

WESTERN TRADER

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Custer • Hill City • Hot Springs • Edgemont • Keystone • Newcastle, Wyoming and Everything in Between

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ISSUE NO. 51

DINING • ARTS • ENTERTAINMENT • EVENTS



RECORD CLUB — The Custer Vinyl Record Club will meet tonight at 5:30 p.m. for its Jingle Jams Holiday Party. Those who attend are invited to bring their favorite Christmas albums, wear a Christmas sweater and bring a wrapped old album for the white elephant gift exchange. [Submitted Photo]

DID YOU KNOW?

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We did narrow it down to the candles the kitchen stuff the books the apparel the vases the accessories the cutting boards the table decor the frames the barware the baskets the pinecone stuff the cabin decor the restaurant next door the FREE gift wrap and the people, to name a few.....

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FEATURING A BREATHTAKING 11.42-ACRE PARCEL adjoining Hwy. 40 with flowing Battle Creek running full length. The exquisite 3 level, 2540+- total sq. ft., all log home, will please the most discriminating buyer. A new, deluxe 2080 sq. ft. shop includes living quarters, 3/4 bath, kitchenette, and more. The shop area is fully finished w/3 overhead doors, heated silicone over concrete floors. . . the ultimate "Man Cave" for your collectible vehicles, motorcycles, and more. In addition, the original old-time livery stable, garage, barn, and original stone fireplace/Gazebo, have all been well preserved and add to the spender of this impressive retreat. Immediate possession available, high-end furnishings & art are negotiable. First time offered for sale in 30+- years of family ownership. Act quickly as this very special property has been sought after by many for years! MLS# 81475. Offered at \$2,500,000. Also available, the adjoining 3.59 acres with an impressive 3530+- total sq. ft., 2 level ranch style home, featuring a large wrap deck & drive under garage, which is fully finished for living area or show off your classic vehicle/motorcycles. The 3.59 acre parcel also joins Hwy. 40 and is suitable for horse/livestock use. Currently utilized as a profitable vacation rental. Excellent quality furnishings negotiable, immediate "turn-key" possession available. Offered at \$800,000. MLS#81915

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MISCELLANEOUS:

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SEEKING OT, SCHOOL PSYCH, and SLP in NE South Dakota for 2025-2026 school year. Individuals moving into our area get signing bonus. For more info visit nesc.k12.sd.us or call (605)783-3607. EOE.

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MISCELLANEOUS:

CALL FOR BIDS for repairing hail damaged buildings for Corson County: Notice is hereby given, that sealed bids

will be received by the Corson County Board of Commissioners in the Corson County Courthouse Commissioners Room at McIntosh, South Dakota until 10:00 A.M. MT Tuesday, January 7th 2025 for hail damage repair to county buildings. Copy of the specifications and exact building dimensions are on file at Corson County auditor's office, PO Box 255, McIntosh, SD 57641, whose phone number is (605) 273-4229. Specifications may be obtained upon request. All buildings are located within the city limits of McIntosh, SD. Approximately 58,000 square feet of roofing and 1500 linear feet of gutters and down spouts. Each bid estimate must be accompanied by a proof of contracting license. All bids received by the county will be reviewed and ranked by Claims Associates, Sioux Falls, SD. Successful bidder shall furnish Workman's Compensation and Certificate of Insurance and will be required to provide an affidavit of compliance with 49 CFR Part 382 of the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 (Drug & Alcohol Testing). The Board of County Commissioners, reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids and waive any defects therein. Corson County Board of Commissioners; PO Box 255; McIntosh, SD 57641.

