman was on hand to be recognized by the governor.

After Pinkelman earned a National Career Readiness Certifi-

cate, the state Department of Labor and Regulation (DLR) provided him tuition assistance to attend an equipment maintenance program.

“I was previously a machine operator,” Pinkelman stated in a release from the DLC. “I thought learning how to set up, maintain and repair equipment would be a great opportunity to advance my career.”

He is now enrolled in the Industrial Maintenance program at RTEC and will graduate next month. A DLR grant funds the program, which is delivered through a partnership between RTEC and Mitchell Technical Institute.

Pinkelman is currently employed at L&M Radiator in Yankton as a warehouse worker.

He told the *Press & Dakotan* that his education during the last nine months has been a challenge when balancing it with work.

“I’m more versatile now,” Pinkelman said. “I worked for Shur-Co for 16 1/2 years running the machines, and when this program came up to actually learn the brains of how they work, it was something I was really interested in.”

When asked by the *Press & Dakotan* after the event whether addressing the low wages South Dakota employees typically receive compared to other states is part of the workforce initiative, Daugaard said it is not directly.

A story this week by *Bloomberg Businessweek* about South Dakota’s struggles to fill job positions pointed to low wages as a culprit.

Reynold F. Nesiba, an associate professor of economics at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, told *Businessweek* that greater competition for workers isn’t enough to lift

South Dakota’s wages because of factors that have kept them down for decades, including low union membership and a small population and modest cost of living.

However, Daugaard said he is counting on job competition to raise wages.

“I think the best way to change the wage situation in South Dakota is competition for jobs,” he said. “The more competition there is for jobs, the better the wages will be. The more competition there is for corn, the better the price for corn is. It’s a supply-and-demand thing. If we can get the demand for jobs up by increasing employers, then that will help wages.”

Only Mississippi had an average weekly wage below that of South Dakota during the third quarter of 2011, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The average weekly wage was \$684, which compares to \$1,118 per week in Connecticut, which had the highest weekly wage.

Daugaard said it is unfair to look at South Dakota’s wages in isolation from other factors.

“If you look at the wages in a high-income tax state to the wages in a low-income tax state and say they’re the same, that’s not really fair,” he said, noting that South Dakota has no state income tax. “You also need to look at the cost of living. The cost of living in South Dakota is much lower than many other places. When you adjust for the lack of an income tax and the cost of living, many of our wage comparisons stack up very favorably.”

You can follow Nathan Johnson on Twitter at [twitter.com/AnInlandVoyage](#)

Walk

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“There’s going to be some items available to capture Brianna’s memory, and there will be a signature board, so everybody that’s present can leave a special note for her,” said Desiree Warren, executive director of the Yankton Women’s/Children’s Center.

Bonnie said the donations will be used to pay for the shirts and bracelets, and the family will donate any money left over to the women’s shelter, just as it did with money from Brianna’s memorial.

“We donated a lot of that to the women’s shelter to help other girls who shouldn’t find themselves in a situation like that,” she said.

Brianna was killed April 9, 2011, by a gunshot fired by her boyfriend, Nicholas Hines. Hines in March pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter and is awaiting a June 7 sentencing hearing.

“Brianna was one of the best people around,” Bonnie said. “She worked so hard, and she didn’t deserve what happened to her. But it will help if everybody remembers her.”

Bonnie encourages everyone to attend the event and take advantage of a beautiful setting to remember her daughter.

“It’s a pretty area to have a relaxing afternoon, walk across the bridge and visit,” she said. “Hopefully there will be a lot of people there. We can talk about Brianna and share memories.”

With a good enough turnout, the Knoll family will plan to make the walk an annual event, Bonnie said. Currently, she has heard from many people planning to participate, which isn’t surprising, considering how much Brianna loved Yankton and how many people she got to know working as a waitress and as a pharmacy tech, she said.

“So many young kids can’t wait to graduate high school and get out of Yankton, but she wanted to live here,” Bonnie said. “She knew a lot of people, and people knew her. Everyone always said how friendly she was. She had a nice big smile. Everybody liked her.”

For more information, call Warren at the Yankton Women’s/Children Center at 605-665-4811.

You can follow Derek Bartos on Twitter at [twitter.com/d_bartos](#)

Syrian Deadline Looms

BY DAVID ENDERS
McClatchy Newspapers

BEIRUT — Syrian security forces on Wednesday undertook fewer military operations involving armor and heavy artillery ahead of Thursday’s cease-fire deadline but conducted raids and arrests in the country’s northern and central regions that left at least five people dead.

Evidence emerged of a pair of mass executions in the city of Homs, underscoring how brutal the government’s crackdown had become in recent days, as it used the last few days ahead of the U.N.-sponsored cease-fire to try to overwhelm its foes. The 59 alleged victims of the executions were killed Monday, when the military sent ground troops into the neighborhood of Deir Balba after shelling it for a week, Syrian human rights activists said.

At least three pro-government militiamen were killed in the city of Hama on Wednesday, and the official news agency SANA said that seven members of the Syrian military killed by anti-government rebels were buried. The statement did say when they had died.

In a separate news item citing an unnamed “source at the Ministry of Defense,” SANA also reported that the Syrian military would abide by the cease-fire proposed by U.N. Syria envoy Kofi Annan and agreed to by Syrian President Bashar Assad last month. That item warned, however, that the military would respond if provoked by anti-Assad rebels.

“It has been decided to halt the armed forces’ missions starting Thursday morning, after they carried out successful missions in combating criminal acts by armed terrorist groups and enforced the authority of the state on all its territories,” the statement read. “The armed forces will be on alert to confront any attack by armed terrorist groups against civilians, law enforcement members, the armed forces and private and public facilities.”

Heavy shelling continued in Homs, the country’s third-largest city, which has been a main center of anti-Assad forces since last year.

Sami Ibrahim, who documents deaths for the London-based Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, said he’d interviewed a half-dozen witnesses to the executions of anti-Assad activists in Homs on Monday and that other members of his organization also had spoken to eyewitnesses.

The alleged killings took place in two neighborhoods in Homs, where more than a half-dozen neighborhoods have been heavily shelled since February as the Syrian government has escalated its military campaign against the Free Syrian Army, the name widely adopted by the loosely organized and lightly armed army defectors and volunteers who have taken up arms against the government.

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