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PAGE 6 OF THE
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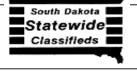
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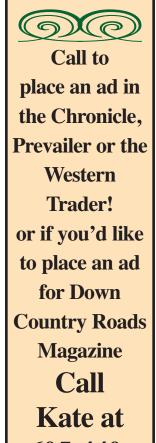
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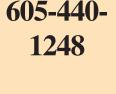
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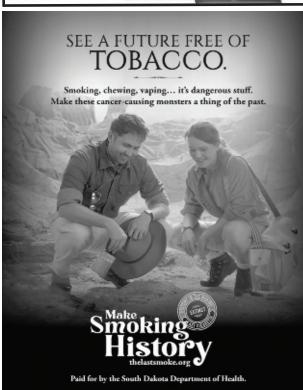
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SHOP THE BLACK HILLS!

Brain development science bolsters calls for quality preschool

By Jackie Hendry South Dakota Public Broadcasting via South Dakota News Watch

Raising a child looks different for every generation. Amy Elliott, chief clinical research officer at Avera Research Institute, understands how quickly new science and research can change ideas that used to be taken for granted. Her research focuses on child health and development.

"For example, drinking during pregnancy," said. "That's something you don't have to go back too many generations - and that actually may have been something that had been encouraged. Now we know the effects that can have on fetal development, which is why there's the recommendation of no drinking during pregnancy."

In the same researchers are uncovering new information about brain development. Even the past five years have uncovered new information, Elliott said.

'We're able to look at the brain, for example, and look at brain development to a much greater degree than we were ever, ever before with those technologies," she explained.

That means researchers have a clearer picture of what parts of the brain develop, when they develop, and how rapidly. Elliott said when a child is born, its brain is about the fourth the size it will be when the child is an adult. By the child's first birthday, the brain will grow to half its eventual size.

"Some have even said in those first three months, the brain is increasing every day at almost a 1 percent capacity — every day," said Elliott. "Millions of connections being formed in a very short amount of time, much more rapid development than is seen at any other time period in life. So the first year of life and then the first five years are really

very critical time periods for brain development." For instance, research has determined that the

what we would refer to as

foundations for language development are set in a child's brain by age 3.

"Now you can definitely learn language after that, but it's a lot more difficult," Elliott said. "We know there's a critical time period where different sounds because different languages have different sounds - are getting integrated within and becoming part of how that brain is wired."

Lifelong learning ability established in early childhood

Elliott expects the next decade of research to demonstrate similar findings for reading, math and social development in children. For now, brain research is catching up with what early childhood educators have known for decades: the earliest years of a child's life can set the tone for lifelong learning outcomes.

State law requires kids are in school by age 6, though families have the option to start kindergarten if their child is 5 by Sept. 1 of the school year. Families might harness the potential of those earlier years through preschool, but South Dakota does not have a state-run or funded preschool program. Aside from federally funded programs like Head Start, privately run early childhood learning programs can vary dramatically in quality.

Preschool standards 'really random in South Dakota' Janessa Bixel is execu-

tive director of the South Dakota Association for the Education Young of Children. It's a statewide chapter of a national professional organization that provides resources for early childhood educators, families and communities. She has more than 20 years of experience in early childhood education, including in Head Start programs in various states.

'When you're in Alaska Kansas or Hampshire or South Dakota which are some of the places I've lived - those Head Start standards are the

same, basically, in all of

New



YOUNG LEARNERS — Preschool students at the YMCA of Rapid City, S.D., use pieces of wood to create letters of the alphabet. [Submitted Photo/KRYSTAL SCHOENBAUER/SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC BROADCASTING]

she said. "When you get outside of Head Start, it's really random in South Dakota. You can open a preschool and you don't even have to be regulated in any way in the

In fact, South Dakota is one of a handful of states in the country without a statefunded program or official standards to measure the quality of private programs. There have been some efforts from groups like the School Administrators of South Dakota to create early learning guides, but they don't hold the weight of regulatory standards. There are no state-

required credentials for preschool teachers either. Part of Bixel's work

includes expanding opportunities for early learning educators in a state where public policy hasn't caught up with the importance research puts on the field.

