



February 2015

What's Up for February? Take a Look Inside...

A2:

- Reality Check
- Prudential Spirit of Community Award

A3:

- Excellence in Education
- Prom Dress Drive

A4:

- JAG Leadership Conference
- CampMed

A5:

- Wellness Wednesday

A6 & A7:

- Feature Photo Pages

A8 & A9:

- A message from SD DOE

Students Tour Barnett Arena in Wheelchairs

By Amanda Rombough
Information Services
Officer

The civic center expansion is at the forefront of not only adults' minds in Rapid City, but a group of students as well. After a tour of Barnett Arena from the seats of wheelchairs, some students realized the difficulties faced by handicapped people visiting the facility and are working to ensure that the necessary changes are made and their voices are being heard.

Two years ago, Rapid City Stevens High School senior Noah Storm joined the Youth Advisory Group with the Civic Center Future Task Force and began learning of the challenges the facility faces. Storm said it's important for students to get involved in what's going on because no matter what the vote ends up being, the civic center will be theirs to deal with.



"We are the future users of this facility," Storm said. "I love Rapid City, and I know I am not the only person of my generation who feels this way about our hometown. Being able to have a say in the future of this community is exciting

and I think the idea that your voice will be heard is what encourages students to get involved."

Students from Stevens, Central, Rapid City High School, and the homeschool network all took a tour of the Barnett Arena from wheelchairs to see first-hand what it was like for a handicapped person to attend events at the civic center. From trying to fit into the handicapped stall in the bathroom, to trying to order concessions at the concession stand, to trying to take the one elevator up to the limited seating, to sitting in the wheelchair seats and attempting to see around people in front of them, the students quickly realized it was more difficult than they thought.

"It surprised me how hard it is," student Rachel Evangelisto said. "I feel bad for disabled people who want to come to these things but can't because this won't allow them to. I wouldn't feel as if I was being treated equally to others."

Civic Center Assistant Executive Director Jayne Kramer said while the difficulties may not affect students now, that does not mean it won't affect them in the future and so it is important to know the information.

"What we're trying to teach these students is that it may not be about them today, but eventually they may have a parent or grandparent who it'll affect," she said. "This is where they'll have to sit."



Jump to A4: Civic Center

Reality Check Teaches Students How to Balance Budget in Game of Life



By Amanda Rombough
Information Services Officer

The game of life is a tricky one, and one that eighth graders at North Middle School got a taste of during Reality Check. Students were tasked with balancing their budget, and going through life as a normal adult would, ensuring that they have all of their needs before wants and making sure their budget balanced at the end of the day.

“I don’t think I’ll be living on my own for a while,” student Isis Suwan Sang said. “You can’t spend money like you do when it’s Christmas. It’s really eye opening to see how much it costs.”

Students started the day off with a salary card with a different career attached to it and then are given a life event card. A life event could be good or bad and could be anything from having a baby, to having an alcohol addiction, to getting into a car accident. Students must then set out trying to balance their budget with the salary

they are given and make sure they have all the things they need, like food and housing, before going for the fun stuff, like Netflix and pets.

Partnership Rapid City, along with Synchrony Bank, put the event on. Liberty Motors brings in cars for students to shop for and Safeway brings actual groceries in to show students what you get for your money. Members of Synchrony Bank work with the students to help them balance their budget and stay on track.



“The biggest thing is for kids to have fun because if they’re having fun they will remember some of this,” PRC Special Events Coordinator Cindy Christianson said. “They learn how to budget, it’s a fiscal responsibility piece. They learn how to get their needs first and then their wants. They start to realize their parents work really hard.”

Students said they didn’t realize how hard it was to balance a budget and stay on track.

“It’s amazing,” student Michael Milk said. “We never had an opportunity where we were actually grownups. I hope to learn how to balance my money and see what’s important.”

Suwan Sang said she found it very interesting how expensive it was to have an addiction. She drew a life event card that said she has an alcohol addiction.

“It’s so expensive to have an addiction. I didn’t think it was that much,” she said. “Just to live with somebody is expensive.”

