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Friday, December 26

No School

Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, coleslaw, frosted brownie.

Birthday: Ben Peterson

Saturday, December 27

GBB at Parkston Classic

Birthdays: Rayne Baker • Raymond Alberts

1:00pm: James Lowery birthday

4:30pm: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass

Sunday, December 28

Birthdays: Tracey Heidrich • Sharon Tullis

9:00am: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church Mass

9:00am: St. John's Lutheran Worship

10:00am: Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Pierpont (LCMC) worship

10:15am: Emmanuel Lutheran Worship

11:00am: United Methodist Church Worship

7:00pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Choir

Monday, December 29

No School

Senior Menu: Swiss steak with mushroom gravy, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, rice and raisins, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Adam Herman, Barbara Stauch • Connie Stauch • Nicole Osterman • Delbert Hinkelman • Brady Keith • Melissa Locke

6:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study

Tuesday, December 30

No School

Birthday: Vera Osness

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **OPEN**

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is back at 10 East Railroad Ave. Don't forget, there is also a dumpster at the city shop for aluminum cans with the proceeds going to the pool.

Mark Malmberg, DDS

19 North 6th St.

Oakes, N.D.

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Two bedroom apartment in the Rix Apartments (former city apartments) at 407 N Garfield

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Roger: 605/397-7118

The new myRA account is an 'exceptionally limited' investment option, says AMAC

One investment analyst calls it 'an IRA with training wheels'

WASHINGTON, DC, Dec 26 - "President Obama has once again proved that his pen is mightier than Congress. He signed a memorandum and, voila, the myRA was born," according to Dan Weber, president of the Association of Mature American Citizens.

Perhaps, Weber speculated, Mr. Obama used his presidential powers rather than asking Congress to pass a law "because the new regulation might have come under too much scrutiny by those who are actually responsible for making laws."

Weber said that the myRA is supposed to give workers a new option for supplementing their Social Security investments, but, "in fact, it is what Christine Benz, director of personal finance at the highly-regarded Morningstar investment research firm, calls 'an IRA with training wheels.'"

The president's myRA is "an exceptionally limited option" because it does not allow potential users a choice of investments. It only allows individuals to put retirement funds aside in Federal bonds paying at a current interest rate of 1.5% at a time when the present rate of inflation is 1.7%."

Jamie Hopkins, who covers investment income planning for Forbes, said that "the maximum account balance rules and limited low return investment options place significant limitations on the myRA, potentially limiting its overall impact."

But there's another flaw, said Weber. "Hidden inside the Treasury's new myRA regulation is a very dangerous section (think Obamacare death panels), Section 347.5, which permits a designee of the Secretary to 'waive or modify any provision' of the regulation subject to certain vague clauses. So not only do we have what could arguably be considered a new law, we have a law that can be completely waived or changed on a whim."

The AMAC chief noted that he thinks the idea of allowing workers to invest their own money in a new kind of retirement account to supplement their Social Security accounts is a good idea. "But it needs to be broader and more generous for those who want to invest for retirement."

Weber said that his association has put forth what he calls an Early Retirement Account that would allow the basic benefits of Social Security to remain the same but would also allow individuals to make investments in their own private investment accounts, or ERA's.

"To ensure that the funds in the Early Retirement Account will not be lost through investment with extreme risk, half of the moneys in individual ERA accounts would have to be invested in guaranteed interest products such as government bonds or annuity contracts. The worker would be free to invest the balance in any other investment that meets certain suitability standards."

Weber pointed out that workers opting for the supplemental ERA would earn a substantial amount of extra income when they retire, in addition to their regular earned Social Security benefits. "For example a 25-year-old who contributes only \$15 a week to an IRA would get \$165,407 in additional income by retirement. Increase the amount to \$45 a week and the windfall would be \$352,389 upon retirement."

A New Year's Day Celebration on the Prairie

Ancient Greeks served them as an incentive to drink. Romans imported and fattened them. American Indians on both coasts considered them a staple in their diet. Abraham Lincoln served them to guests at parties at his Illinois home.

And in Dakota Territory in 1880, oysters were a New Year's Day treat for some famous settlers.

Charles and Caroline Ingalls, their daughters Mary, Laura, Carrie and Grace, and their fellow homesteaders and friends near De Smet, Robert and Ella Boast, began the new year with a special dinner.

"There were oysters and honey and sauce [from] home dried



The family photo was taken in 1894. Seated are, from left, Ma (Caroline), Pa (Charles) and Mary. Standing are, left to right, Carrie, Laura and Grace. (Photo courtesy of the South Dakota State Historical Society – State Archives.)