"I would love to see an program apprenticeship started in South Dakota for early childhood educators," she said. "There are some states doing that right now and it seems like it could be an untapped area to support this field and really help to elevate it as a profession

because it truly is a profes-

sion. I mean, we're working

with young children when

the most brain development

happens. So why shouldn't it be required that you need to understand how to work with young children at that

Preschoolers 'need more than just love'

time?

Nicole Weiss believes preschool providers owe families the highest-possible quality care for their children. She's the early learning director for the YMCA of Rapid City. While the state doesn't mandate credentials to teach preschool, her program does.

"Preschool's an interesting time in a kiddo's life because they need more than just love and freedom to roam and learn," she said. "They also don't need to be sitting down with worksheets and having their whole day scheduled out. It takes some education to understand that." All teachers in Weiss'

department must join with least Child a Development Associate (CDA) credential, a oneyear degree. "They have to have a

minimum of that to be a lead teacher in our pro-

gram," said Weiss. However, even that minimum education require-

ment adds a hurdle to ongoing staffing issues. There's a lot of people who think because they teacher is going to teach to

have worked in child care that, 'I'm a preschool teacher now, I can go do this or that,' and they don't understand the lesson planning and the assessments and the conferences."

The state Department of Social Services contracts with a handful of organizations around the state that offer the CDA credential. One of those is a Rapid City nonprofit called Early Childhood Connections.

The state of South Dakota supports CDA," said Autumn Gregory, executive director. "Right now they pay for the coursework, they pay for the scholarship, for the assessment and credentialing, and so they are really trying to promote professional development.'

But without a state requirement, it's up to private entities to decide what level of training their staff

Gregory's organization also administers a program called Starting Strong, a scholarship program funded by the John T. Vucurevich Foundation to allow disadvantaged families opportunity to afford preschool. The benefits ripple beyond children in the Starting Strong program,

"That

she said.

kindergarten

the child with the most needs because that's where all that attention needs to go," Gregory said. "If those children can come in ready to learn, then it benefits all the children in that kinder-

garten class.' Elliott, Avera's chief clinical research officer, believes the data show the same benefits to preschool that educators have experienced firsthand.

"Pre-K teaches kids so many things, and sometimes I think the things that are taught - the most important - are on the behavioral side," she said. "There shouldn't be pressure that kids have to be able to read or do those things before school. But it's good for them to be exposed to letters and to colors and to sounds and to like looking at books.

Because research on child development is evolving so rapidly, Elliott understands it can take time for the public - and policy to catch up. She returns to the example of drinking during pregnancy. "People will say, 'Well, I

think things turned out just fine.' The one thing I would like to say is, that's what science is supposed to do for us. It's supposed to help us raise the next generation better than the previous

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The Alpine Inn

Monday - Saturday 11 am

Annie Lode

Black Hills Bistro

Monday - Saturday

7 am - 2 pm

Monday - Sunday

11 am - 9 pm

7 am -1 pm

Sunday - Closed

Wednesday - Saturday 2:30 pm LUNCH 4 pm to close 5 pm - 9:30 pm DINNER

Custer County Coffee Cabin Candy Co. Tuesday-Friday Monday-Saturday 6:30am - 1:00pm 11am - 5pm Sunday Noon - 5pm

am-4pm Thurs & Fri. 8:30am-5pm Sat. 9am-2pm Bumpin' Buffalo **Custer's Last** Bar & Grill Stop

Sunday 11 am -3 pm **Caboose Coffee Custer Wolf** Company Monday-Saturday Monday - Saturday 11:30 am- 8 pm

Chute Rooster Dairy Queen Thursday - Monday Mon.-Saturday 11am-8 pm

Cream

Tuesday - Saturday

10 am - 3:30 pm

Dairy Twist Monday - Saturday 11a.m. - 7 p.m. & Sunday Noon -7 p.m

Gold Run Café Sunday - Thursday 8 am - 2 pm Friday - Saturday 10 am - 3:30 pm

Heart of the Hills

Exxon Daily 5 am - Midnight

> Company Daily 11 a.m. -7 p.m

Miner Brewing

Winery Daily 10 am - 6 pm

Prairie Berry

Laughing Water Silver Dollar Restaurant Saloon Mon - Fri. 11 am to 4 pm Monday -Thursday 1pm - 10 pm Sat. & Sun. 9am - 4 pm Fri - Sun Noon - 10 pm

