

A Tale of Two Cities: Why the Commute?

You don't have to live in a community to feel part of it as women like Stacy Starzl are finding.

Starzl lives in Yankton, SD but commutes for her full-time job as a program assistant in the University of South Dakota's student services.

"After working ten years in Yankton as a director, the university in Vermillion had all the career opportunities that I was looking for to further my career," Starzl said. "The University of South Dakota is just a great place to have a career and continue working on that career."

Starzl said she knows a lot of other women in Yankton and surrounding areas who commute to work as well.

"A lot of people commute from Sioux Falls to the University as well," she said.

It would seem that the University is a good draw for the workforce showing that good career opportunities are worth the drive.

"The university is just a great atmosphere, a great climate to work in," Starzl said. "You get to work with students as well as families and great staff and the organization itself is an amazing organization to work for."

Far from feeling like an outsider, Starzl enjoys having a foot in two communities.

"I think it's great," she said. "I get the best of both communities. Both Yankton and Vermillion are great communities to live in and I get to see and be a part of both those communities. Just knowing individuals and professionals in both communities is a great networking tool. Everywhere you go everyone is just so pleasant. It's a very South Dakota small-town feel. It's really an awesome feeling to just go into a restaurant or a store and be able to say hi and recognize those faces."

There are not many downsides to the commute according to Starzl.

"The only challenge I've come across is bad weather but you also have that when you live across town so I really haven't had any challenges with commuting," she said. "I liked working in the same town that I lived in, however now the opportunities are much larger at the University so the 25-minute commute is a small drawback compared to the opportunities that I'm being given here at the University."

Juggling family life can be a challenge when the commute is longer.

"Maybe making it to my daughter's sporting events is a challenge, not being just five minutes away where I could run over there and do that," Starzl said. "But she's older and understands and we're able to work that out whereas if I had little ones it wouldn't be as easy."

Starzl does have two daughters attending the University of South Dakota and the commute actually helps her connect with them more.

Though her work and many connections and friends are in Vermillion, Starzl has good reason for continuing to reside in Yankton.

"My daughter is a big part of that reason," she said. "She has established friends and a home in our neighborhood in Yankton. She's 16 and it's hard to uproot a teenager and move them in the middle of their high school years."

Starzl herself has many ties both to people and places in Yankton that she wishes to keep unbroken.

"I have established really great friendships and family in Yankton that I really won't ever move from," she said. "The recreational area that I use almost every weekend in Yankton is huge to me. It's why I moved back from Rapid City after I moved away after high school. Some people take our lake and our recreation area for granted and it's definitely a plus for me."

❖ By Sarah Wetzel



Stacy Starzl is one of the many women commuting from one town to another pursuing career opportunities

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