

Media Coverage of the 2017 Public Fossil Dig Program

Ed Murphy

The Survey's paleontology program and especially our public dig program has never had a problem obtaining press coverage. That is because people generally are fascinated by fossils, especially dinosaur fossils, and the opportunity to discover them. That said, in the sixteen years of the public dig program, we never had the press coverage, especially national press coverage, that we experienced this year. It started on July 13th when the Bismarck Tribune ran a story on our Medora public dig which featured Legacy and Century High School summer biology students. On July 16th, the New York Times printed a three-page article in their Sunday Travel Section regarding our public dig in the South Heart Badlands southwest of Dickinson. Not surprisingly, the New York Times article generated a tremendous amount of interest and we

immediately had inquiries from all over the U.S. Most people had already made their summer plans and were inquiring about our digs for next summer, but some were willing and able to travel to North Dakota on relatively short notice. We were able to accommodate families from New York, Connecticut, California, as



The NBC film crew (left to right): cameraman Aaron Sasson, soundman Bobby Lapp, reporter Lucy Kafanov, and producer Bryan Lavietes.



Students uncover fossils during dig

30 Bismarck high school students participated in the public fossil dig program on July 13-14.

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well as a family from Italy, by adding them to our Pembina fossil dig in August. In addition, KXNews, KFVR-TV, and WDAY all generated video reports on our fossil digs. The New York Times article caught the eye of David Douglas, a producer for NBC News. In mid-August, an NBC crew came to North Dakota and filmed at our Bismarck public dig. While they were filming, dig participants uncovered two perfectly preserved *Tyrannosaurus rex* teeth in two different areas of the dig, twenty minutes apart. The segment ran on the Today Show on September 17 after a three week delay due to coverage of hurricanes Harvey and Irma. As a direct result of all of the 2017 media coverage, we currently have 360 people on our sign up list for the 2018 public fossil digs.