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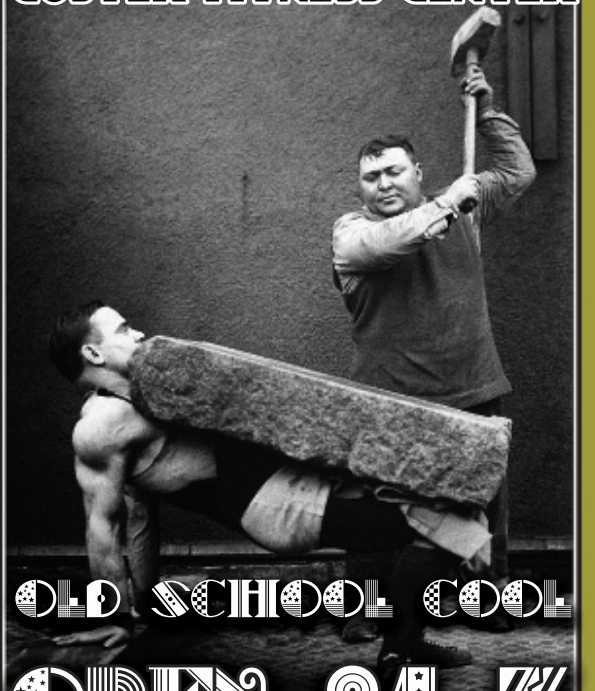
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Circle One

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Arts and Crafts	Misc. for Sale
Autos for Sale	Mobile Homes
Auto Parts, Repair	Motorcycles
Boats	Personal
Business Opportunity	Pets and Supplies
Child Care	Photography
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Garage Sales - _____	Wanted
Help Wanted	Other _____

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Insertion Dates:

DIRECTIONS: Write your ad below, one word per line. Remember, make sure your ad includes a phone number. Garage Sale ads need to include date, time, location and directions (if your location is difficult to find).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15 \$8.00	16 \$8.10	17 \$8.20	18 \$8.30	19 \$8.40	20 \$8.50	21 \$8.60
22 \$8.70	23 \$8.80	24 \$8.90	25 \$9.00	26 \$9.10	27 \$9.20	28 \$9.30
29 \$9.40	30 \$9.50	31 \$9.60	32 \$9.70	33 \$9.80	34 \$9.90	35 \$10.00
36 \$10.10	37 \$10.20	38 \$10.30	39 \$10.40	40 \$10.50	41 \$10.60	42 \$10.70
43 \$10.80	44 \$10.90	45 \$11.00	46 \$11.10	47 \$11.20	48 \$11.30	49 \$11.40

Run my ad _____ Weeks x \$ _____ = \$ _____

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Credit Card/Exp. Date _____

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No. _____

rev Jan 2017



Business and Professional Directory

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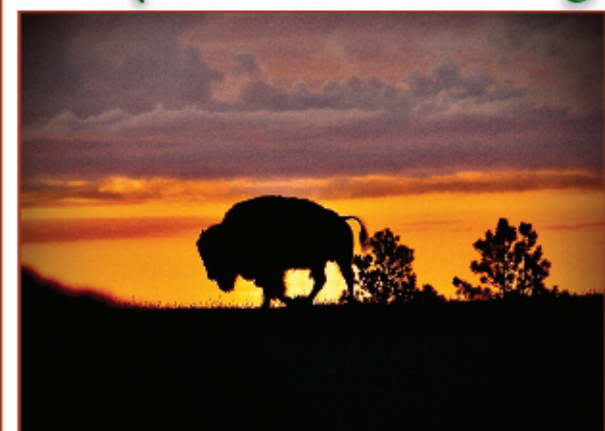
Business & Professional Ads are a great way for your business to not only get noticed, but to stay in people's minds when they need to utilize a local business service. "Out of sight out of mind." Let's face it, if you aren't reading the Custer County Chronicle or the Hill City Prevailer at lunch on Wednesdays or Thursdays, you are not really going to know what's going on. People depend on us for all local news. Advertising is also a great way to reach potential new customers/clients and to boost your business. Come in or call 605-673-2217 and we can help. We will even build you an ad at no extra charge!