West Middle School Student Named a Top Youth Volunteer

Prudential Press Release

Jessica Benson, 14, of Rapid City was named one of two South Dakota’s top two youth volunteers of 2015 by The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, a nationwide program honoring young people for outstanding acts of volunteerism. Abigail Boner, 17, of Castlewood, as also chosen. Jessica was nominated by West Middle School. The Prudential Spirit of Community Awards, now in its 20th year, is conducted by Prudential Financial in partnership with the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

“If anyone would emulate what a good, kind hearted soul is, it would be Jessica,” seventh grade teacher Heidi Peterson

said. “In class she’s intelligent, caring, and empathetic, she’s an all-American girl, and the kind you can look at and think I can trust her with anything. She’s just a great kid and thinks about others before she thinks about herself which is not a common thing. She looks at the bigger picture of things and it’s not just about Jessica.”

Benson, an eighth-grader at West Middle School, makes, collects, and distributes holiday cards for active military members and veterans through the Red Cross’s “Holiday Mail for Heroes” program. She has several relatives who are veterans, so she wanted to do something to thank servicemen and women for their sacrifice, and also get fellow students involved in

community service.

“I feel military members are people we need to respect and honor,” she said. “I feel that it is very important to teach our youth that there is always something they can do to get involved.”

Benson began by purchasing supplies such as construction paper, markers, stamps, stickers and blank cards so that she could set up card-making tables at her school, church and community events. She then put together a PowerPoint presentation explaining the different branches of the military, and began speaking in classrooms to recruit participants. To en-

Jump to A3: Prudential

Excellence in Education Teaches Students to Dream Big, Set Goals

By Amanda Rombough
Information Services Officer

What started as an inspirational day for adults has grown to include students as well. Day of Excellence, Excellence in Education made its way to Rapid City Schools last month bringing in inspirational speaker David Edward Garcia to teach students the importance of setting goals and dreaming big.

Day of Excellence started six years ago and is held in April to inspire adults to leave a lasting impression. Four years ago, Excellence in Education was started to inspire students likewise. Speakers are brought in that speak to only students so that they can relate to and connect to the students through humor.

(He's) bringing a message of goal setting and dreaming big and being focused in



life and if you're focused you can block out some of the naysayers," Ericka Heiser, Vice President of Day of Excellence, said.

Excellence in Education visited area high schools to encourage them with speaker David Edward Garcia.

According to Heiser, teachers usually follow up with the students to drive the message home and make it even more relatable to the students. This is the first year Excellence in Education has been able to go to Stevens. They also visited Central and Rapid City High School.

"We're hoping the message the audience receives is one that will promote positive change in someone's life," Heiser said. "We're making excellence the new average and want to encourage students to become a better version of themselves. Be the best of what



you're capable of, that's success."

Garcia has been a Student Motivational Speaker for 13 years after the job found him in Texas. He tries to combine comedy with motivation to reach students where they're at. He said the job not only reaches students, but it inspires him as well.

"Their energy, their hype," he said. "I get the good part, I get the best of them. It's just beautiful."

Rapid City High School Hosts 2nd Annual Prom Dress Drive

By Amanda Rombough
Information Services Officer

Prom is a landmark event in every high school students' life, especially girls, but one that not everyone gets to enjoy. Students at Rapid City High School want to make sure that every girl that wants to go to prom gets to, even if they can't afford a dress. For the second year, RCHS is hosting their All Cinderellas Go To Prom Dress Drive and are asking for donations to the drive.

The Prom Dress Drive was started last

year and over 260 dresses were collected. Once dresses are collected, students throughout the district are welcome to come and shop for free for a dress. Girls from other area high schools are also welcome to come and shop for a dress.

"From my experience, prom is really expensive and a lot of it comes from the dress," RCHS senior Syxx Puetz said. "I have a hard time spending so much money on myself."

Students said they wanted to continue the prom dress drive to help ensure that the

cost of a dress did not stand in someone's way of being able to go to prom and that students are able to spend that money elsewhere if they need to.

