

WAG

From Page 1

grow to 50 people, that's fabulous."

The revolving loan fund also helps businesses manage any bumps in the financial road, said WAG economic development coordinator Kelsey Doom.

"We have the banks in Wagner who do an awesome job with financing, but there are unexpected costs," she said. "We come up with more of a gap funding and hopefully solve those little problems with our revolving loan fund."

In applying for federal funds, WAG offered \$51,000 to match the \$50,000 USDA grant, Slaba said. "Now, we have local skin in the game," he said of the local match.

Slaba believes the WAG assets of \$250,000 can grow even more through sources such as the Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED).

"We would like to ask GOED for another chunk of funding," Slaba said. "We would like to go from \$250,000 up to \$350,000 or \$400,000. Then, we have a fund where we can really go out and generate some interest and support."

Besides their GOED contacts, Wagner officials have worked with two Yankton resources, the Areawide Business Council (ABC) and Planning and Development District III, Slaba said.

THE PERFECT STORM

The USDA grant comes at a perfect time, as local development efforts are falling into place, Slaba noted.

Doom was hired this month as the economic development coordinator. Her hiring represents a structural change, as the position formerly operated under the City of Wagner and now works under WAG.

The city has transferred \$45,000 to WAG for the coordinator position, and the Chamber of Commerce has provided \$5,000, Slaba said. He considers those amounts not only as funding but as a vote of confidence.

"The city was doing fine (with the position), and they are extremely supportive of us (with the change). But it's better aligned with Wagner Area Growth," he said. "Kelsey will have first-hand knowledge of a lot of opportunities (for the revolving fund)."

WAG will focus on three things, Slaba said.

"Those three things are: stabilize our current businesses, increase our current businesses and then develop local businesses," he said. "The fourth thing, we will hopefully recruit future businesses, but the first three things are really our concentration right now."

WAG believes in growing the local economy with business owners and a workforce already familiar with and invested in the area, Slaba said.

"We take care of our own here. We want to make sure our people who are right here are being taken care of first, so anybody can establish or expand their business," he said. "Once we establish that area and stabilize it, then we can recruit outside firms."

POOLING RESOURCES

In her role, Doom will connect local businesses and residents with resources meeting their needs.

Doom has also worked with Florence Clairmont, the Yankton Sioux Tribe economic development coordinator, on the Southern Charles Mix Dakota Rising program. They are serving as community site coordinators with access to resources for regional entrepreneurship.

Southern Charles Mix County was chosen as a new Dakota Rising community site, part of the Dakota Resources program. The next community gathering is scheduled for 6 p.m. May 29 at the Wagner theater, preceded by a 5:30 p.m. cook-out.

Next week's community meeting will draw together residents from Wagner, Marty, Pickstown, Dante, Lake Andes, Greenwood and Ravinia to discuss what the program can mean for the region.

"Dakota Rising will provide the Southern Charles Mix Community Site one more tool in our community tool shed for the potential business to expand and existing business to be retained," Clairmont said in a news release. "The communities will gain knowledge and education on how to keep our local economy healthy."

Doom is also working with Home Address, a program seeking solutions for local needs. Community gatherings have focused on four things: housing, including usage of prisoner-built homes; landlord-tenant rights; building a coalition between Native and non-Native residents; and rehabilitating homes.

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Wagner officials hope to tap into another resource: young people.

The Wagner schools hosted a recent conference, promoting opportunities for young people. The afternoon program showed them the needed training and encouraged them to start businesses or work in their home areas.

"I hope the idea catches on, and more kids come home," Doom said. "I see Wagner with tons of young people and really awesome youth. There is so much potential."

Slaba has seen strong youth attendance at Dakota Rising conversations.

"They are all looking for what business they can develop themselves back here," he said. "They are very eager, ambitious and talented individuals who want to stay here, and they see the opportunities."

Economic and community development take time but bring rewards, Slaba added.

"I don't see an immediate turnaround. It may be 5, 10 and 15 years," he said. "We can do all of that within the realm of Wagner Area Growth."

Doom senses great things ahead with the USDA grant, Dakota Rising and the new WAG coordinator role.

"You mix together the perfect recipe, and you have no idea where it's going to go," she said.

For more information on Dakota Rising, contact Doom at (605) 481-2493 or Clairmont at (605) 216-7671.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

Doctor

From Page 1

obtaining his chiropractic degree from Northwestern College of Chiropractic (now Northwestern Health Sciences University) in Bloomington, Minnesota.

He began his professional career in Yankton, working for about a year as an associate doctor with Dr. Tom Stotz at Stotz Chiropractic. After marrying his wife, Sheila, Fitzgerald returned to Minnesota and started his own practice while Sheila finished chiropractic school.

However, that wouldn't last long, as an old friend came calling two years later. "Dr. Stotz said he could really use some help and asked if we had any inkling of moving back to Yankton," Fitzgerald said.

He said the choice was a difficult one, and the couple considered it for at least a month.

"We were just getting established, but we decided we

would rather raise our family in Yankton in this setting that we were familiar with compared to the big city," he said.

The family moved to Yankton in 1992, and Fitzgerald and his wife joined Stotz as partners at First Chiropractic Center. Since then, the practice has grown into a business that houses four doctors with two satellite clinics.

Fitzgerald said the aspect of his work he has enjoyed the most is the people he meets every day.

"It's being able to provide care so that patients can enjoy the lifestyles that they like," he said.

