

SDSU Foundation

# Ness Family Honored As 2015 Philanthropic Family Of The Year

BROOKINGS — Larry and Diane Ness of Yankton were honored April 23 by the South Dakota State University Foundation as the 2015 Philanthropic Family of the Year.

The award, created in 2012, "acknowledges exceptional generosity to diverse causes by a family that serves as an inspiration to others to support South Dakota State University."

The award was announced at the Foundation's annual Donor Celebration in Frost Arena. With more than 800 in attendance, it was the second-largest Donor Celebration ever held at SDSU.

Larry and Diane Ness are members of the Theodore and Esther Schultz Society that recognizes lifetime commitments of more than \$5 million to SDSU. The Ness' provided the leadership gift that will help launch the Ness Division of Management and Economics at SDSU in the fall of 2015.

In presenting the Philanthropic Family of the Year honor, President David L. Chicoine said, "Their



The Larry and Diane Ness Family. (Courtesy photo)

leadership, their incredible passion, their generosity, and their sharing of time and treasure has changed this university."

Larry Ness is chairman and CEO for First Dakota National Bank, which has locations in 12 South Dakota

communities and three Nebraska locations. Larry is a 1969 SDSU graduate; Diane earned her degree in 1970. They were joined by more than 20 family members and bank employees at the recognition dinner.

The previous winners of

the Philanthropic Family of the Year are the Dale and Pat Larson family of Brookings, the Les and Wanda Roberts family of Ashton, S.D., and the Bob and Pat Fishback and Van and Barb Fishback families of Brookings.

## Rescue

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while trying to figure out what we were going to do because there was no one around — everyone was gone."

With the Jet Ski slipping beneath each wave, the pair was finding it hard to keep hold of the watercraft.

Deanda and Vite felt at this point, their only option was to try and swim for shore.

"First, we prayed because we didn't know what else to do," Deanda said. "Then we decided, 'Let's both go, and just go swimming as far as we can get. So we started doing that and just left the Jet Ski there.'"

Almost immediately, they found the waves overwhelming as they tried to swim.

"There was too many waves," he said. "We would try swimming and they would get in my face, in my mouth and everything. She told me I should face the other way and the waves won't hit me. We were going and then it started getting really, really cold."

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at Gavins Point Dam were reporting the water temperature on Lewis & Clark Lake was 53 degrees on Sunday.

The two of them tried to flag a passing boater with no success.

Then, Deanda said fatigue began to set in for the two of them.

"We had a whistle and we tried blowing the whistle to see if anybody would hear us," he said. "We saw a boat pass by but they didn't hear us, so we just kept swimming. Then I started to give up. I tried going as much as I could. She was getting tired, too. I had her behind me and then I would try swimming forward first, and then we switched. But then I couldn't go no more — my legs gave up on me — it was really that cold. So I told her I would stay here and go behind (her) because she could swim better than me. I told her to go ahead."

Vite described the point where the situation turned most critical.

"We were going to try keeping in contact by screaming at each other," she said. "There was a certain point where he wasn't responding anymore, so I went back for him to check on him, and he was passed out. I didn't even know what to do. I was literally going crazy in the water. I started

shaking him ... I was trying to pull him with me, drag him along with me, trying to swim with him and it was really hard. The water was getting all over my face — I couldn't see, I couldn't breathe because the water kept going in my mouth and I just couldn't do it anymore. I'm so little compared to him, so it was hard."

Vite then had to make another hard decision — one the two of them had discussed earlier after they'd been stranded.

"I just decided I was just going to go," she said. "We had decided before when he was awake we were just going to swim and one of us gets help and comes back for the other. That was our plan from the beginning, but it was hard leaving him because there was nothing I could do."

Unknown to Vite and Deanda, family members on shore had put in a call at 5:33 p.m. to the Yankton County Sheriff's Department saying the two hadn't returned to the Midway Beach area. Yankton County Search & Rescue, the South Dakota and Nebraska Game Fish & Parks, Yankton County Emergency Management and the sheriff's office responded with water craft and aircraft on the lake looking for them. Vite was found first at 7:45 p.m. and Deanda — still unconscious in the water — was found shortly afterward.