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Native absenteeism challenges state educators

By Stu Whitney
South Dakota News Watch

When Randy Pirner took the job as principal of Todd County High School on the Rosebud Indian Reservation in 2018, he was a veteran educator who thought he had seen it all. But overseeing a public school with 95 percent Native American enrollment opened his eyes to cultural and socioeconomic factors that make chronic absenteeism an educational barrier in South Dakota reservation communities such as Rosebud and Pine Ridge.

"I'm originally from Wagner, which is technically on the (Yankton Sioux) reservation, but the problems out here are tenfold compared to the issues in that area," said Pirner.

Years after the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted American schools, nearly every state is still struggling with attendance. But the challenge is greater for Native American students – a disparity that existed before the pandemic and has since grown, according to a joint reporting effort between The Associated Press and South Dakota News Watch.

Out of 34 states with data available for the 2022-23 school year, half had absenteeism rates for Native American and Alaska Native students that were at least nine percentage points higher than the state average.

In South Dakota, the chronic absenteeism rate for Indigenous students was 54 percent in 2022-23, significantly higher than the state average of 21 percent. That differential was the largest of the 34 states included in the AP data.

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing at least 10 percent of days in a school year for any reason, including excused and unexcused absences.

The South Dakota Department of Education has posted data from 2023-24, which shows Native American chronic absenteeism at 51 percent at public schools, compared to the state average of 21 percent.

That shows slight improvement, as Indigenous communities continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. But serious hurdles remain.

State data shows that 68 percent of Native American public school students complete high school, compared to the state average of 91 percent. In addition, only 18 percent are considered college and career ready, significantly lower than the statewide average of 54 percent.

"There's no silver bullet," said Josie Green, executive director of Teach for America in South Dakota, which helps reservation schools find, train and retain new teachers. "A big part of it involves building trust between schools and their communities."

Poverty plays role in attendance

Part of that means assessing the root of the problem, said former Rosebud Sioux Tribe president Rodney Bordeaux, whose educational journey took him through Todd County High School in Mission, Augustana University in Sioux Falls and Oglala Lakota College in Pine Ridge.

Bordeaux now heads the St. Francis Mission, a Catholic ministry on the Rosebud reservation in south-central South Dakota, one of America's poorest and youngest regions.

Todd County has a median household income of \$33,800, less than half the state average of \$69,500, according to U.S. Census data. Residents under the age of 18 account for 41 percent of the population, compared to the state average of 24 percent.

Even with federal and tribal assistance, those factors put stress on rural and often isolated households, making it challenging for caregivers and children to be actively engaged in school.

The latest data shows Todd County's chronic absenteeism rate at 71%.

"There are a lot of issues underlying (attendance data), but no one really

cares," Bordeaux told News Watch. "They just see high rates of absenteeism and they blame the parents or the school. It's a lot more complicated than that."

Truancy starts in younger grades

Pirner came to Todd County High School after 14 years as a principal in Homer, Nebraska, just south of Sioux City, Iowa. Before that, the former South Dakota State University football standout worked at Elk Point-Jefferson.

He acknowledges he had a lot to learn about the cultural complexities of a school district where many students come from single-parent homes or are being raised by relatives. In addition, just 15% of Todd County residents 25 and older have a college bachelor's degree or higher, half the statewide average.

"I truly believe that the only chance that you have to fix the truancy issue is to get to kids when they're young and stress the importance of attending school," Pirner told News Watch.

"By the time we get them up here in ninth grade, they've developed the habits of missing school. A lot of it's based on moms and dads not being in the picture and grandmas and grandpas or aunts or cousins raising them, and a lot of these older people don't have high school degrees. They don't appreciate the importance of it."

Cindy Young, education director of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, agreed that lacking educational standard-setters at home makes it tougher to get young people to school regularly or inspire them in the classroom when they do attend.

