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Several Yankton High School Students Participate in Figure Skating Competitions



BY
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A "real" South Dakota winter didn't occur this year. Little snow has covered the ground and one has only had to slide on icy roads a few times. As obviously demonstrated by the need for winter driving classes in Yankton, Yanktonites must not be too keen on ice. But there is an exception to the majority – Yankton Ice Association Figure Skaters are keen on ice.

Amanda Kokesh, Morgan Privett, Sam Hanson, Jade Gaukel, Beth Pearson, Sarah Pearson, and Jackie Pajl are the current Yankton High School members of the Yankton Ice Association Figure Skaters.

Team captain, Beth Pearson, has been figure skating ever since the rink opened. "I have been a figure skater for seven years. I joined, because ever since I was really little my parents took my sister and I to Omaha and Sioux Falls to skate. When Yankton was able to start their own ice rink, it was a great opportunity for me in which to take part," Beth Pearson said.

Pearson, as a team captain, feels that she has "a great responsibility. Being a leader to the younger children and the peers in my own level is a great honor. I take pride in being the team captain."

Amanda Kokesh, a senior, has been ice skating for seven years. "My mom signed me up for lessons to keep me busy; she did not think I would stick with [skating]. Clearly she was wrong," Kokesh said with a laugh.

Throughout Kokesh's many years skating, she has learned a lot of tricks. "Most definitely the most difficult element for me to learn was the flip. I learned it years ago and tried to master it then, but I was not able to," Kokesh stated. "I then stopped trying until last year. I started practicing the flip again because Morgan [Privett] landed hers instantly. It was not until this year that I finally landed my flip, and I felt so good to finally have it mastered!"

Morgan Privett has been ice skating for four years. "I would go to open skate at the rink and taught myself how to skate. Then, I talked my parents into signing me up for formal lessons. I started on hockey skating first, but then switched to figure," Privett said "The hardest part of figure skating for me is balancing everything out and not over-doing one thing or another. Time has to be spent equally on all elements, not just one. Also, there will be bruises."

Junior Jade Gaukel has been figure skating for six years. "I joined skating because my grandparents used to skate when they were my age," Jade said. "I thought it would be a great experience."

Gaukel's favorite part of skating is the "all the different pretty costumes" the figure skaters get to wear for performances and competitions.

Participating in competitions has changed skating for Kokesh. She explained that "now in practices, the coaches are stricter than past years. The coaches keep us moving with constant drills and practices for competition. Because of competitions, I have also realized how truly competitive I am and how determined I am to place."

Another part of competitions includes the solo performances. Gaukel's best memory of figure skating is winning first place in the Luverne, Minnesota competition. "I won first place last year for my freestyle bronze solo performance," Gaukel explained.

"I put as much time as necessary into my solo performances to make them perfect," agrees Beth Pearson. "The amount of time to perfect my performances range from a couple of days to a few months."

High school junior Sam Hanson, a figure skater since 6th grade, has been changed by competitions. "Competitions inspired me to work harder and to be more committed to the sport," Hanson said. "I love the feeling of getting a medal, and that has pushed me."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOSH SCHURRER

Above (L to R): Beth Pearson, Amanda Kokesh, Amber Winters, Morgan Privett, Kirsten May, and Maddie Manning perform to the song "Mambo #5."

Below: Yankton High School junior, Samantha Hanson, performs a solo.

Privett said, "In my last competition I felt more excited and less scared. I just skated for fun and let everything flow. Also, it was really nice to see our team together as one at the competition."

The Yankton Ice Association Figure Skaters' next competition once again will be in Luverne Minnesota from March 31 to April 1. Bri Erzar and Katelyn Breen are the figure skating coaches. "I began coaching because I love skating and I never wanted to stop."

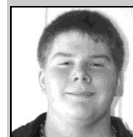
Breen stated that "once skating is a part of your life, you do not want to stop; you do not want to lose it."

The figure-skating girls are very aware of a strong team bond. Breen says, "The girls support each other throughout all levels." "I would like to think of the bond as a family," said Hanson. "I think of all of the other skaters as my sisters."

"Our team has really gotten close within the last few years since our lesson groups have changed," Kokesh stated. "We went from being separated by age to being separated by skill. So now, we are all together. We have become closer, because we know each other's strengths and weaknesses in skating."

On March 10th at 5:30 P.M., the people of Yankton will be able to see the Yankton Ice Association Figure Skaters in person, on ice, at the 4-H Kiwanis Ice Center. "Come watch the show!" Breen encouraged. "The girls, as a team, placed 3rd out of 17 teams in the biggest international skating institute last March in Luverne, Minnesota. They surely will put on a wonderful performance."

Mrs. Jill Mikkelsen Named SDCTE Teacher of the Year



BY
TOM
KELLEN

"Not surprised at all," was Dr. Kindle's reaction upon hearing that Yankton High's very own Mrs. Mikkelsen had won English Teacher of the Year. He said, "We have one of the finest English departments in all of South Dakota, and our students are very fortunate to have the caliber of teacher like Mrs. Mikkelsen at Yankton High School. This award also is an indication of how respected she is among her colleagues across the state."