Vite and Deanda were then transported to Avera Sacred Heart Hospital with hypothermia brought on from nearly four hours in the water. At the time of admission, Vite had a core body temperature of 92 degrees while Deanda's body temperature had dropped all the way to 85 degrees.

Vite was released from the hospital early on Monday. As of Monday evening, Deanda was still in the hospital for antibiotic treatment to stave off possible bacterial infection from inhaling so much lake water.

But both will make a full recovery.

"We're just happy we're out," Vite said. "Our kids are waiting for us. We need to get back to them and we're just happy to be alive and be able to be with them."

Deanda also credited a simple piece of safety gear that made a big difference for the two of them.

"Good thing we were wearing our life jackets," he said. "Otherwise it would've been bad."

Follow @RobNielsenPandD on Twitter.

## Speaker

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"The life expectancy for my industry — which is higher now — but at the time, was 19 months. I lasted 10 years. I wouldn't change it."

7.) Humor: Aaker said that work should always be fun.

"Having fun means you are learning something," he said. "Sometimes when you're a leader, if you don't laugh, you'll cry."

8.) Loyalty: When it come to loyalty, start with being loyal to yourselves, Aaker said.

"No one can do it better than you do," he said.

After that, leaders can be loyal to their company, brand and community.

"Nobody can wave that Yankton flag better than you can," he said. "There are a lot of people out there that need to see that and hear that. Loyalty can make a big difference. I always think through leadership and loyalty, we can build customers for life. Even referrals for life."

At the end of Aaker's workshop, he handed out his "world famous" commitment card to each member of the audience. Each person wrote their name, phone number and a commitment that they would like to accomplish this week.

He then retrieved the cards and re-distributed them, making sure no one had their own card. The audience was then instructed to call the number on the card back in a week to make sure the person followed through with their commitment.

Aaker said he had planted the seed of leadership in each one of the audience members, and it is their job to make it grow and spread the seed onto others.

He said each and every one of the audience members were stars.

"To be a star or a leader, you need to follow your own light and follow your own path and not worry about the darkness," he said, "because that's when stars shine the brightest."

Follow @hartjordynne on Twitter.

## SD Observes Wildfire Awareness Month in May

RAPID CITY — Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed May as Wildfire Awareness Month in South Dakota. South Dakota has joined six other western states in a separate multi-state proclamation.

This month is intended to raise awareness for the dangers of wildfires and how citizens can protect themselves and their communities from these potentially devastating events. Firefighters alone can't protect property. Every citizen, especially those living in fire-prone areas, have an important role in preventing loss of life and property from wildfires.

This year's theme, "Do Your Part Before the Wildfires Start," encourages homeowners to take simple steps to reduce the impacts of wildland fire.

During Wildfire Awareness Month, state, federal and local agencies are hosting events to raise awareness about wildland fire safety, preparedness, mitigation and prevention.

To learn more about South Dakota Wildland Fire Awareness Month and to see planned events, visit [www.sdwildfireawareness.com/](http://www.sdwildfireawareness.com/).

## Meridian

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a full RV resort

"What we're looking at doing is a full hook-up RV resort," he said. "You'll have water, power and sewer."

Currently, 120 spaces have been plotted out for the 55-acre site's first phase to be rented by the year for RV enthusiasts, with the potential for more.

"Right now we have 120 (camping spaces) plotted out," Marlin said. "We have the potential for 240."

In addition to the full utilities offered, the park is also set to boast walking trails to the Missouri River and Meridian Bridge and a small lake that was dug during the construction of the Discovery Bridge that the park's developers have access to enhance.

A second phase of construction is planned to include a communal building for campers that could also serve as a storm shelter, and possible cabins around the 10-acre lake.

LaCroix said the plan is start off with 120 spots as a means of gaining feedback from campers on what they feel should be added.