"We provide services to help the parents however we can," said Young, who has also worked in education on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and at St. Francis Indian School. "A lot of the time those parents aren't educated themselves and they live way out in rural areas, so it's harder to get those kids to school."

COVID school plan 'went haywire'

Less than two years after Pirner arrived at Todd County, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down in-person schooling throughout the state in March 2020.

Todd County was one of the few South Dakota schools that opted to continue remote learning for the 2020-21 school year after consultation with Rosebud tribal officials.

With crowded living conditions making distancing difficult, researchers found that risk factors for COVID-19 were disproportionately high among Native Americans living on reservations. Todd County, with a population of 9,200, reported nearly 4,000 COVID infections and 53 deaths during the pandemic. Pirner said that was when things "really went haywire" because about 80% of the district's students live on tribal lands and many lack internet access, making the concept of online classes logistically impractical.

"It was sort of like, 'Come on. We're not in Canton. We're not in Beresford,'" said Pirner. "Out here, there's no connection. I would say that COVID set us back 10 years because kids who aren't going to school in kindergarten aren't going to be going to school when we get them in high school. It's almost like we're starting from scratch."

State testing data shows the extent of the challenge that lies ahead.

Todd County School District had proficiency scores of 11% in English and 8% in science on the latest South Dakota Department of Education report card, with an attendance rate of 35%. The state averages were 51% in English, 43% in science and 87% for attendance.

Seeking cultural relevance in classroom

Green, who oversees Teach for America's efforts with Todd County and other predominantly Native school districts, saw the COVID-related shutdown as a chance to reassess strategy.

Green is Oglala Lakota

from the Pine Ridge Reservation but grew up in Wilmet, just outside the Sisseton Wahpeton Reservation. Her studies at Tiospa Zina Tribal School paved the way for her to earn her degree from Minnesota State University-Moorhead, which led to educational opportunities in Todd County.

During the pandemic, she and her team reached out to students, parents and other community members with questions that got to the heart of chronic absenteeism. What is the point of school? What sort of education should it provide? Are teachers relating to students in a way that inspires them?

"We heard things like 'the best education is a place that I can learn things that are relevant to my life and feel like a whole person, and people honor that,'" said Green. "They wanted the skills and emotional ability to prepare for the future that they saw for themselves, and school wasn't doing that for them."

Part of the solution was finding qualified teachers with an Indigenous background to bring role models and cultural understanding into public school classrooms. It remains a work in progress.

This year's Teach for America cohort of 22 teachers for South Dakota includes just three Native Americans, Green said. The goal is to boost Indigenous involvement to 50% by next year and bring more Lakota-based curricula into the fold.

"If we're talking about a whole child, it means honoring every aspect of that child," said Green. "Language, culture, understanding the homes that their students come from. Those things are all essential to be able to truly understand what students need and for the curriculum to be more culturally relevant."

Academy stresses parent involvement

Getting families involved is crucial, said Bordeaux, the former tribal president who now oversees programs such as Sapa Un Jesuit Academy, a K-8

school with about 45 students located in St. Francis on the Rosebud reservation.

Bordeaux said it was important to give reservation families a choice beyond St. Francis Indian School – which is funded by the Bureau of Indian Affairs – and nearby public school districts such as Todd County, Winner and White River.

Sapa Un opened in 2013 and is funded almost entirely by private donations. It employs the Jesuit nativity model, which includes free or low-cost tuition, longer school days, an extended school year and opportunities for summer camp.

"There was a need for a school setting focused on academic achievement, leadership development and culture," said Bordeaux. "Parents are a big part of that."

With no buses, parents are expected to take their children to school each day, with flexible times to accommodate for work schedules or other commitments. Parents are also encouraged to help students with school-based community outreach, such as shoveling sidewalks for elders or reading to nursing home residents.

Lakota school seeks connections

The parent participation model is also embraced by Wakanyecja Tokeyahci Elementary School, a privately funded Lakota Immersion program on the Rosebud reservation.