Taqueria Los Maria's Mexican **Camelinas** Restaurant Monday - Saturday Monday-Friday 4pm-7 pm Saturday 11 am-2 pm 6:30 - 10 am, 11 am - 3 pm

4:30 pm - 8:30 pm Tin City Saloon Miner's Cup Friday-Wednesday Monday - Saturday

11am - 8 pm

79 Lounge Daily 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. 11 am - 9 pm Sunday 10 am - 6 pm

> Eno's Pizza & Pub

Mon-Thurs 11am -9pm

Friday-Sunday

Keystone

11am-10 pm Keystone **Country Store** Daily 7 am to 9 pm

Turtle Town Monday-Saturday 10 am until 6 pm

Sunday 10 am until 5 pm Xanterra@ Mt. Rushmore

Carver's Cafe @ Mt. Rushmore

Daily 8 am - 9 pm

8 am - 4:30 pm

Information Call 605-745-4140 www.hotsprings-sd.com

Just A Click Awa

custercountychronicle.com

Edgemant

American Legion Igloo Bar

> Friday & Saturday 9am - 2 am **Khantong Thai** Cuisine

Daily 9 am - 12 am

The Hat Creek Grill Friday & Saturday

Noon - 10 pm

Victory

Yesway

Monday-Saturday

6 am - 9 pm

Newcastle

Boopa's

Tuesday - Friday

7am - 2 pm

Saturday 7am - 10 am

Donna's Main St.

Diner

Daily 6 am -2 pm

Kaffee Klatsch

Mon-Wed 5:30 - 12:30pm

Tues, Thurs, Fri. 5:30 - 1pm

Saturday 6:30am-10:30am

Cambria Coffee &

Decker's Market

Monday-Friday 7am-5 pm

Saturday 7am-2pm Sunday

8 am - Noon

Decker's Market

- Deli

Monday - Saturday

7 am - 8 pm

Sunday 8 am - 7 pm

Hot Stuff Pizza

Daily 5 am - 6 pm

Taco John's

Daily 11 am - 10 pm

Hannah's

Heavenly Treats

Tusday - Friday

7 am - 2 pm

Saturday 7- 10

9am - 4pm

Monday-Wednesday-

Friday 11 am - 4:30 pm

Steakhouse & Lounge 11 am - 9 pm Tuesday - Saturday

3pm-7pm Sunday 8 am -9am Sick-N-Twisted **Yesway #1174** Daily - Open 24 hours

Southern Hills Diner & Bakery Thursday-Monday 8am-2pm closed Tuesday &

Golf Course Daily 7 am - 8 pm

Springs Coffee

Kiosk

Mon-Fri 5:30am-4:30pm

Monday - Saturday

7 a.m. to 9 pm

unday 8 am - 8 pm

Wednesday

Southern Hills

Saturday 5:30am - 2pm Sunday 5:30am - Noon Taco John's

The Berm (Food Truck) Wednesday - Saturday 11:30am - 6pm

Two Cows Creamery & Bistro Mon-Thurs 11am-8pm Fri & Sat 11am-9pm Sunday 11am-7pm

> Bakerv Wednesday - Monday 10am - 5pm

Wandering Bison

Coffee

Heaven Scent

Mon, Tues, Thurs 7am-3pm Fri & Saturday 3pm-6 pm Sunday 8am-3pm

Winner's Circle

Sunday-Thursday

10am-8:45pm

Friday & Saturday

10am-9:45pm **Howdy Bakery** For Hot Thursday, Friday, Saturday 8am-6pm Sat. **Springs**

