



Early Snow, Then Partial Clearing

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**SATURDAY** ■ February 15, 2014



**Area  
Hoops  
Teams In  
Action  
Friday ■ 7**

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## Jamming To The Grammys

Yankton Native Mike Merkwan Discusses Work On  
Music Video Recently Nominated For Top Award

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

[nathan.johnson@yankton.net](mailto:nathan.johnson@yankton.net)

**Y**ankton native Mike Merkwan knows how to jam — whether it's with the bass guitar or in the editing room.

However, it's his work in the latter area that recently was recognized with a Grammy nomination for "Best Music Video." Now living in Los Angeles, the 31-year-old was the editor for the music video "Safe and Sound" by the indie pop duo Capital Cities.

"As the editor, it is my job to take a concept from the director and create a story through video," he told the *Press & Dakotan* via email. "There is clearly much more to it, but to be quite simple, that is what I do 90 percent of the time. I work in a dark room with a director and about three to five clients creating the story. The editor is the secret creative collaborator — the guy behind the curtain."

"I guess the reason I enjoy editing so much is quite simple: I've always loved music, and editing is all about rhythm. I play bass, so the creative process is very similar. Finding the chord structure for the chorus is like finding the perfect clip order and pacing for the action sequence."

The "Safe and Sound" video was directed by Grady Hall and features Sebu Simonian and Ryan Merchant of Capital Cities dancing through various eras at the Los Angeles Theatre. It seamlessly mixes dance footage shot at the theatre with archival footage of dancers.

"Safe and Sound" won an MTV Video Music Award for Best Visual Effects in 2013. However, it lost out on a 2014 Grammy to the David Fincher-directed "Suit & Tie" video for Justin Timberlake.

"I knew the video was a long shot after seeing who we were up against," Merkwan said. "Some huge names were there. It's pretty humbling to be on a list with such huge talent. Ultimately, losing to David Fincher isn't the end of the world. Just being recognized is a massive honor."

After graduating from Yankton High School in 2001, Merkwan obtained an associates degree in recording from Full Sail University in Orlando, Fla., and moved to Los Angeles in the spring of 2003.

"I got hooked up with a sound editor on the Sony lot," he said. "I shadowed him for a few months until my bills started coming in, and I needed to start getting paid. So I got a restaurant job and looked for paid work on set or helping studios any way I could to stay in the industry on the side. It was grueling."

Eventually, Merkwan found somewhat steady work with a startup company and then got hired as a full-time production assistant.

"Back then, we used to lay off daily progress to 3/4-inch tape and FedEx it to our clients," he said. "So I learned the editing system. I eventually got the opportunity to assist editors on projects and start learning the seat. That, in turn,



COURTESY PHOTO  
Yankton native Mike Merkwan worked on a music video for indie pop duo Capital Cities that was nominated for a "Best Music Video" Grammy award. Merkwan, left, is seen here at a pre-Grammy party with his girlfriend Marlene Ellingsen and video director Grady Hall, who is wearing his Grammy nomination medal.

## Public Meetings Scheduled Next Week For Missouri River Flooding Legal Action

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF

[randy.dockendorf@yankton.net](mailto:randy.dockendorf@yankton.net)

A law firm suing the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over Missouri River flooding will hold two public meetings next week seeking interested parties.

Representatives from the Polsinelli Law Firm, a national firm based in Kansas City, have been invited to hold the informational meetings, according to State Sen. Dan Lederman (R-Dakota Dunes).

"It's a mass action lawsuit, and any person or business can join the suit," Lederman told the *Press & Dakotan*.

A meeting will be held at 3 p.m. Feb. 22 in the Dakota Valley High School Auditorium in McCook Lake.

Another meeting will be held at 5 p.m. Feb. 21



Lederman

at the Americinn Conference Center in Fort Pierre.

The public is welcome to attend and gain more information, Lederman said in a news release.