"We kind of want to accommodate for what the people are wanting, so we're going to get 120 sites in here and kind of get their thoughts of what they would want in here and kind of weigh everybody's decisions so we're not just saying, 'Nope, this is what we're doing. This is what we're

putting in — cut-and-dry," he said. "Camping, walking trails and beautiful views is what we're shooting for right away and the facilities will take shape as demand for them exists."

### PRESERVING SURROUNDINGS & HISTORY

Despite the size of the project, the developers emphasize they'd like to preserve as much of the natural surroundings as they can.

"This will be the nicest (campsite) around," Harmelink said. "The nicest, the best quality and we want to keep it that way. Since it's so close to the bridge, we do not want people to be offended to have anything that's 'junky.' There's going to be rules and we have to abide by them."

LaCroix said the development team is also making every effort to preserve the view of the river from South Dakota.

"We don't want people to get the wrong impression that there's going to be campers right up against (the river)," Neal said. "We're going to leave this (tree) buffer, so to speak, between this and the river so that it separates it; when you look over from the South Dakota side, it still looks 100 percent natural in here. We're going to keep it as natural as we can keep it within this park to keep the historic Missouri River and keep it preserved."

The park's development team has also limited tree removal largely to dead trees.

Harmelink said he's also looking to add another ele-

ment to the park linking it to its namesake — a piece of the bridge itself.

"We purchased about 1100 feet of Meridian Bridge railing that was sold in 1977," he said. "When they redid the old Meridian Bridge, they took all the railing off the bridge. I found that railing and purchased that. Our intentions are — if we're permitted to — is to use that on the walking trails."

Harmelink added that for the moment, he's seeking out any permissions necessary to add to railing to the trails, but that he hopes to use them as an educational — as well as aesthetic — marker.

"As long as we're on the same page, our intentions are to put it on the trails as the trails wind through here to identify that it was the railing from the bridge and have a little plaque at the entrance of a trail to talk about the bridge, and the history, where that

railing came from, why it was taken down," he said. "The cost of the railing was expensive, but I think it just adds to the camping, plus the history of the bridge, plus the area."

Currently, the project is still progressing through utility permits and other necessary paperwork, so an opening date has yet to be set in stone.

However, LaCroix said there's a hope of giving the park a small dress rehearsal later in the summer and to allow people to pick spots for next year.

"We're shooting for — even if everything's not 100 percent complete — maybe having a pre-opening for Riverboat Days to let some of the people that are going to Riverboat Days stay here."

Currently, the intention is to finish phase one by 2016 and begin work on phase two in 2016.

### A BOOST FOR YANKTON

With campers having quick access to downtown Yankton via the Meridian Bridge, Marlin foresees this as a boost for the downtown area.

"We feel that it's going to really affect the downtown people," he said. "It's going to bring people in. I feel it'll open up shops, more eateries in the downtown area because of the accessibility. I think it's going to be a big plus for them."

Neal said in addition to the help it could provide downtown, it adds a new camping option to a popular tourist area.

"It's hard to get a camp spot at the state parks," he said. "Reservations are) three months out, a year out and they're always full. There's no other place for these people to go. I don't have a percentage, but we are turning away hundreds of people — if

not thousands — per year because they cannot camp anywhere, and that's what they're coming here for — to use their camper, the lake and the recreation that we have.

To turn that many people away, you're turning away money, and we are looking to have a spot for everybody to come and to be able to fill that market full of people that will in turn help Yankton grow. The more money Yankton can have in tourism, the better off the town is."

For more information on the resort, to keep up with construction and leave suggestions, visit <https://www.facebook.com/Meridianbridge-ervsort>


Follow @RobNielsenPandD on Twitter.

  
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**FREE**  
**Skin Cancer Screening**  
**Tuesday, May 5th, 1pm - 4pm**

Yankton Medical Clinic®, P.C. Dermatologist, James Young, D.O., will be offering a free skin cancer screening clinic on May 5th. No appointment is necessary. Patients will be seen on a first come, first serve basis. Limit of 50 patients. Upon arrival at the Clinic please check in at Section N receptionist, upstairs in the expansion.

\*For screening purposes. If further tests are needed, standard charges will be applied.

  
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