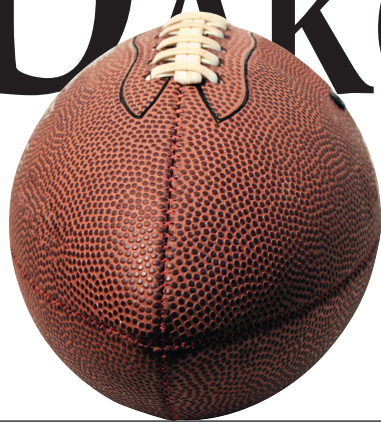




Sunny And Warmer, But Windy

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THURSDAY ■ November 12, 2015



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# No Issues Found

State Maintaining Grants With Platte Educational Cooperative

BY JAMES NORD  
Associated Press

PIERRE — A financial examination found no issues with a Platte-based educational cooperative's administration of federal grants beyond a college-readiness program already under scrutiny, South Dakota's education chief said Wednesday.

Secretary Melody Schopp said the Department of Education reviewed its grant relationships with Mid-Central Educational Cooperative

after a murder-suicide involving two cooperative employees prompted state officials to take a closer look.

The cooperative handled administration of the federal GEAR UP college-readiness grant for the state until the agreement was canceled in September.

Schopp said the department worked with Mid-Central for several years to address financial concerns before it decided not to renew the contract. The department didn't find criminal concerns and Schopp said the decision was based on financial issues and failure to follow

proper accounting procedures.

Hours after the department informed Mid-Central that it was losing its GEAR UP contract on Sept. 16, cooperative business manager Scott Westerhuis shot his wife, Nicole, and four children before setting the family home ablaze and shooting himself. Nicole Westerhuis was the co-op's assistant business manager.

A state-federal investigation into the financial circumstances involving GEAR UP is ongoing.

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RANDY DOCKENDORF/P&D

Veteran Jon Fleek organized and delivered donated food for Mike Durfee State Prison guards in Springfield who were veterans and working on Veterans Day.

## Springfield Man Makes Special Delivery To Fellow Vets

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
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SPRINGFIELD — Jon Fleek could only wait helplessly while a fellow soldier was caught in Taliban fire during a mission in Afghanistan.

Heavy support arrived for relief, and the medic returned with the wounded Afghan soldier.

"Our medic didn't say anything, and he just had this look on his face," Fleek said. "Then I looked at his front side, and he was covered in blood. All his medical pouches were hit with bullets, but he wasn't hit himself. All the blood on him came from the Afghan soldier."

Fleek's sense of relief turned to frustration when the medic didn't receive any formal commendation or other recognition for his heroism.

"From that moment, I promised that, if I could ever help it, I would see that a veteran got the recognition he deserved," Fleek said.

Fleek now works as a corrections officer at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield. Keeping his promise to himself, he provided free food Wednesday to fellow MDSP corrections officers who were veterans and working on Veterans Day.

"Our staff has veterans of wars ranging from Vietnam to Iraq and Afghanistan. We had about a dozen of them that were working on Veterans Day," he said.

"This day is really for them. They don't get a lot of recognition, and I wanted to give them what they should be getting."

### MAKING PLANS

Fleek wasn't scheduled to work Veterans Day as part of his alternating holiday schedule. He devoted his day off to his fellow veterans rather than use it for personal time or relaxation.

He came up with the idea of providing a free meal. He received permission from prison officials, but he needed to change

FLEEK | PAGE 3



SHAUNA MARLETTE/VERMILLION PLAIN TALK

John and Shari Behring are pictured in front of Old Main located on the campus of the University of South Dakota. The Behrings are both graduates of USD. John returned to spend two days doing workshops on campus in an effort to give back to his alma mater.

BY SHAUNA MARLETTE

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VERMILLION — The University of South Dakota located in Vermillion has no shortage of successful graduates now working across the world. The students in the Theatre and Media and Journalism departments had the opportunity to speak with one of those graduates this week when director and producer John Behring returned to Vermillion spending two days on campus sharing the knowledge he has gained since graduating and leaving campus in 1977.

Behring — who has produced and directed such shows as "Vampire Diaries," "Numb3rs," "Charmed," "Arrow," "The Flash," "Blue Bloods," "Grimm" and "Gotham" — said giving back is why he was in Vermillion this week.

"I have always had a passion for still photography and during my time here, I specialized and taught it while I was a teaching assistant," Behring said. "I realized that through photography, you can connect images with other images and tell a story with them."

He said that prospect was something he dug into when I was a student here.

"I developed an understanding of visual narrative storytelling," Behring said. "Part of what makes me successful is that I work hard. I am well prepared; I care deeply about what we do, I care deeply about the people that I work with and that combination of a strategy or personality motivates people to do their best. I think a big part of that comes from the fact that I am from here."

Tim Pyles, professor of Theatre at USD, said the two days the students spent with Behring offered a fantastic opportunity.

"For our students to really see what is possible outside of this place and to have the education that they are receiving here affirmed in terms of that it is preparing them well for what they need to do is an amazing opportunity," Pyles said. "The students are hungry to get every last bit out of their education that they possibly can. They are like sponges soaking up all of the information and advice that they possibly can for when they launch out to New York or Los Angeles or where ever it is."

Behring said that knowledge base he gained here allowed him to succeed. He and his wife, Shari, left Vermillion after she did not get into the doctoral psychology program. They moved to Milwaukee, where Behring began working for a television station before

VERMILLION | PAGE 12

## Niobrara Reacts Negatively To Proposed Relocation Of Highway 12

BY LINDA WUEBBEN  
P&D Correspondent

NIORARA, Neb. — A public hearing held Monday in Niobrara garnered no comments of support for the proposed relocation of N-12 east and west of the Knox County community.

The public hearing was hosted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and also present were National Park Service and Nebraska Dept. of Roads officials. Questions were answered before the hearing opened during which time only comments were accepted. The hallways of the new gymnasium at Niobrara High School were lined by topography maps and route proposals for the public to review, which had been designed for the

Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and also the Clean Water Act permit application for the project.

It didn't matter. When the 200 Niobrara and Santee residents filed into the sparkling new gym, they had only one thing on their mind. This permit to relocate Highway 12 to the base of the bluffs south of the current roadway should not happen.

Various proposals for the relocation of the proposed roadway will eat up anywhere from 111-1,064 acres of good farmland and hunting area at a cost of



\$164 million-\$217 million, depending on which proposal is finally approved.

In between accusations of thievery, came poignant stories of the residents of Niobrara. Like Cathy Scott whose family has owned their land for 100 years, many were saddened and enraged about being forced to give up their family homes, farms, ranches and hunting areas.

"My grandfather settled here 100 years ago and this is my grandchildren's legacy," Cathy Scott said. "We live here, farm here, hunt here and you are just going to take it away. It's not about money; it's about people."

A big concern for Keith Eckmann for

HIGHWAY | PAGE 2

## Local Asks Vets To Spread Their Message

BY ROB NIELSEN

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Dave Hosmer issued a call to veterans to serve once again. Wednesday night, Hosmer had an opportunity to address Yankton Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 791 & Auxiliary's annual Veteran's Day banquet.

Hosmer is a financial advisor who practiced law in Yankton for 20 years, a former deputy state's attorney, a teacher and a history enthusiast, among many other accomplishments — but one of his latest endeavors has included the collection of memories of local World War II veterans. Along with Yankton High School teacher Doug Haar, he's helped interview more than 100 area veterans about their experiences.

Hosmer said he wasn't entirely sure if he should be the one addressing so many distinguished veterans, but made note of

VETERANS | PAGE 3

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