

# OUR TOWNS

Gayville  
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Volin

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## Blank Brings Carlin-esque Comedy To Gayville

BY JUSTIN RUST  
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GAYVILLE — Bill Blank has an addiction he hasn't been able to shake for the last 10 years: comedy.

Ever since the first time Blank got on stage to perform his act, he was hooked. "I always wanted to do it, but it wasn't until I was 21 that I got up and stage, and I haven't stopped doing it since," Blank said. "I've been doing stand-up for 10 years, and I've been making a living doing it for the last five years."

Area residents will be able to take in Blank's no-nonsense humor when he performs at Wild Bill Cody's in Gayville at 9 p.m. Saturday.

It will be the first time in a year and a half that Wild Bill Cody's has hosted a comedian, according to the manager Al Harder.

However, the small-town atmosphere of Gayville doesn't discourage Blank, as he will perform in Kimball and Vale leading up to the event in Gayville.

"It's pretty cool. I like working with them, and I've had good experiences with the small towns so far," Blank said in a telephone interview with the *Press & Dakotan* this week. "You can have a good stand-up show anywhere if the set-up is right."

It may be Blank's first time in Gayville, but he is used to the area.



COURTESY PHOTO  
Comedian Bill Blank will perform at Wild Bill's in Gayville at 9 p.m. Saturday.

"I actually really love the area. I've been to Sioux Falls a bunch of times, and it's one of my favorite towns to perform in," he said.

In fact, Blank, who lives in Des Moines, Iowa, loves to perform in the Midwest, mainly because of the atmosphere of the crowds.

"I have a chip on my shoulder because if you are from the Midwest, you are some hayseed. My comedy isn't the Blue Collar

Comedy Tour, and some people are disappointed by that," he said. "I like performing in the Midwest because they don't think that. I enjoy being around people who are intelligent, and we have some of the best schools in the Midwest."

"Plus people in the Midwest have attention spans, as well," Blank added.

Blank has a wide range of comedians who have influenced his comedy such as Louis C.K., David Cross, Eddie Murphy and Dave Chappelle. But one person who Blank lists as an influence may be a bit of a surprise — boxer Muhammad Ali.

"I think if (Muhammad) Ali wanted to be a stand-up comedian, he would've been the best ever; he was ridiculous and hilarious," Blank said. "His charisma was unbelievable, and I admired that. The rant he had in his fight with Joe Frazier was amazing."

Blank tries to bring the same type of charisma to his performance, but Ali wasn't his main influence. When he was a teenager, Blank witnessed the person who made him want to be a comic.

"When I was 16, I saw one of George Carlin's HBO specials, and that's when I decided that's what comedy is," he said.

"He speaks his mind, and he is very logical. I am a very logical person when I write my jokes, too, but I really don't go as political as Carlin by any means."

It's not like Blank sits down and constantly thinks of jokes either. He walks around with a notepad and writes down the jokes whenever they strike him, instead of just brainstorming.

"The jokes creep in naturally. I am one of those guys that doesn't force themselves to write jokes," he said. "Stuff just pops into my head, and I write it down."

Blank's show will start at 9 p.m. on Saturday, and he will be putting on a show no matter how many people show up.

"I've had times that there have been only eight people, and you still do the show, because I am not leaving without my money," Blank said with a laugh. "Some of those shows end up being the best, because if you screw up, it was just eight people."

"But please come to the show," Blank said.

For more information and links to Blank's work, his website is [www.bill-blank.com](http://www.bill-blank.com).

## Applications For Miss S.D. International, Teen Honors Sought

Applications are now being accepted for the titles of Miss South Dakota International 2011 and Miss Teen South Dakota International 2011. The new 2011 title holders will have the opportunity to represent South Dakota at the national pageant in Chicago July 28-30, 2011.

The Miss South Dakota International and Miss Teen South Dakota International 2011 Pageants will be held Dec. 11-12 at the Orpheum Theatre in Sioux Falls.

Areas of competition include:

- Private interview — 40 percent;
- Fitness Wear — 20 percent;
- Evening Gown — 20 percent;
- Fun Fashion Wear — 20 percent;

Young women between the ages of 13-18 and 19-29 residing in South Dakota that are interested in competing should contact Sarah or Stephanie Seljeskog/South Dakota Directors at (605) 391-5419 or (605) 391-0862 or e-mail [sdintlpageants@gmail.com](mailto:sdintlpageants@gmail.com).

## DOGS

From Page 1

American Food Group, said the deal with the Vikings has been in the works for while now, and the hot dogs and brats have gone over very well.

"It's something we have been working on for about a year, and it came to fruition about three weeks ago," he said. "The transition has gone very well, and from what we are hearing, the product has been very well received."

Even though the Dome Dog will have no presence at Mall of America Field, that doesn't mean Sheboygan won't offer its own signature hot dog — the "QB Dog."

Sheboygan's "QB Dog" is an original product offered by the company specifically for Mall of America Field. It's an all beef hot dog made with 100 percent fresh beef with no MSG, filler or by-products.

"The consumers think it's better than the Dome Dog," Termansen said. "That has us elated."

The "QB Dog" won't be exclusive to Mall of America for long. Termansen said is hoping to bring the product to stores around the Midwest in 2011.

The "QB Dog" and other Sheboygan products have already been introduced to Mall of America food for two games in the preseason, and Termansen said everything is ready to go for the Vikings' home opener against the Miami Dolphins on Sunday.