Along with his time practicing, Fitzgerald has contributed to his field in numerous ways. These include serving on the SDCA board of directors for eight years, as well as providing testimony for various legislative bills for the SDCA.

He received the Walt Wolf Award in 2000 for work with a high school physical bill and the Going the Distance Award in 2013 with the

Sewage

From Page 1

responsive to requests, Garrity said correspondence with a district representative of RV Horizons ended earlier this week. RV Horizons of Cedaredge, Colo., recently purchased the park.

"There are not a lot of tools here (for the county)," Garrity said. "We're going to get people sick if we don't do something."

Commission Chairman Bruce Jensen said several people have called him about the situation.

"They are frantic," he stated. "I don't blame them."

Garrity said he has been working with the South Dakotan Department of Environmental and Natural Resources (DENR) and has also requested help from the South Dakota Department of Health and the South Dakota Department of Social Services.

The DENR has been on site and has followed up with correspondence to the owner about coming up with a plan to address the issue, according to Kim Smith, a spokesman for the DENR. The individual handling the matter for the DENR was out of the office Wednesday.

"I can't just go in there and shut off the water or evict those people, because where am I going to put them?" Garrity told the commission. "We don't have an emergency fund for that kind of thing. It's really a bad situation, and I can't believe (the owners) can go to bed at night. But I guess that's beside the point — they don't live here."

Commissioner Donna Freng asked if the county could have the tanks pumped out and subsequently place a lien on the property to recover the expenses.

Garrity said a court order would be needed for such an action.

Claims were made at the

meeting that the sewage had flowed into a nearby county ditch. Ernster told the *Press & Dakotan* Wednesday that was untrue.

"It's unlawful of them to allow sewage to go into a public road ditch," Commissioner Garry Moore said. "Quite frankly, I think that we have a criminal case here. They haven't addressed the problem and are allowing sewage to flow into the county ditch. That's strictly prohibited by state law. The owner of the property — put a warrant out for his arrest. I bet you'd get some answers then."

Garrity told the *Press & Dakotan* that he became aware of the situation in January.

"At the time, we visited with the trailer court manager, and we thought it was probably frozen up since it was such a deep frost this year," he said. "I was willing to be flexible with that."

However, when the spring thaw occurred and action was requested, nothing happened.

Complicating matters was that a new company purchased the property.

Ernster, who said he had been a maintenance man handling the mowing and upkeep of homes for just more than a year, became the park

passing of a copay bill. He was also recipient of the Ron Bubel Spirit of SDCA award in 2011 and the Northwestern College of Chiropractic Chiropractor of the Year award in 2012.

Fitzgerald said his experience in the chiropractic field, other than the awards he was received, is close to what he imagined it would be when he was a high school student. However, it's also recently changed for the better, he said.

"One of the biggest changes I've witnessed in health care is the cooperation of other providers in the area," Fitzgerald said. "It wasn't too long ago that cooperation with chiropractic and traditional allopathic medicine didn't take place very much. Now, I really appreciate our medical providers and their willingness to recognize the value of our chiropractic profession. This cooperation we're seeing now ultimately benefits the patient and helps with what we do."

In addition to recognizing his work in the chiropractic

profession, Fitzgerald's latest award also honors involvement in the community — something that has been a priority for the Yankton doctor for most of his professional life. He has served with many local organizations, including Yankton Jaycees, Pheasants Forever, Babe Ruth Baseball, the Sacred Heart Catholic School Board and the Yankton School Board.

Fitzgerald said his commitment to his field and his community can be summed up by quote by Teddy Roosevelt that he came across early in his career.

"Basically it says that every man owes some of his time and talent to the up-building of the profession to which he belongs," he said. "I really feel like you can also take the word 'profession' out and insert 'community.' It feels right to participate in the area where you live."

You can follow Derek Bartos on Twitter at twitter.com/d_bartos. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

manager April 1.

"I didn't know anything about sewers," he said.

Ernster has spoken with experts who have informed him there is a broken "T" in one of the lines.

"On top of that, the old manager had another guy working on the sewer system," he added. "That guy was not doing things right. There is a brand new drainage field out back, and they never hooked it up. That's what needs to be done. It needs to be hooked up and drawn to the new drain field."

Ernster said his mobile home is located near the place with the broken "T."

"I have a 12-year-old daughter, and I have just as much of a stake in (getting this fixed) as anybody else," he stated.

The amount of sewage coming up out of the cleanouts varies by what is going on in the park, according to Ernster.

"You can tell when it's laundry day," he said. "On a normal day, you might have a little wetness on the ground. When you have three or four trailers doing laundry or something, it gets to be more."

Rumors that the RV Horizons is not going to address the problem are unfounded,

Ernster added. It's a matter of finding a contractor willing to do the work.

"We are wanting things done. It's a high priority for us," he said. "We're doing the best we can. Our biggest problem is to get somebody out here to look at it."

Ernster said attempts have been made to keep people away from the sewage, but Garrity said he has observed children playing nearby and has told them to get away from the pool.

"We have the appearance that we're looking the other way," Garrity said of the long process to address the situation. "That's not true at all. We're pounding away on this very hard. The tools, I think, are grossly inadequate."

"To me, the tool that should be available is: 'I gave you 10 days to get that accomplished. You didn't get it done, so we're hiring someone to do it and you're going to pay for it out of your taxes.' (But) we do not have that tool."

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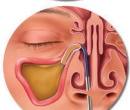


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