

Kuhlman

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teaching, with 20 of those years at Avon. He spent his first four years of teaching at Waubay High School and Hosmer High School. He had previously been recognized as the 2008 South Dakota Outstanding Physical Science Teacher and the 2009 South Dakota teacher of the year.

Other area teachers that are being honored in Washington include Deborah Snook from Philip, SD; David Hartman from Lincoln, Neb. and John Christen from Beatrice, Neb.

One of the things that he said has changed in his years of teaching is that students now realize they need a background in math and science to further their career goals and education.

"I like to keep it fun," Kuhlman said. "I tailor the curriculum to everyday things that students can relate to."

Avon Superintendent Tom Culver said the community has really been receptive to Kuhlman's teaching style and all that he does for his students and the school.

"A lot of the community is thankful that he is one of our teachers," he said. "He goes above and beyond the call on everything he does."

Matt Yost, secondary dean of students at Avon, said Kuhlman is one of the most dedicated individuals around.

"He shows complete dedication to his profession," Yost said. "He works and will continue to get better each day."

Culver noted that, of the 70-80 students enrolled in the high school, about 20-30 of them enroll in a physics or chemistry course with Kuhlman. He added that people might consider moving to Avon because of the recognition that Kuhlman is getting.

Culver went on to dispel the myth that smaller schools often mean fewer opportunities.

"There are outstanding teachers that are very capable in small schools," he said. "Paul winning the award reinforces things we do in our building."

Despite the high recognition, Kuhlman remains humble.

"This award is really a credit to the students and their parents, other teachers at the school and the Avon administration," he said. "It's a reward for their hard work that makes me look good."

He is able to relate to students by using many demonstrations in

class. He added that a lot more students want to do science fair projects because they realize they could take a trip somewhere if their project does well. Kuhlman even does a "turkey timers" lab around Thanksgiving which focuses on how turkey timers actually work.

"Paul would be the first to say that he is just doing his job," Culver said. "He truly cares about the kids and what they learn."

Kuhlman has a unique teaching style, which distinguishes him from other teachers in the region, Yost said.

"No one word describes his teaching style," Yost said. "It changes depending on the students and class needs."

Kuhlman has shown a remarkable ability to motivate his students and make learning fun for them. Under his leadership, Avon has become a perennial competitor in national and international science fairs, with some of his students qualifying for events in New York, Texas, Georgia and Florida. He has even started a science night at the school, with the crowd often filling the entire gym.

"The one thing about Paul is that he sincerely wants his students to be successful," Yost said. "Students know that he will give them any support that he can mentally and physically take on."

Both Yost and Culver said that many former Avon students have gone into science and math fields, noting Kuhlman probably had a lot to do with their career choices.

"The students here are committed. They will show up for things after school and they want to be involved, which makes my job a lot easier," he said. "The more a student is engaged, the more the teacher is engaged."

He added a sincere thank you to his students, both past and present.

Despite the award, Kuhlman said he is far from done perfecting his teaching style and methods.

"It's a nice reward and a nice honor," he said. "However, it doesn't mean I'm done. It's only more incentive to work harder and keep at it."

"When you walk around the school you never know what kind of smells or sounds are going to come from his science labs," Yost said. "He is really a mad scientist at heart."

He even has license plates that say "science" on his car.

You can follow Andrew Atwal on Twitter at twitter.com/andrewatwal

Casino

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services of Creative Casino Solutions, a company whose principals have over 75 years of experience in the casino business, to assist in the management of the design and construction of the project."

The tribe has selected Taylor Woodstone Construction as general contractor, Trudell said in the newsletter.

"They have significant experience building casinos and hotels for other tribes," he said.

PROVIDING A MAJOR BOOST

The new Ohiya Casino and Resort includes a 25,000-square-foot casino; 47-room lodge with two luxury suites, a banquet facility and conference center; a convenience store and gas station to replace the existing Feather Hill gas station; and an 18-hole golf course and club house.

The expanded casino will offer 400 Class II gaming machines, or double the current number, Thomas said. The new amenities will make Ohiya Casino a destination resort, she said.

"We open in December, so we can host Christmas parties and other events," she said. "And with our new events center at the complex, we plan to host as many conferences and as much entertainment as we can. There will actually be lodging available that didn't exist in this part of Nebraska."