> Hi-16 Cafe Thursday - Sunday 7 am - 9 pm

Sunday - Wednesday

11 am - 8 pm Tursday - Saturday 11 am - 9 pm

Perkins Tavern

Monday - Wednesday

Isabella's

11 am - 8 pm Thursday - Sunday 7 am - 9 pm Pizza Barn

Friday & Saturday 4 pm - 10 pm **Uncle Vito's**

Tuesday - Friday 7 am - 2

pm

Saturday 7 am - 10 am

Monday - Thursday

4 pm - 9 pm

Pringle

The Hitchrail Bar & Restaurant Tuesday - Sunday 11 am - 8 pm

Rapid City

Monday - Wednesday 11 am - 8 pm BELLE gaurche

Shipwreck's Bar

& Grill

Black Hills Diner Tuesday-Saturday 7 am - 2 pm

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE. WITHOUT OUR READERS, **SUBSCRIBERS & ADVERTISERS WE WOULD** NOT EXIST. WE STRIVE TO **GIVE THE BEST LOCAL COVERAGE YOU WILL NOT GET ANYWHERE ELSE**

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THE CUSTER COUNTY

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CALL TODAY TO PLACE AN AD Kate Najacht: 605-440-1248 for more information

605-673-2217

BLACK HILL

LIVE MUSIC - LOCAL EVENTS

Wednesday 12-27

Winter Express 1880 Train Hill City, SD Select times

Men's Breakfast

7:30 AM

Bible Study The Little White Church Hill City, SD

Custer County Commission Custer County Courthouse Custer, SD MA8

Seniors Functional Fitness

Hill City Center Hill City, SD 9 AM Seniors Bridge Card Games

Hill City Center

Hill City, SD

Custer, SD

10:30 -11:30 AM

11 AM - 4:30 PM

10 AM - 3 PM Wiggles & Giggles Toddlers and Parents Fun Time Custer YMCA

Trees and Trains Exhibit South Dakota State Railroad Museum Hill City, SD

Crafternoon **Custer County Library** Custer, SD **3 PM**

Lane of Lights Museum Drive Hill City, SD Dusk - 10 PM

Hill City Common Council Meeting City Hall Hill City, SD

5:30 PM Crossroads Church Xtreme Youth Group

Crossroads Church Custer, SD 6:30 PM

Thursday 12-28

Winter Express 1880 Train Hill City, SD Select times

Seniors Stretch & Flex Hill City Center Hill City, SD 9 AM

Seniors Hand & Foot Card Games Hill City Center Hill City, SD 12:30 PM

Imagination Club Hill City Public Library Kids' Annex

Lane of Lights Museum Drive Hill City, SD Dusk - 10 PM

Tony DuBlois, Musical Savant LIVE The Hills Finest Custer, SD 5-8 PM

Keystone Senior Center Meeting

Keystone Senior Center Keystone, SD 6 PM

Civil Air Patrol Custer County Airport Custer, SD

Friday 12-29

Seniors Coffee Club Hill City Center Small Room Hill City, SD

9 AM Hill City Seniors Flow &

Relax Yoga Hill City Center Hill City, SD

Community Food Pantry The Little White Church Hill City, SD

9 AM - 11 AM Story Time Hill City Public Library Kids

Annex Hill City, SD 9:30 AM

Lane of Lights Museum Drive Hill City, SD Dusk - 10 PM

Celebrate Recovery Crossroads Church Custer, SD

Meal at 6 PM Lesson at 6:30 PM

Saturday 12-30 Coffee with the Mayor

Hill City Cafe Hill City, SD 10 AM



OPEN STAGE TIME AGAIN — Hill City Arts Council's winter music showcase ushers in each new year with shows in January, February and March. In addition to livening up the local scene in the dark of winter, Open Stage gives new talent and seasoned acts alike a supportive place to hone their craft. It also helps local promoters find and hire performers for summer shows and festivals. Local and regional singer/songwriters and poets are regulars, but storytellers, joke tellers are welcome too. [Submitted Photo]