Mrs. Mikkelsen earned the reward by always looking to further her education whether it meant receiving a master's degree, which she did seven years ago, or going to workshops. For example, last summer she attended an invitational writers' workshop called, The Dakota Writing Project. Mrs. Eggers, who nominated Mrs. Mikkelsen stated, "I nominated her for Teacher of the Year, because she exemplifies what a teacher should be, and also because of her twenty-seven years of teaching. I was Mrs. Mikkelsen's student teacher and look up to her as a mentor, so I know firsthand the type of teacher she is."

Last weekend Mrs. Mikkelsen, accompanied by four other Yankton High School English teachers, made a trip to Chamberlain, South Dakota to attend the 2012 South Dakota Council of Teachers of English (SDCTE) annual convention with fifty-one other teachers across the state. The conference was split into three sessions. Friday morning, teachers were allowed time to visit three of five round tables. Over lunch, they held SDECTE's annual business meeting. Friday concluded with the second leg of the conference which consisted of hour long sessions over several topics such as technology in the classroom, poetry, etc. The annual SDCTE conference then finished on Saturday morning with six more sessions.



PHOTO BY NATHAN RAUSCH

Jill Mikkelsen is SDCTE Teacher of the Year.

Debate Team Denied National Qualification



BY
HUNTER
KOCH

On February 17 and 18, the Yankton High School debate team traveled to Sioux Falls Washington to participate in the Rushmore National Qualifying Tournament. Although no member of the Yankton debate team qualified for the national tournament, several members went far and came close to reaching nationals. Yankton Lincoln-Douglas debaters Nicole Westerman and Emily Gurney made it into the top five at the tournament, the policy debate team of Ashley Hussein and Joshua Arens made it very deep into the second day of the tournament, and the public forum debate team of Steven Marlow and Caitlyn Oien made it far as well.

Members who competed in public forum debate are the teams of Steven Marlow and Caitlyn Oien, Devin Clark and Tyler Wenande, Chandler Kolberg and Garrett Adam, and Tessa Haeckey and Zach Latte. In policy debate, the teams of Juan Skorey and Kayla Sylvester and Ashley Hussein and Joshua Arens competed. In Lincoln-Douglas debate, Nicole Westerman, Emily Gurney, Alliyah Greaver, and Hunter Koch competed. Duo interp also competed at the qualifying tournament, with the teams of Juan Skorey and Kayla Sylvester, Alliyah Greaver and Broc Mauch, and Haylee Worm and Amanda Boon.

Coach Leo Kallis commented on the performance of the debate team at the qualifying tournament, saying, "I thought they did well as expected. I am proud of Emily Gurney and Nicole Westerman for reaching the top five, and Ashley and Josh had a nice run. Half the team are freshman, and they performed admirably."

The debate team also headed to their state competition on March 1st and 2nd. Mr. Kallis stated that "there are a lot of judges we haven't seen before," and the debate team would, "prepare hard, work hard, and do their best."

Results from the state meet were not available at press time.

Students and Businesses Work Together to Repair Humane Society Van



BY
JUSTIN
GRODE

Just a couple weeks ago the Heartland Humane Society contacted the Yankton High School about servicing their van. They said that it had a problem with the oil.

Mr. Bob Evans said, "Sure we could do that," and that was the beginning of Project Humane Society 2012.

Project Humane Society 2012 is the codename for the Yankton High School's project to fix the Heartland Humane Society van.

Evans said that Michael Kuchta and Hope Logue are helping with the project. Their goal is to give the Heartland Humane Society a reliable, safe vehicle that they can trust not to break down on them in the middle of the street.

Ever since the day the Yankton High School received that call, they have decided they would do maintenance on the van.

After further investigation of the van, they discovered that



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MIKE KATHOL

Michael Kuchta, Hope Logue, and teacher, Bob Evans, are pictured with the local humane society's van which they are repairing.

there were many more things wrong with it than just the oil.

It also needed a new exhaust, spark plugs and spark plug wires, serpentine drive belt,

and, of course, engine oil.

The Yankton High School needed some help getting the parts so they contacted many local businesses to donate parts.

Luckily, many of them replied and said that they would love to donate parts.

Ferdig's Transportation & Exhaust donated the new exhaust, O'Reilly's donated the spark plugs and spark plug wires, Hedahls donated a serpentine drive belt, and Yankton Automotive Machining donated the much needed engine oil.

After the donation of all needed parts, Project Humane Society 2012 began installing and fixing the van from the Heartland Humane Society.

Evans predicted that this project could take quite a while to finish. He said it might even go until the end of the school year.

Evans is hoping though that his prediction isn't right, and they can get done as quickly as possible. He believes that with talented Yankton High School students donating the labor required to fix the van, they will give the Heartland Humane Society a reliable and safe van within this school year.

The Heartland Humane Society is a private, non-profit organization. Their website is www.heartlandhumanesociety.net.

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