"It's a really fun way to end the year," senior Rachel Francis said. "So when people can't afford it, it's really sad. But it's about realistic costs. I pay my own car bill, insurance, and am paying for college."

Teacher and Beyond the Books Coordinator Jessica Dial said many dresses come in with the tags still attached to them, so they are good dresses. Last year's drive attracted a lot of last minute shoppers and people who were last minute invites to the prom and couldn't get a dress in stores.

Dresses can be dropped off at Rapid City High School from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday – Friday through March 11th. All Cinderellas Go To Prom Shopping Days at the Rapid City High School Vocational Building are Wednesday, March 11 from 1:30 – 4:30 p.m. Any student in the district is welcome to shop with a student ID.

Cont. from A2: Prudential

courage others to make their own cards, Jessica placed collection boxes around town and partnered with a summer reading program. Within a few months, she had collected more than 400 cards for the Red Cross program.

"I will never forget one man who stopped at a booth to make a card," she said. "He told me how he received a card at Christmas when he was stationed in Afghanistan, and how great it felt to have something from home and to know he

was appreciated. This moment was the reason I did this."

As state honorees, Benson and Boner will each receive \$1,000, an engraved silver medallion, and an all-expense paid trip in early May to Washington, D.C., where they will join the top two honorees from each of the other states and the District of Columbia for four days of national recognition events. During the trip, 10 students will be named America's top youth volunteers of 2015.

JAG Leadership Conference Pushes Students Out of Comfort Zone

By **Amanda Rombough**
Information Services Officer

Teaching students career and leadership skills is a skill that JAG focuses on in its regular classes and last month got to take it out of the classroom and utilize their skills alongside other students from the state during the JAG Leadership Conference, held in Rapid City this year.

Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), is a career and leadership development class held at Rapid City High School where everything from applying certain skills to life, interview and job skills, to resume building is taught. The class is very hands on and includes a lot of hands on student driven projects, JAG Specialist Julie Callahan said.

"Everything we do is to promote confidence and leadership," she said.

The JAG Leadership Conference was

held on January 28 and brought in students from Todd County, Bennett County, Little Wound, Lake Andes, and Wagner to collaborate and learn leadership skills. The students were excited to work with students from other schools, Callahan said. Seventeen students from Rapid City High School attended the conference.

"They get in their comfort zone at their own school so being able to do something outside of that school adds a whole new level of confidence," Callahan said. "It's what we practiced and now they're showing results. They can take that to a job interview."

The breakout sessions of the conference were led by students, which Callahan said was beneficial because they get to learn what a meeting is like when it's led by someone other than their teacher and the students learn public speaking skills,



which gets them out of their comfort zones. But the lessons went far beyond getting out of their comfort zones.

"We talk a lot about respect and respecting others' decision," Callahan said. "We talk about our values and teamwork so it's nice to see them interact with other grade levels. I hope they have fun, build confidence and say it was a successful day."

Cont. from A1: Civic Center

Storm said even though many students may not be the proper age to vote, they can still be an influence and it's still important to be involved and know the facts.

"By being informed, you are able to debunk misconceptions that you hear people talking about, and then the facts spread throughout the community and

hopefully reach those who are old enough to vote," Storm said. "So even if you are too young, you can get educated on the issue so you can express your creative ideas to parents, teachers, and older friends."

The Civic Center Expansion Project goes to a public vote on March 10th.



Students Experience Medical Field with CampMed

By **Amanda Rombough**
Information Services Officer

From EMT to veterinary to dietician, there is a wide range of jobs available for someone in the medical field and seventh grade students got to experience a small taste of that with CampMed held at West Middle School. Students got to experience different presentations about various medical field careers and participated in hands-on activities, an event put on by Partnership Rapid City.

Cindy Christianson with PRC said it's a chance for the students to really learn what is offered, what the job would entail, what kind of education they need to work in that field, what kinds of classes they will need to take, and then participate in a hands on activity that is specific to that field.

"It's pretty amazing," Christianson said. "It's an opportunity to be exposed to different things that they might not be exposed to. There might be things out there that they might not know about so we're making sure they get to learn about all that is out there."