"The exhibition games went well, and the products were very well accepted," Termansen said.

"We had to get up some signage and experiment with cooking the product a little bit, but it sounds like everything is ready to go for the home opener."

There are close to 200 employees at the American Foods Group plant in Yankton who make the various Sheboygan products for the Vikings. Sheboygan also signed a two-year contract to be the exclusive hot dog and brat provider at Mall of America Field.

But despite the big contract American Foods Group now has, there are no plans at this moment to add more jobs.

"Down the road as the brand develops, we are hoping to develop more jobs," Termansen said.

One reason adding jobs may seem like a risky venture is because the NFL has a lockout looming next year as the Players Association and the league have yet to come to an agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement for the 2011 season and beyond.

However, Termansen is confident that the "QB Dog" will be consumed by many Vikings' fans at Mall of America Field next year.

"We have confidence that things will be settled, and things will work out for the best," he said.

## CUTS

From Page 1

away with while still providing necessary services, he said.

"I'm just speculating here, but I don't think you'll see every department be reduced. I think you'll see some that may and some that may not," Dilges said. "I think it depends on putting the puzzle together that's the appropriate mix of services and reductions to services and ensuring that we're doing what we need to do to make sure that South Dakotans get what they need out of state government."

Sen. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton, chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, said she likes the governor's plan because it will provide a more thorough analysis of possible cuts before the legislative session starts in January. If cuts are first proposed during a legislative session, lawmakers do not have enough time to find out the impacts of those cuts, she said.

"This just gives us a head start," Hunhoff said.

Hunhoff said if the state's financial situation improves by early next year, lawmakers will find it easier to add money instead of making last-minute cuts to the budget.

"We know there's going to be a shortfall. I think the clamor we're hearing across the country as well

as within our state is we've got to make sure the spending we do is prioritized on the projects," Hunhoff said.

The Legislature this year balanced the general fund portion of the budget by using \$76.5 million in federal stimulus funds, cutting some spending and making some one-time transfers of money. The budget, which spends more than \$1.1 billion, also did not increase state aid to school districts, and state employees for the second straight year got no pay raise.

Dilges said South Dakota law, which ties state education aid to the inflation rate, would boost state aid to schools by 1.3 percent next year, but the 2011 Legislature will decide whether to give schools more or less than that.

Tom Dravland, the governor's chief of staff, said it's impossible to say whether state employees will have to go a third year without a pay raise. "I don't know where that will shake out," he said.

Dilges and Dravland said the state will have \$47 million in federal stimulus money to help balance its budget next year, but that's less than the \$76.5 million in stimulus money in this year's budget. The state's share of spending on the state-federal Medicaid program also will rise, and the state needs to spend \$13 million or more to replenish disaster funds that have been used to deal with blizzards, floods and tornadoes.

*I paid for this Letter to the Editor because*

## I Disagree!

To the editor:

The P&D article on school funding included quotes by Nick Moser, our representative from Yankton County. I am Jay Williams. I'm running for one of the two District 18 House seats, and Nick's quotes perfectly illustrate why I want to serve you in the state legislature.

Here's the issue: the federal government just granted South Dakota \$26.3 million for education. The powers-that-be in Pierre and Nick (in your article) intend to basically put the money in the state's mysterious "general fund" where it will be spent on everything but education — fancy airplanes, Washington lobbyists, pay raises or bonuses for a select few employees, the Valhalla governor's retreat and who knows what else.

Nick politely tried to explain the bureaucracy's money swap: "I think it is important to point out that both sides, to me, have legitimate reasoning for how they want that money spent."

That's the trouble with the current one-party legislature. They talk a good fight, but when there is actually an opportunity to help our local schools in these troubled times they don't do it. Obviously, the Pierre bureaucracy wants to squeeze the school boards until they must "opt out" of the formula and raise property taxes.

The state's bureaucracy grew by twice the rate of inflation in many recent years. Meanwhile, legislators and the governor limited K-12 schools to 3% or the rate of inflation, whichever is less. If the state had been as frugal as our schools, it wouldn't have a \$107 million shortfall.

Nick Moser and his Republican colleagues had an opportunity March 9 to give schools the measly 1.2% inflationary adjustment due them in the state funding formula. But Nick and nearly all of his caucus voted NOT to grant the 1.2%. It would have cost about \$4 million.

But just 17 minutes earlier, Nick and all his caucus members voted against Rep. Bernie Hunhoff's amendment to Senate Bill 195 that would have denied a foreign oil company a \$38 million tax break on its next pipeline project across South Dakota. (Later in the session, they acquiesced and cut the tax break in half).


So Nick Moser and his caucus had \$38 million for Trans-Canada on March 9, but they couldn't find \$4 million for education. Then the feds, recognizing that states are under-funding schools, sends \$26.3 million to help out and the bureaucrats in Pierre — with our legislator's support — decides to just keep it in Pierre.

This is a clear and defining issue. The federal education dollars are meant to help our children while stimulating our economy. Depositing them in the general fund through legislative trickery is wrong. Paying lip service to education and then removing funds earmarked for education is unacceptable. The choice is clear! I view the idea of using these earmarked funds for anything but education as clearly unacceptable. Nick Moser does not.


*Paid for by Jay Williams, Candidate for SD House*



By Jay Williams




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