

LEADERS OF THE LIBRARY

The following story appeared in the Yankton Press & Dakotan paper.

Books can be a child's best friend. They can take you to far off places, tell you about the moon and teach you to expand your horizons.

However, for the last three school years, Yankton Public School students have had limited access to the districts libraries, due to the cut of librarians at the elementary schools.

That shortage changed at the beginning of this school year when elementary librarians were reinstated full-time in each of the districts four elementary buildings.

"When the opt-out failed and the district had to make cuts for the 2011-202 school year, the elementary library positions were eliminated," explained Stewart Elementary Librarian Kathleen Bergeson. "It was such a loss. It was the one cut that the community really vocally voiced their displeasure over. During the recent school survey every group (teachers, parents, students and the community) wanted the librarians back."

The following two school years, the district had two librarians serving the four schools.

Bergeson said that the district's school board and Superintendent Dr. Wayne Kindle listened to the community's demand for the librarians.

"They worked at finding the funding to bring us back," she said. "I have heard a lot from the community since the announcement was made they were bringing us back that it just feels so right — that the community is glad the school board took action and found a way to fund the libraries. The community is offering praise for reconsidering this cut."

Stewart Principal Jerome Klimisch said in a lot of ways people didn't realize how utilized the librarians were in the schools until they were no longer there.

"The librarians know what the kids are reading, what genres they like," he said. "They impact all areas of education. The more kids read the better they test and learn."

Yet Bergeson said the most important aspect of having accessible libraries for the students is that, in the library, every child is a winner.

"The library is the heart of the school," she said. "Unlike sports, or grades, when you leave the library, everyone leaves with a book



— everyone is a winner in the library. That is such a big confidence builder for the students."

Bergeson said the biggest disappointment for her when the librarian positions were cut was that it increased the difference between the haves and have-nots.

"The parents who could afford to buy their children books did, but the students whose parents couldn't go out and buy them the books lost out," she said. "The door to engage children in lifelong reading habits closes in elementary school. We don't want to lose that opportunity to engage these students as life-long readers."

Bergeson said it is proven that a staffed library is one step to having higher achievements for students.

"Librarians are here to help the school," she said. "We help with curriculum support, purchasing, cataloging and mending books - but most important we are here to help the students with research skills and technical skills needed to independently do their school work."

Bergeson said learning to research is one of the most important things a student will learn at the elementary level, as it is a skill they will use their whole life.

Serving as librarians for the elementary schools are: Bergeson at Stewart, Yvonne Huennekens at Beadle, Sylvia Fedde at Lincoln and Deb Enfield at Webster.

"You know when the kids walk in and cheer that you are here, that this was a great move by the school board to reinstate the elementary librarians," Bergeson said.

CTE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

• OPEN HOUSE SHOWCASES CTE PROGRAM

Yankton High School opened its doors to parents, students, teachers, and community members last April to showcase its career and technical education program.

The open house allowed people from the community to visit the various career and technical education classrooms that YHS offers and show how broad and far-reaching CTE has become.

“Many may think of the shop and home-ec classes in the past, but our classes now are so much more and this event helped to define those classes,” YHS Principal Jennifer Johnke said.

Attendees of the open house were given student-guided tours.

In each of the classrooms and labs, students explained the various skills they were learning and showcased their projects,

which included a building trades house, 3-D Printers and audio-visual equipment, to name a few.

During this event, 8th grade students were bussed from the Yankton Middle School to Yankton High School, divided into groups and also given tours of the various labs and classrooms.

“This was a way to help these students think of avenues they could take at the high school level to become college and career ready,” Johnke said.

Yankton High School CTE Day brought 221 people through the hallways of YHS.

“It’s an event we plan to hold and to grow annually so students are given more opportunities to showcase their skills and projects,” Johnke said.