The event was sponsored by South Dakota Department of Health, Western Dakota Technical Institute, and Regional Health and featured 15 different hands-on presentation from various partners. West, Southwest, and North Middle Schools' seventh graders were all in attendance. Students were able to see the Life Flight helicopter up close, utilized patient simu-

Cont. on A5: CampMed

Want to see yourself,
class or activity in

The Reporter?

Email your photo or idea to:

RapidCityDistrictCommunications@
k12.sd.us

Knollwood Elementary Gets Physical with Wellness Wednesday

By **Amanda Rombough**
Information Services Officer

From the books to the hallways, teachers at Knollwood Elementary are working hard to make sure their students remain physically active during Wellness Wednesdays. On the Wednesdays that there is not an early release, students and staff alike take part in Wellness Wednesday and participate in various physical activities to get them moving and staying active.

Wellness Wednesday was thought up last year, but this is the first year the school has implemented it. Activities include relays in the halls, yoga, scooter relays, wizard tag, capture the flag, speed stack relays with cups, jump rope, team building activities, Zumba, and adventure

to fitness (a running, jumping, walking, adventure where the students learn about the place they are going, like Yellowstone or Egypt). The activities vary each time for each grade level.

“My students are excited when they know it’s Wellness Wednesday without even knowing what the activity is for the day,” teacher Ashley Berg, wellness committee member, said. “The teachers are doing the activities with them and that makes it fun for all of us and we all look forward to where we can just have fun and laugh while being active together.”

According to PE teacher Brady Wolfe, the students get 30 minutes of PE twice a week, so Wellness Wednesday gives them another chance to be active and get their heartbeats up and their bodies moving. Berg said the wellness committee is hoping that if they can teach the students fitness and wellness at school, then they would take it home with them and get more excited about it with their families as well.

“Wellness Wednesday is im-



portant to our students because they enjoy the time where they get to put down the books and pencils and do something physical with their classmates and teachers. It’s also becoming more important to them to get the extra physical activity,” Berg said, adding that she has had students stop her in the hall to talk about walks they took with their parents, bike rides they took, and swims they had, as well. “I think exposing them to physical activities that can be fun has made them excited not only to do it at school, but at home too.”



Cont. from A4: CampMed

lation mannequins and surgical tools, as well as found out what it was like to have a cast and visit with a vet and his pet dog.

This is the third year the event has been held.



Students got to experience different medical fields at CampMed. Hands-on activities included learning CPR for different person sizes and feeling brains and other organs.

Teachers: Have a student who wrote something awesome, took a great photo, or made an amazing art project? Share it with the rest of us by emailing it to RapidCityDistrictCommunications@k12.sd.us and it could be featured in an upcoming issue of *The Reporter!*

Check out the great things our staff & students are doing!



South Canyon Elementary School Valentine's Day Parties



(Left) Students at Rapid City High School delivered homemade Valentines to residents at the senior center for My Golden Valentine.

(Right) Pinedale teacher Stacie Tschetter recently won \$500 to go towards math supplies from the News Center 1 and First Interstate Bank 1+1. Congrats!



Get online with us at all of our web and social media sites! Watch for school postings on Facebook, Twitter & Nixle; browse photos on Instagram; watch quick videos on Vine and longer videos on Vimeo!

Check out the great things our staff & students are doing!



Crisis One Acts - Central High School



The Central High School Jazz Band visited the students at General Beadle.



The January Character Counts Stars at Valley View Elementary.



(above) Students at South Canyon are raising money for their school during the We Love Our School fundraiser by filling their "hearts" and turning them in by Feb. 23. A celebratory family dance will be held after the fundraiser is complete.



Students at General Beadle Elementary got to participate in Minute to Win It games at the stock show.