Driver's License Exams

Annex Pine Room

Custer, SD

8 AM to 5 PM

Hill City Center

Hill City Center

Hill City, SD 10 AM - 3 PM

Crafternoon

Custer, SD

3 РМ

Meeting

Center

6 PM

Keystone, SD

Custer, SD

6:30 PM

Custer County Library

Keystone Town Board

Keystone Community

Crossroads Church

Xtreme Youth Group

Thursday 1-4

Seniors Stretch & Flex

Hill City Center

Seniors Hand &

Hill City Center

Imagination Club

Hill City Public Library Kids'

Hill City, SD 12:30 PM

Hill City, SD

Tony DuBlois,

Custer, SD

Custer, SD

Hill City, SD

Relax Yoga Hill City Center

Hill City, SD

5-8 PM

7 PM

9 AM

9 AM

The Hills Finest

Civil Air Patrol

Custer County Airport

Seniors Coffee Club

Friday 1-5

Hill City Center Small Room

Hill City Seniors Flow &

Musical Savant ///F

Annex

3:15 PM

Foot Card Games

Hill City, SD

9 AM

Crossroads Church

Hill City, SD

9 AM

Custer County Courthouse

Seniors Functional Fitness

Seniors Bridge Card Games

Wiggles & Giggles Toddlers and Parents Fun Time Custer YMCA Custer, SD 10:30 -11:30 AM

New Year's at Noon Custer County Library Custer, SD 11 AM

Lane of Lights Museum Drive Hill City, SD Dusk - 10 PM

Sunday 12-31

New Year's Eve

Lane of Lights Museum Drive Hill City, SD Dusk - 10 PM

Tony DuBlois, Musical Savant /// The Hills Finest Custer, SD 5-8 PM

KISS AA Meeting Keystone Community Center Keystone, SD 6 PM

Monday 1-1

New Year's Day

First Day Hikes Little Devils Tower Stockade Lake Trail -Creekside Trail Custer State Park Custer, SD 8 and 10 AM & 2 PM

Tuesday 1-2

Seniors Beginning Line Dancing

Hill City Center Hill City, SD 9 AM

Hill City Seniors Flow & Relax Yoga Hill City Center Hill City, SD 10:30 AM

Seniors Hand & Foot Card Games Hill City Center

Hill City, SD 1-4:30 PM

Seniors Knitting & Crocheting Group Hill City Center Hill City, SD 1-3 PM

Custer Piecemakers **Quilt Guild**

Custer Lutheran Fellowship Custer, SD 1:30 PM

Custer City Hall Custer, SD 5:30 PM Hill City Planning

and Zoning Meeting

Custer City Council

City Hall Hill City, SD 5:30 PM Celebrate Recovery The Little White Church

Hill City, SD 5:45 PM Hill City Lions Club

Hill City Center Hill City, SD 6 PM

Hermosa Town Hall Hermosa, SD

Hermosa Town Board

Buffalo Gap Town Hall Buffalo Gap, SD **7 PM**

Buffalo Gap Town Board

Wednesday 1-3 Men's Breakfast

Bible Study The Little White Church Hill City, SD 7:30 AM

Community Food Pantry The Little White Church Hill City, SD 9 AM - 11 AM

Story Time Hill City Public Library Kids' Annex Hill City, SD 9:30 AM

Storytime Custer County Library Custer, SD 10 AM

Seniors Birthday Party

Keystone Senior Center Keystone, SD 11 AM - 1 PM Celebrate Recovery

Crossroads Church Custer, SD Meal at 6 PM Lesson at 6:30 PM

Saturday 1-6

Custer County Democrats Coffee and Breakfast Gathering

Crazy Horse Memorial Laughing Water Restaurant Custer, SD

Hill City Cafe Hill City, SD 10 AM Live On Stage LIVE

Coffee with the Mayor

High Country Guest Ranch Hill City, SD Doors open at 5 PM Dinner at 5:30 PM Show starts at 6 PM Tony DuBlois,

Custer, SD 5-8 PM Keystone Bingo Keystone Community Center

Musical Savant LIVE

The Hills Finest

Keystone, SD Dinner at 5 PM, free will donations Bingo at 6 PM **Buffalo Gap** Community Dance LIVE

Buffalo Gap Community Center Buffalo Gap, SD 7 PM

Sunday 1-7

Custer Community Action Food Distribution CAT Building, corner of N. 6th and Lincoln streets Custer, SD 10 AM to 1 PM