The aggressive marketing will lead to another major benefit — jobs. The larger casino and resort should more than double the current 40 full- and part-time employees to around 100 staff members, Thomas said.

Those jobs will exert a major impact on the regional economy, she said. And that's particular important on the reservation, which suffers from 75 percent unemployment.

"It's something that is certainly very positive in helping with economic development not only for our service area but for all of northeast Nebraska," she said. "The employment is not only for the Santee Sioux but also for our neighbors surrounding us. We are adding 40 to 50 jobs — that's huge for us. It would be huge for Yankton. It's quite a great thing."

Plans are already under way for securing the additional staff, Thomas said.

"We are looking at an employee job fair going in the month of October so we can select employees and go through training before we open," she said.

When it was opened in 1996, Ohiya Casino — named for the Dakota word for "winner" or "victor" — became Nebraska's first casino. Amidst legal battles with state and federal officials, the tribe operated the casino out of an old cafe in Santee. The small casino, which opened with 29 gaming machines and nine employees, was located atop a hill overlooking the Missouri River in northern Knox County, Neb.

To obtain greater visibility and access, the casino was relocated about a decade ago. The casino now occupies a renovated box factory at the intersection and Nebraska Highway 12 and Spur 54D leading to Santee. The Feather Hill Express gas station and convenience store lies to the east of the casino.

What will happen to the current Ohiya Casino?

"That's a tribal decision, but there is such a shortage of facilities on the reservation that they may decide to use it (for that reason)," Thomas said.

She's also unsure of what will happen to the current Feather Hill Express once the new casino and resort open later this year.

ROLLING OUT THE RED CARPET

In the tribal newsletter, Chairman Trudell said the casino and resort incorporate design elements. The new facilities will offer a number of amenities, he said.

At the front door is a canopy designed to allow three lanes of traffic to drop off and pick up customers during inclement weather. The canopy has also been customized to accommodate buses.

"The structure is sized to allow buses that will bring gamers to the (site) to off-load and load their passengers," he said.

As visitors enter the casino, they will find the main lobby with a fireplace and sculptural "tipi" light that forms the focal point of the entire complex.

"The gaming floor, restaurant, event center and hotel all radiate from this iconic overhead structure," Trudell said.

The new casino's floor has been designed for 400 electronic gaming machines, compared to the current 200 machines, he said.

"Gaming machines will be provided by as many as five different vendors to provide our guests with the best possible selection of gaming opportunities," the tribal chairman said.

The casino and resort will offer expanded food and beverage options. A 34-seat cafe will feature hot and cold foods with self-service capabilities. A 32-seat buffet area includes service stations, and a 54-seat restaurant offers full table service.

"All restaurants are grouped around a

common kitchen that will allow the venues to be used with great flexibility," Trudell said. "On the opposite side of the casino floor is a full bar with eight bar-top gaming devices, food, golf check-in and retail sales."

Thomas sees tremendous potential with the flexibility in food services.

"(Visitors) can go through anything from a buffet to fine dining," she said. "We will also be available to do catering, and our events center will be organized so they can (handle) banquets and have a larger kitchen set-up."

The two-story hotel offers 45 king and double queen rooms. The hotel also offers a large two-room suite and an oversized junior king suite.

Off the main eating area, the casino offers a 4,000-square-foot events center with room for bingo, weddings, business meetings and entertainment events.

"Depending on the type of event and whether or not food is being served, the event center will accommodate 400 guests, or 200 for banquet seating," Trudell said.

Two significant exterior areas surround the building.

The east end offers an outdoor event gathering area for weddings, business meetings and cultural ceremonies. At the back of the hotel, overlooking the golf course, is an outdoor pool and deck area for guests and summertime parties.

The casino and resort include the gift shop, convenience store and gas station and 18-hole golf course.

Ohiya Casino and Resort won't miss a beat as it moves to its new home, Thomas said.

"When we make the move, we won't lose any business (during the transition period)," she said.

Ohiya Casino and Resort comes on the heels of other Santee success stories, such as a new medical clinic and new convenience store along with a new community college campus slated to open this fall. The Santee Sioux are also working on a new justice center that would offer more space for trials, hearings, court services, administrative offices and law enforcement.

"Things are really moving on the reservation," Thomas said. "We're on the go."

For more information on the casino and job openings, contact Thomas at (402) 857-3860 or by email at thelma.thomas@ohiya-casino.com, or visit online at www.ohiyacasino.com.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf

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