



Vermillion Public Schools FOUNDATION

Tanager Update Fall 2022

Supporting Opportunities to Learn

Construction of Vermillion's New Elementary School has Started

by Dr. Damon Alvey, Superintendent

A new elementary school for Vermillion School District! After years of discussion and study, the school district has committed to the building of a new elementary school. A public committee helped determine that putting dollars into two 67-year-old buildings would not set the district up for the best future, rather; a new building was recommended. This recommendation was taken to the voters in the form of a \$26M bond referendum on October 5, 2021, passing with nearly 75% approval. Construction began in July 2022 with an expected completion date of July 2024. We look forward to the educational opportunities this project will provide our students and staff.



Architectural rendering of the new elementary school's entrance.

Experiential Learning a Top Priority for Students, Teachers and the School Foundation

Approximately one-half of our current demographic of kindergarten students have had very few outdoor learning experiences according to Austin Elementary kindergarten teachers. With the help of the Vermillion Public Schools Foundation (VPSF) Student Experiential Learning Fund, all kindergarteners were able to spend a day of

outdoor learning at the pumpkin patch last fall. Students and staff travelled to Mazing Acres Pumpkin Patch where the staff customized a program to include various educational and gross motor stations including a zipline! The students rode a flatbed through the patch, participated in a demonstration about the planting and harvesting

process and even picked their own pumpkin. A great outdoor learning adventure was had by all!

The Student Experiential Learning Fund is new for VPSF. The fund works to provide students with meaningful opportunities to learn outside the classroom. Other educational experiences sponsored by the fund this year include chess boards for the new Vermillion Middle School Chess Club and the High School Art Club's trip to the Joslyn Art Museum in Omaha. The fund also sponsored a trip for seventh grade students to the movie theater to view the film "Blue Miracle." Most recently, the fund sponsored two high school students and their advisor to attend the National Speech and Debate Tournament in Louisville, KY.



Mary Giffin is the First Vermillion Public School Foundation Employee

In October of 2021, the Vermillion Public School Foundation (VPSF) hired its first employee, part-time Executive Director, Mary Giffin.

Mary comes to the foundation with a wealth of business and non-profit experience. Mary is a graduate of Morningside University with a bachelor's degree in Accounting, minor in Business Administration, and is a Certified Public Accountant certificate holder. Mary was employed most recently as a substitute teacher for the Vermillion School District (VSD) at all four school buildings. Her career has also included positions as Business Manager, Accounting Manager, Grant Writer/Grant Administrator, as well as volunteer treasurer for many non-profit organizations.

The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations

of the Foundation along with compliance with federal and state regulations for charitable organizations. Mary explores grant and fundraising opportunities to continue and create innovative programs that the VPSF provides to enrich the learning experiences and increase opportunities for teacher development and collaboration. In addition to enhancing the relationships the VPSF has with VSD alumni & the Vermillion community, she fosters partnerships the VPSF has with the Booster Clubs, PTO and other local organizations. Mary increases and establishes new endowments that will allow for the perpetual support of the VSD priorities that cannot be funded by tax dollars.

The funding of this position is through the Vermillion School District for the first and second year. A grant from the Clayton & Odessa Lang Ofstad Foundation, Bank of America, N.A., Co-Trustee funded the supplies for the Executive Director's office in the Administration area of the Vermillion High School.



Mary Giffin holds the Community Service Award given to the VPSF in August of 2022 by the Associated School Boards of South Dakota in recognition of the VPSF's efforts "prioritizing initiatives that enrich and augment experiences of local public school students."

Vermillion High School's Rhythm in Red Show Choir have a Once-in-a-Lifetime Trip

Vermillion's Rhythm in Red show choir traveled to Orlando March 30-April 3 for a once-in-a-lifetime experience that included a performance and attending workshops, in addition to enjoying Disney theme parks. Fifty-five students, including singer-dancers, the show band, and the crew, and ten adult chaperones made the trip.

Choir Director Trisha Fisher said that this is a fantastic opportunity for students to get some experience with being professional entertainers on a public stage. The group performed

their 15-minute competition show on the Waterfall Stage in Disney Springs, attracting a large audience of tourists who stopped to listen. They also attended a workshop with Disney staff, who taught them how music works in movies and how to create sound effects. At the end of the workshop, the group had their work set to scenes from the Disney movie Tangled.

According to Fisher, students gain several important lessons from this experience. She said that Disney

treats the students as professional performers, so students learn what that entails. Students also learn about how to be good travelers, including how to plan their time and budget their money.

Fisher said that the Rhythm in Red typically takes a big trip like this every four years. Each student has a fundraising goal, and fundraising events include the annual mattress sale and greenery sale as well as working concessions and cleanup at the Dakota Dome.



Vermillion's Rhythm in Red show choir performs at Disney during a spring trip to Orlando

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Vermillion Public Schools
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Vermillion High School Graduates and Dual-Credit Students Receive Scholarships

In addition to the nine 2022 Vermillion High School graduates to receive Senior Scholarships, the VPSF has started a new program for VHS Dual Credit Students. Taking Dual-Credit courses allows qualified high school students to experience a variety of college courses at one-third the cost while gaining college credits. For



Nine of the VHS Senior Scholarship recipients proudly wearing clothing representing the next school in their academic pursuits.

some students, even this reduced rate can be cost prohibitive. With the new needs-based Dual-Credit Scholarship, the VPSF started supporting dual credit courses being taught in our high school this past spring. Starting in the fall, we are expanding that program to include online courses taught in the state. An unrestricted donation from the Clayton & Odessa Lang Ofstad Foundation, Bank of America, N.A., Co-Trustee provided the initial funding, allowing our students opportunities to further their education and reduce the cost of college education.