The school opened in fall 2020 under the direction of the Sicangu Education Initiative, with founder Sage Fast Dog stressing the need to teach Lakota language and culture in a way that inspires and challenges Indigenous youth.

The Associated Press contributed to this story, which was produced by South Dakota News Watch, an independent, nonprofit news organization. Read more in-depth stories at sdnewsWatch.org and sign up for an email every few days to get stories as soon as they're published. Contact investigative reporter Stu Whitney at



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Saturday 9 a.m.–3 p.m.
Sunday Closed

CUSTER WOLF

Monday–Saturday
11:30 a.m.–8 p.m.

DAIRY QUEEN

Monday–Saturday
11 a.m.–8 p.m.
Sunday 11 a.m.–7 p.m.

DAKOTA BROASTED

Tuesday–Saturday
11 a.m.–6 p.m.

FRONTIER BAR & GRILL

Daily 11 a.m.–9 p.m.
Closed Tuesday

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11–2 a.m.
Food 11–2 a.m.

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Saturday & Sunday
8 a.m.–Noon

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6:30–10 a.m., 11 a.m.–3 p.m.
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11 a.m.–7 p.m.
Delivery Fri & Sat 4–6 p.m.

BLACK HILLS BURGER & PIZZA CO.

Tuesday–Saturday
11 a.m.–2:30 p.m.
Wednesday–Friday 5–7:30 p.m.

SKOGEN KITCHEN

Tuesday–Saturday
5–8 p.m.

SUBWAY RESTAURANT

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8 a.m.–9 p.m.
Sunday 8 am.–8 p.m.

HILL CITY EATS

ALL ABOARD

Monday–Saturday
11 a.m.–8 p.m.
Sunday
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5–9:30 p.m. DINNER

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Friday–Saturday
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Monday–Thursday
1–10 p.m.
Friday–Sunday Noon–10 p.m.

TAQUERIA LOS CAMELINAS

Monday–Friday 4–7 p.m.
Saturday 11 a.m.–2 p.m.

TIN CITY SALOON

Friday–Wednesday
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HERMOSA SENIOR CITIZENS CENTER

Monday–Thursday
Noon–close

79 LOUNGE

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LAZY R BAR & GRILL

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KEYSTONE EATS

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Monday–Thursday
11 a.m.–9 p.m.
Friday–Sunday 11 a.m.–10 p.m.

KEYSTONE COUNTRY STORE

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TURTLE TOWN

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10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Sunday 10 a.m.– 5 p.m.

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Sunday 5:30 a.m.–Noon

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Friday & Saturday
9 a.m.– 2 a.m.

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11 a.m.– 4:30 p.m.

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Noon– 10 p.m.

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Saturday 6:30 a.m.–10:30 a.m.

CAMBRIA COFFEE & DECKER'S MARKET

Monday–Friday 7 a.m.–5 p.m.
Saturday 7 a.m.–2 p.m.
Sunday 8 a.m.–Noon

HOT STUFF PIZZA

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5 a.m.– 6 p.m.

TACO JOHN'S

Daily
11 a.m.–10 p.m.

HANNAH'S HEAVENLY TREATS

Tues–Fri 7 a.m.– 2 p.m.
Saturday 7 a.m.– 10 a.m.

HOWDY BAKERY

Thursday, Friday, Saturday
8 a.m.–6 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

HI-16 CAFE

Thursday–Sunday
7 a.m.–9 p.m.

ISABELLA'S

Sunday–Wednesday
11 a.m.–8 p.m.
Thursday – Saturday
11 a.m.– 9 p.m.

PERKINS TAVERN

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11 a.m.–8 p.m.
Thursday – Sunday
7 am – 9 pm

PIZZA BARN

Monday–Thursday
4–9 pm
Friday & Saturday
4–10 pm

UNCLE VITO'S

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7 a.m.–2 p.m.
Saturday
7 a.m.–10 a.m.

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