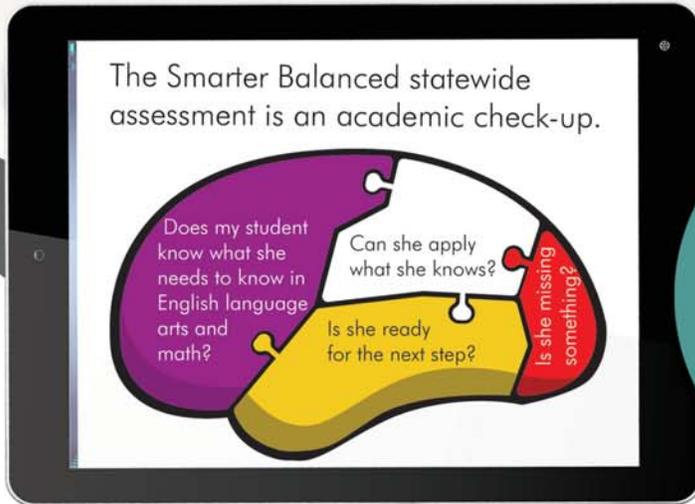


(left) Students at Knollwood got story time from some Rapid City Rush players.



(right) Students at Black Hawk Elementary got to participate in School of Mines Engineering Week.

Smarter Balanced: An academic check-up



Test results in the following categories will tell you if your child is on the path to college and career readiness. If your child struggles in math or reading, the sooner you know, the faster she can get help. If your child excels, scores can help teachers challenge her to do even better.



Strong skills in math and reading lead to:



College



Technical Institute



Career



Military



Frequently Asked Questions: Smarter Balanced assessment

What is the Smarter Balanced assessment?

Smarter Balanced is South Dakota's new state assessment, to be administered for the first time in spring 2015. It will be administered to students in grades 3-8 and 11 and measures student mastery of new, more rigorous standards in English language arts and math. The test was developed by the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium, a group of 22 states, including South Dakota. More than 100 South Dakota educators served on Smarter Balanced work groups as the test was being developed.

Why is there a new assessment this year?

New standards and assessments are part of South Dakota's plan to help all students graduate high school ready for college, career, and life. The Smarter Balanced assessment is an important part of implementing these new standards in math and English language arts, because it will help educators and parents see if students are on track to meet the standards.

Didn't students already take the Smarter Balanced assessment last year?

The Smarter Balanced Field Test was administered in spring 2014. It was a practice run to give districts, schools and teachers a chance to practice test administration procedures, and students the opportunity to experience what will be expected of them on the new assessment. Since the field test, a number of South Dakota educators have served on panels to help set achievement levels for the new test.

What is achievement level setting?

Achievement level setting is the process for establishing one or more cut scores on an assessment, making it possible to create categories of performance.

Student scores on the Smarter Balanced assessment will fall within one of four achievement levels (1, 2, 3, 4). Smarter Balanced scores in higher ranges (Levels 3 and 4) demonstrate not only more thorough understanding of the standards, but the ability to apply knowledge. Scoring at these levels indicates students are on track to be college and career ready.

Why is this assessment important?

Like an annual medical check-up, this test will provide an annual academic check-up, letting educators and parents read the "vital signs" indicating whether students are on track for academic success.

I've heard student scores are likely to go down. Is that true?

Because the new assessment measures student mastery of new, more rigorous standards, student performance on Smarter Balanced should not be compared to performance on Dakota STEP, the former state assessment. Any time a new test is introduced, there will be a period of adjustment as students become familiar with the new concepts being assessed.

If you must compare results of the two tests, expect to see a drop in the number of students demonstrating proficiency (Levels 3 and 4). This should not be cause for alarm; it means we are challenging students and preparing them for the rigors of postsecondary education and careers in today's world.

Is this assessment an improvement over the previous state assessment?

Yes. This new assessment requires students to apply knowledge. There is more to it than multiple choice and filling in bubbles. Writing is required at every grade level. New question types and performance tasks ask students to demonstrate an array of research, writing and problem solving skills. This means assessment results will provide a more meaningful picture of student performance.

The test is administered online rather than in a paper and pencil format. Today's students are very comfortable in this online environment. In addition, accessibility tools are available for all students, and accommodations—such as Braille—are available for those who need them.

Where can I take a practice test?

Practice tests are available at <http://commoncore.sd.gov/assessment.aspx>.