

McGOVERN NEWSLETTER

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Three Successful Courageous Conversations



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In January, it was decided to call our Braver Angels debates “Courageous Conversations.” It was a good name choice and it stuck. Three Courageous Conversations were organized around three South Dakota ballot initiatives which will be on the November ballot.

- 1. Top-Two Open Primaries (February 20):** A top-two open primary is one in which all the candidates, regardless of party affiliation, are on the ballot as a single group. The top two candidates move on to the general election. Representatives from the South Dakota Open Primaries organization sponsoring the initiative sent two representatives who made the case in favor of the initiative. They also received signatures of those supportive of the amendment. South Dakota Senator John Wiik represented the con position by Zoom. Roughly 35 were in attendance with 83 views on YouTube.
- 2. Elimination of the SD Food Tax (March 19):** This topic has been under debate for many years and at one point was even supported by Gov. Kristi Noem. Rick Weiland and others of Dakotans for Health argued the pro position and Sen. John Wiik and others argued the con position. Again, the debate was lively and informative with roughly the same attendance as the previous event. There have been 42 online views.
- 3. Constitutional Amendment on Abortion (April 23):** It was clear from the start that this would be our most contentious topic and likely the topic that would draw the largest crowd. This debate had roughly 75 in attendance with 303 views on our YouTube channel. The pro-side was represented again by Weiland and others and the con position was argued by Rep. Jon Hansen of South Dakota Right to Life. While the debate became a bit contentious a time or two, things remained relatively courteous.

More funding was allocated this spring for advertising than in the past. Each of the Courageous Conversations was advertised in the Mitchell Republic newspaper, on KMIT radio, with interviews on KMIT, KORN and SDPB. \$1,200 was allocated for advertising these three Courageous Conversations.

Video recordings remain available at www.youtube.com/@DWUedu/streams.



Dakotas Conference of the Northern Plains

On April 27, I had the opportunity to present a paper entitled “McGovern’s Bible: The Social Gospel at Wheaton” at the Center for Western Studies at Augustana University. It was a rewarding experience where I received considerable interest and questions about the topic.

My paper delved into McGovern’s speech delivered at Wheaton College on Oct. 11, 1972. I examined McGovern’s relationship with the Bible, his adoption of the social gospel interpretation and highlighted instances of his application of social gospel principles in his speech. Lastly, I explored the purpose behind McGovern’s sudden outreach to the evangelical community.



McGovern Center at USD Law School

In February, Dean Neil Fulton of the Knudson School of Law at the University of South Dakota initiated a collaboration to introduce his students to the style of debate championed by Braver Angels. The chosen topic for debate was the age of marriageability in South Dakota, currently set at 18, but potentially adjustable to 16 with the consent of only one parent. This topic was recently deliberated in committee during the recent South Dakota legislative session.

Having witnessed this debate during a visit to the capital with some students, I found it compelling and pertinent. We decided to engage in a debate on an issue that had recently been considered in Pierre. Following a brief introduction to the McGovern Center and the Braver Angels-style debating methodology, the debate commenced. Half of the class advocated for retaining the current legal arrangement, while the other half argued against the provision permitting 16-year-olds to marry with parental consent.

The event was met with considerable enthusiasm and appreciation, demonstrating its relevance and impact within the academic community.

McGovern Center Hosts DWU Lectureship Series

On Feb. 13, Tatewin Means, Executive Director of the Thunder Valley Community Development Corporation (CDC), was our 2024 Stark Lecturer.

Thunder Valley CDC is an indigenous grassroots organization in Oglala territory seeking liberation for Lakota peoples through language, lifeways and spirituality. Means gave a student presentation at 11 a.m., a presentation for the community at 7 p.m., along with a box lunch and a come-and-go coffee in the afternoon. All appreciated hearing about the great work to provide beautiful housing for the Lakota peoples.



On April 2, we helped to organize and host Dr. Bret Lingwall as our 2024 Carhart Lecturer. Dr. Lingwall is an associate professor at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering. His talk was titled “Unlocking Atmospheric Carbon Capture, Sequestration and Beneficial Reuse with Biology.”



Our Newest DWU Braver Angel



Clifford Chamberlain, professor of business and marketing at DWU, has recently become a member of Braver Angels and is currently undergoing training to serve as a debate moderator.

Alongside Jeff Pospisil, Chamberlain will be representing DWU at the upcoming Braver Angels convention in Kenosha, Wis., accompanied by several DWU students.

DWU Day of Service



On April 30, our campus came together for our annual Day of Service—a cherished tradition uniting students, faculty, and staff in acts of community outreach both on and off-campus. Spearheaded by a dedicated team comprising a community member, two students, and myself, this year's event saw collaboration with approximately 35 community partners, as well as various campus service locations.

While striving for inclusivity, we aimed to diversify participation beyond traditional club and

athletic affiliations. Despite these efforts, many groups gravitated toward familiar interests, such as the football team's consistent role in spreading mulch. Nevertheless, the day unfolded seamlessly, marked by a wide array of impactful activities.

From washing windows to cleaning ditches to enjoying time with seniors, constructing gift baskets to tidying churches and hosting science fairs, each endeavor contributed to the collective spirit of service. I'm delighted to report that the event proceeded without a hitch, underscoring the power of our community's commitment to making a difference.

Uganda Team and Trip



The Uganda team recently returned from a very successful trip under the auspices of AsOne Ministries. Our nursing students worked in the AsOne clinics, and the education students and others provided service in the schools as part of a summer program. The team experienced no sickness or travel mishaps! The McGovern Center assisted by covering the cost of airline tickets for the team leaders, the Rev. Anthony Purcell and the Rev. Taryn Ragels, campus pastors at DWU who organized and led the team. The good news is they came back enthused and eager to start the process for May 2025.

As always, we ask that you help support programs and events like those listed. Please consider making a donation to the McGovern Center [here](#).



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