



Clark School Board members are pictured from left to right: Travis Peterson, Troy Mudgett, Malory McIntire, Lacey Ortberg and Todd Fjelland. Submitted photo

Clark School Board recognized by Associated School Boards of S.D.

The Associated School Boards of South Dakota (ASBSD) awarded the Clark School Board a Gold Level recognition for the 2024 School Year.

The ASBSD Board Recognition Program is designed to recognize school boards for their dedicated and ethical service to the students of South Dakota. This program recognizes board members' participation in outside activities, board development and training, and leadership demonstrated at various areas and levels.

By participating in ASBSD activities, training opportunities and demonstrating leadership at the local, state and national level, board members accumulate points to achieve awards. For each level of award, Gold, Silver and Bronze, point totals are counted in three separate categories. In order to qualify for any board award, some points must be earned in all three categories. One of those categories was completed by the Clark School Board last week with GAVEL

Training.

"This is a great opportunity to recognize our school board for their dedication to our children and our community," Clark School Superintendent Travis Ahrens said.

The men and women serving the Clark School District and their years of service are Todd Fjelland (12 years), Malory McIntire (five-years), Lacey Ortberg (two years), Travis Peterson (one year) and Troy Mudgett (one year).

This group is responsible for setting the vision of and goals for the Clark School District and strives to provide a quality education for our students. The school board also hires quality educators, adopts policies and evaluates progress while always keeping the best interests of our students in mind.

"As elected leaders, school board members serve as the link between the school and community members," Superintendent Ahrens said. "They work tirelessly for our students, staff and community."

Claire Mohr named Region 1 Principal of the Year for 2024

By Carolynn Olson

Willow Lake High School Principal Claire Mohr has been named the Region 1 Principal of the Year by the South Dakota Association of Secondary Principals. Region 1 is the northeast region.

Mohr received her undergraduate degree in Early Childhood Education from South Dakota State University in Brookings, graduating in 2011. She graduated from the University of Sioux Falls in May of 2023 with a degree in Educational Leadership.

Claire's career in education started in Pierre. Her first year was at the Pierre Indian Learning Center as a Title Reading teacher followed by a year of teaching sixth grade math at Georgia Morse Middle School. Mohr then primarily taught middle school math in Clark for nine years before becoming the principal in Willow Lake.

"This is my second year in administration, so I'm learning something new everyday. I love the energy for learning in the elementary, the excitement of new classes and



opportunities in the middle school and the conversations about future endeavors with our high school students," explained Mohr. "We have great students, a hardworking staff and a supportive community at Willow Lake," she added.

Mohr and her husband, Shawn live outside of Willow Lake. They have four children, including Thea, a fourth grader; Ada, a second grader; Alma, who is in kindergarten; and Otto, who goes to daycare.

Imberi, Plunkett place first in Day County Coyote Hunt

By Tara Knutson

To be successful, hunters rely on being able to visualize their target while factoring in the wind direction and weather conditions, with most finding that success during daylight hours.

This is not the case for local hunter, Adam Imberi of Clark. Imberi and his hunting team partner, Dominic Plunkett took first place in the Day County Coyote Hunt held in Roslyn, S.D. at the end of December. During the annual weekend event, Imberi and Plunkett did their hunting during nighttime hours. The pair checked in at 4:00 p.m. on Friday and headed out to hunt while needing to be checked back in 2:00 Sunday afternoon.

Teams could hunt anywhere in the state, so Imberi and Plunkett

headed 'West River.' Imberi explained, "I have family in the Moberge area and have land out there that has only been hunted a couple of times a year. We keep this land for hunting competitions like this Roslyn hunt."

Adam went on to say, "Going into a competition, you want more land lined up than you will need. We had a route planned and back-up plans for back-up plans. If the wind switches or a blizzard hits all weekend, you need to adjust. We spent the two days living in a truck in the field, and thankfully, the weather this year was good; foggy and rainy but not cold, so that was nice."