Adult Bible Study The Little White Church Hill City, SD 6 PM

KISS AA Meeting Keystone Community Center Keystone, SD 6 PM

Monday 1-8

Mason's Lodge Breakfast Hermosa Mason's Lodge Hermosa, SD 7 AM to Noon

Community Food Pantry The Little White Church Hill City, SD 9 AM - 11 AM

Seniors Functional Fitness Hill City Center Hill City, SD 9 AM

Custer Rotary Club Custer Senior Center Custer, SD Noon

LEARN TO LINE DANCE — Hill City Center is home to a

beginning line dancing class for those looking to add

some new moves to their repertoire. Cowboy boots are

not required! The class will meet again Jan. 2 at 9 a.m.

at the center . [Submitted Photo]

Meeting City Hall Hill City, SD 5:30 PM

Hill City Common Council

Hill City School Board Meeting High School Board Room Hill City, SD

6 PM **Custer School District Board of Education** School Administration

Building Custer, SD 6 PM When Helping Hurts Community Lutheran Church

Text HCWHH to 605-574-1023 to register Chick Chat and Crafts The Little White Church

Hill City, SD

Hill City, SD 6:30 PM Hermosa Arts & History

Association Hermosa Town Hall Hermosa, SD 6:30 PM

AA Meeting Lighthouse Assembly of God Hill City, SD

Tuesday 1-9

Seniors Beginning Line Dancing Hill City Center Hill City, SD 9 AM

Custer County Library Custer, SD

Games Hill City Center Hill City, SD 1-4:30 PM

Seniors Hand & Foot Card

Crocheting Group Hill City Center Hill City, SD 1-3 PM Custer Meet & Eat

Seniors Knitting &

Custer, SD 5-7 PM Celebrate Recovery The Little White Church Hill City, SD

Custer Community Church

5:45 PM Hermosa Planning and Zoning Hermosa Town Hall Hermosa, SD

6 PM

Pringle Town Board Pringle Community Center Pringle, SD

Elk Mountain School District Board of Education Elk Mountain School Dewey, SD

Wednesday 1-10

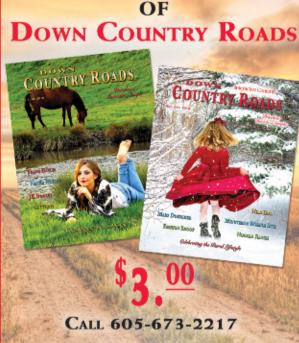
Men's Breakfast Bible Study The Little White Church Hill City, SD 7:30 AM

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Seniors Functional Fitness Hill City Center Hill City, SD 9 AM Seniors Bridge Card Games Hill City Center

Custer County Commission

Custer County Courthouse

Driver's License Exams

Custer Area Economic

Development Corp.

Black Hills Energy

Annex Pine Room

Custer County Courthouse

Custer, SD

Custer, SD

Custer, SD

8:30 AM

8 AM to 5 PM

8 AM

Hill City, SD 10 AM - 3 PM Crafternoon Custer County Library

3 PM BOLT

Custer, SD

The Little White Church Hill City, SD 3:20 PM

The Landing The Little White Church Hill City, SD 4:30 PM Middle School & High

The Little White Church

School Youth Group

Hill City, SD 5:40 PM Crossroads Church Xtreme Youth Group Crossroads Church

Custer, SD

6:30 PM Thursday 1-11

Women's Bible Study Fellowship The Little White Church Hill City, SD 8:30 AM

Seniors Stretch & Flex

Hill City Center Hill City, SD 9 AM Seniors Hand & Foot Card Games

Hill City Center

Hill City, SD 12:30 PM Imagination Club Hill City Public Library Kids' Annex

Hill City, SD 3:15 PM Tony DuBlois, Musical Savant LIVE The Hills Finest Custer, SD

5-8 PM

ADD/ADHD Support Group Monument Health Custer Hospital Custer, SD 6:30 PM

Civil Air Patrol Custer County Airport Custer, SD