"The discussion will include results of the firm's investigation of the recurrent flooding and actions being considered to address the flooding and the damages resulting therefrom,"

he said. "There are no obligations respecting attendance."

On his Facebook page, Lederman said the firm has initiated legal action "and would like to speak with potential claimants."

The firm scheduled public meetings earlier

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**EB-5**

## State Paid Thousands To Benda Without Any Receipts

BY BOB MERCER

State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — The former state official that pioneered recruitment of Asian investors for a handful of South Dakota projects received many tens of thousands of dollars in reimbursements for expenses in a two-year period that weren't backed up receipts or other proof, a special audit has found.

State government paid approximately \$89,000 to the official, former secretary of tourism and state development Richard Benda, for expenses that a private business should have paid under its state contract with Benda's state agency, according to the audit.

The contract meant the state audit could inspect some of the contracting company's financial records. While Benda was still a state employee, the contractor paid him approximately \$62,000 for expenses that didn't have any supporting documents.

"We don't know what those were for," state Auditor General Martin Guindon said Friday. His office conducted the financial inspection. "We don't know there was a problem," he said. "There's no evidence for us to show they were paid for legitimate purposes."

In some instances, travel vouchers reimbursed by state government to Benda showed event-hosting expenses without any supporting documents such as the purpose and the attendees. State government didn't have a policy on allowable costs for hosting, according to the audit.

Guindon said Friday some receipts were in Mandarin Chinese language and listed Chinese currency amounts. Among the reimbursements were payments totaling \$14,700 for translation services reportedly performed by people in China and Philippines that lacked formal receipts and were supported by notations written in English.

The final expense payment from the contractor to Benda of \$35,539.41 came in January 2011 as he was exiting state government to work for the contractor.

While secretary, Benda had signed the contract in November 2009 with SDRC Inc. president Joop Bollen, a former state employee at Northern State University, to manage South Dakota's participation in the federal EB-5 visa program for the Governor's Office of Economic Development.

Bollen had previously done extensive work for state government recruiting foreign investors under EB-5 while at NSU. Bollen incorporated SDRC in January 2009. The contract with SDRC was negotiated that year between a lawyer for GOED and an Aberdeen lawyer, Jeff Sveen, representing SDRC.

Foreign citizens who invest or loan money to U.S. projects under EB-5 gain



Benda

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## YPD To Hold 2nd Citizen's Academy



COURTESY PHOTO  
Law enforcement officials are shown demonstrating the Yankton Police Department's remote-controlled robot, R2D2, at last year's Citizen's Academy. This year's program returns Tuesday, and will once again give area citizens the chance to get an inside view into the operations of local law enforcement agencies.

BY DEREK BARTOS

[derek.bartos@yankton.net](mailto:derek.bartos@yankton.net)

Several members of the community are about to get an inside look at the Yankton Police Department.

Beginning Tuesday, the department will hold its second Citizen's Academy. For the next 10 weeks, 11 individuals will meet once a week to receive an education in area law enforcement operations and programs.

"They'll get an overview of the entire department," said Yankton Police Chief Brian Paulsen. "For example, we'll talk about the department philosophy on training, talk about our Special Response Team, the D.A.R.E. program, Safety City. One week will also be dedicated to the Yankton County Sheriff's Office and their duties."

The goal of the program is to foster transparency with the public, Paulsen said.

"We want them to understand what we're actually doing, and why we do those things," he said.

The department held its initial academy last year with six participants. Judging by the feedback from the graduates, the program was right on target, Paulsen said.

"It was all very positive," he said. "One of the strongest comments was they didn't realize how much we did. Everybody sees the cruisers at a traffic stop or a response to an accident, but they're not aware of things like our training program. And everybody knows about D.A.R.E., but Safety City and National Night Out and some of the other events we participate in, they're not as knowledgeable about."

Paulsen said questions most often asked involve the K-9 unit.

"Everyone wants to see how that works and get the explanation," he said. "Everybody knows we have them and what kind of dogs they are, but the whole selection and training are things that people take for granted."

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