Hunters 'flock' to this particular tournament hosted by the VFW in

Day County Coyote Hunt
(continued on page 8)

Katelynn Merkel hosting self-defense classes for senior project

By Carolynn Olson

Clark High School senior Katelynn Merkel is the daughter of Nathan and Megan Merkel of Clark. She also has two older brothers, Kolby (21), Taylor (18) and a younger sister, Alayna (14).

For her senior project, Merkel is hosting self-defense courses to help advocate for human trafficking and self-awareness.

The thought of doing this as her senior project came about last year in her grammar and composition class with Mrs. Andrea Bege-man. "We were assigned to write a research paper, and shortly after that assignment was assigned, I had watched the movie called 'The Sound of Freedom' and was inspired to write about the purpose of the movie, human trafficking," explained Merkel.

Katelynn's mentor for her project is Beret Ohm of Watertown who works with an organization that helps advocate for human trafficking. "After talking to Beret on the

SELF-DEFENSE COURSES

THESE COURSES ARE PROVIDED FOR KATELYNN MERKEL'S SENIOR PROJECT TO HELP ADVOCATE FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SELF-DEFENSE

If you are interested or have any questions please contact me!

Phone Number: (605)-233-0659 (you can call or text)
Email: merkelkatelynn@icloud.com

INFORMATION

Courses are hosted by The Fallout Shelter on:
-Thursday, Jan. 16th
-Tuesday, Jan. 21st
-Tuesday, Jan. 28th

All courses will be hosted at the Clark High School in the wrestling room from 6pm-7pm

phone and hearing some facts and statistics on human trafficking and also how she and her organization host self-defense courses, I was really inspired and thought it would be a good senior project," said Merkel. Without hesitation, Ohm said yes when asked to be Merkel's mentor for this senior project.

The first self-defense course is this Thursday, Jan. 16 in the wrestling room at Clark High School. The other courses are on Tuesday, Jan. 21 and Tuesday, Jan. 28 at the same location. The classes start at 6:00 p.m. and end at 7:00 p.m.

"I am super excited to be a part of this project and host something that will benefit myself and my community," Katelynn beamed.

After graduation, Merkel plans on attending college at the University of South Dakota with a major in pre-med and a minor in business. She hopes to become a dermatologist and eventually develop her own private dermatology practice.

Fate of Florence-Henry athletic co-op remains up in the air

By Brandon Heim

Watertown Current

A scheduled vote by Florence School Board to determine the fate of the school's athletic co-op with Henry was tabled Monday, Jan 13. Board member Cory Rislov made the motion to table the vote indefinitely, pending Henry's response to a revised proposal.

Under the latest proposal, Henry School would be invited to participate in a co-op agreement with Florence. Florence would be responsible for 90 percent of expenses, excluding individual travel expenses; the cost of traveling to Florence would be born by the Henry district. The proposed co-op would be known as the Florence Falcons, dropping Henry from the name. According to the proposal: "Efforts will be made to practice in Florence as much as

possible, but it is understood that both school's facilities will be used throughout the athletic seasons."

In a submitted question-and-answer portion of the meeting, Rislov explained that Florence wanted to keep the door open to student athletes from Henry. But given recent controversies there, he thought it was important to remove the Henry name. Although discussions on the future of the co-op are not new in either community, the most recent effort to end it were, for the most part, the result of a bullying incident between Florence-Henry football players. The 2023 arrest of a Henry teacher for sexual contact with a underaged student was also given as an example.

Additional features of the proposal, dated January 9, include: one home volleyball game, one boys and

one girls basketball game in Henry.

"The Florence School Board will be in charge of the sports cooperative. Articles of Cooperation will be adjusted upon approval of the changed terms."

A Co-op Board will be formed by school board members and administration of both schools

"To address Title IX, bullying and complaints against school employees, school districts will use their policies and work with the other school to ensure safety and equality for all students and staff associated with the sports co-op."

