

Mining local history at the Sanford Lab

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May 9, 2019



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Former Homestake Mining engineer David Vardiman will present a history of local mining at tonight's Deep Talks presentation in Lead.

Matthew Kapust

Today, the deep underground shafts and drifts at Sanford Underground Research Facility (Sanford Lab) host cutting-edge research experiments. Just 20 years ago, however, this underground system housed Homestake Mining Company (Homestake), the largest and deepest gold mine in North America, which produced approximately 41 million ounces of gold in its 126-year lifetime.

“Knowledge, capital and an incredible appetite for risk — that’s what it took to create the venture of gold mining in the Black Hills,” said David Vardiman, geotechnical project engineer at Sanford Lab who previously worked for 21 years at Homestake.

At the upcoming event “Deep Talks: Historic characters of Black Hills mining,” Vardiman’s expertise in mining and geology will combine with a personal passion for local and national history for a presentation. This Deep Talks, Science for Everyone event begins at 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 9, at the Sanford Lab Homestake Visitor Center in Lead, S.D.

“The presentation will be a thumbnail sketch of the history of the Whitewood Quartz Mining District,” said Vardiman. “This district in the northern Black Hills was home to hundreds of mining claims, many of which were grafted into Homestake.”

Deep Talks is held at the Visitor Center, 160 W. Main Street, in Lead. The event begins at 5 p.m. with a social hour that includes free beer (must be 21 and older to drink) and light snacks. Deep Talks is sponsored by Crow Peak Brewing Company of Spearfish, S.D.