In other business, the school board had a lengthy discussion on purchasing new mobile classroom units. The main point of contention was buying brand new units or used units from Castlewood. No action was taken. A "Farm-to-School"

lunch program was also discussed.

The board also set Tuesday, June 17 for its next election. That would coincide with Florence Town Board elections.

WEATHER				
Robert Cole - Official Weather Observer				
	HI	LO	PR	
January 7.....	18	-4	0.01	
January 8.....	15	-4	0	
January 9.....	24	10	0	
January 10.....	34	16	0.03	
January 11.....	26	15	0.06	
January 12.....	32	0	0.02	
January 13.....	6	-7	0	
2025 precipitation to date	.17"			
2024 precipitation to date	.19"			



Shown above is some of the progress that has been made at the new CTE building for Clark High School classes. The Clark School Board toured the CTE building to begin the meeting on Monday night. Pictured on the right, Nick Dalton is helping a high school student in the automotive class fix a leak on an ice auger.

Photos by Carolynn Olson



Clark School Board members tour new CTE building at January's meeting

By Carolynn Olson

The January meeting of the Clark School Board was held on Monday, January 13 starting at 5:30 p.m. Rather than beginning the meeting in the library, which is the usual procedure, the meeting was instead started at the new CTE building. This allowed the board to tour the building and see the progress that has been made since purchasing the space last year. Renovations have been progressing ever since. The school has been using the CTE building for classes since the start of the 2024-2025 school year.

There they can offer classes such as auto, small engines, welding, building trades, ag wood structures, wildlife, fisheries, horticulture, animal science, horticulture, and carpentry. "We do a little bit of everything," Nick Dalton stated. Dave Severson and Dalton are the primary teachers in the CTE building.

After the tour was completed, the regular meeting of the school board was resumed in the high school li-

brary.

The board approved Draft #3 of the Clark School District 2025-2026 school calendar that was discussed at December's meeting. "This will not be a perfect calendar for everyone, but I do believe it is something we can all work with," Clark School Superintendent Travis Ahrens stated. The board also approved the update to district policy JFB and JFB-R (1), JFB-E (1), JFB-E (2) forms; "education of homeless children."

There was some discussion on the five-year capital outlay plan. The plan is still a work in progress, but a few priorities in the plan currently include installations of air conditioning for the elementary gym and kitchen, renovation of HS/MS bathrooms, replacement or refurbishing of classroom doors at the HS/MS and the Voss Wing of the elementary, as well as replacing the windows and exterior doors at the HS/MS building.

The board will be securing quotes for these projects in order to get a

better idea of cost and see what other smaller projects they can fit into the five-year capital outlay budget. Renovating the FACs and high school science rooms were also discussed as a future need and will be discussed again at next month's meeting.

A formal resolution opposing any form of public school vouchers using state tax dollars was approved by the board. Superintendent Ahrens expressed concerns with public school vouchers. There are two bills, HB 1009 and HB 1020, that each propose a form of vouchers.

HB 1009 proposes to provide for the creation and use of South Dakota educational empowerment accounts, and to provide a penalty therefor. HB 1020 proposes to establish education savings accounts.

Ahrens also raised concern over Governor Noem's budget proposal for educational savings accounts. "This route will be the toughest to defeat in my opinion," he stated. "The big concern with vouchers is that it will divert significant amounts of money

away from public schools and everything else that is covered by the state's general fund," he explained. "I would encourage you to contact your District 4 Legislators and let them know how you feel about these legislative matters, especially vouchers."

Clark High School will host the SDHSSA girls' wrestling super region tournament on Thursday, February 20.

The all school play director position is still open. If interested in the position, contact Travis Ahrens at the Clark High School.

Audrey Foster's work agreement adjustment was approved, effective January 1, 2025.

The board entered executive session at 7:30 p.m. for superintendent evaluation SDCL 1-25-2 (1). The board came out of executive session at 9:10 p.m. and the school board meeting was adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

The next Clark School Board meeting will be Monday, February 10.