Help Wanted

Wheatcrest Hills - New Wage Scale - is hiring for PT and FT CNA positions. We are looking for caring compassionate individuals to join our team. CNA certification training class to start in December and January, benefit packages available. Please stop in for application or contact Kristin at 605/448-2251. (1209.1216)

SUN DIAL MANOR in Bristol is accepting applications for an RN or LPN. PRN, part time or full time. Small town, home-like facility with new renovations. We offer competitive wages and benefits. We are an equal Employment Opportunity employer and offer a drug free workplace. If interested, please call Connie at 605/492-3615. (121614)

Classifieds

SUNDIAL MANOR in Bristol is accepting applications for a Social Services Coordinator. For more information, please contact Peggy Pearson, Administrator, at 605/492-3615. (121614)

Apartments For Rent

ONE AND TWO bedroom apartment for rent. HDS subsidized. Rent includes utilities and heat. No smoking. Pets okay. Contact Darlene Daly at 605/397-8131.

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fruit the Boasts had brought with them. We told stories and joked and had a happy New Year's day," Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote in *Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography*.

Charles Ingalls referred to the occasion as "the first oyster festival in Kingsbury county."

Pioneer Girl is Wilder's original nonfiction account of her life. It is the true story behind both her fictional "Little House" books for youngsters and the long-running *Little House on the Prairie* television series starring Michael Landon. The autobiography was recently published by the South Dakota Historical Society Press.

In *Pioneer Girl*, Wilder describes 16 years of the mostly westward journey that the Ingalls family took from 1869 through 1885. In 1879, the Ingalls family was living near Walnut Grove, Minn., when Charles accepted a job as bookkeeper and company storekeeper for A.L. Wells and Co., which sold goods to the graders on the Dakota Central Division of the Chicago & North Western Railway Co. The railroad was expanding its rail service west from Tracy, Minn. The family arrived at Silver Lake, near De Smet, in September.

The Boasts homesteaded about a mile east of De Smet. The Ingalls family had New Year's dinner at the Boasts' house.

"It was all the more fun because their one room was so small, that with the table set, we had to

go in the outside door and around to our place at the table one by one and leaving the table we must reverse the order and go out the door following the scripture that, 'The first shall be last and the last first,'" Wilder wrote in *Pioneer Girl*.

It was probably canned oysters on which the Ingalls and Boasts dined. Fresh or canned, oysters had soared in popularity in the 19th century, according to an annotation in *Pioneer Girl*. Packed in hermetically sealed cans, oysters "traveled the breadth of the wide trans-Missouri region almost as soon as Americans ventured there," according to historian Paul Hedren. Railroads brought oysters almost everywhere by 1880.

In her fictional account of the New Year's Day meal in *By the Shores of Silver Lake*, Wilder described how they dined on oyster soup and that Laura had never tasted anything as good as the "sea-tasting hot milk" with oysters at the bottom.

The first day of 1880 ushered in a winter that Wilder described in *Pioneer Girl* as passing quickly and merrily.

Individuals may order copies of *Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography* through the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation at (605) 773-6346 or www.sdhsf.org. More information about Wilder's autobiography can be found at www.pioneerproject.org.

This moment in South Dakota history is provided by the South Dakota Historical Society Foundation, the nonprofit fundraising partner of the South Dakota State Historical Society. Find us on the web at www.sdhsf.org. Contact us at info@sdhsf.org to submit a story idea.



The photo of Laura was taken when she was 24. (Photo courtesy of the South Dakota State Historical Society – State Archives.)

Aberdeen Cornerstones Career Learning Center Teaches Citizenship Classes

The Aberdeen Cornerstones Career Learning Center in conjunction with Lutheran Social Services of Huron has earned a grant, which allows a twelve-week course to prepare for the U.S. Naturalization (citizenship) Exam. To meet the requirements for the class, those interested must have a permanent resident card, a green card, speak, write, and read English, and have lived in the United States for four to five years.

To become a citizen everyone must pass a Civics test and an English test. The curriculum includes vocabulary, history, civics, government, reading, writing, and speaking. The civics test contains questions about the history and government of the United States. During the interview, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigrant Service (USCIS) representative asks each candidate for citizenship 10 questions from a 100 question list. The English test begins the moment the candidate enters the USCIS office. The candidate is expected to understand and respond appropriately to everything the USCIS officer says, speak in English, and write in English.

The first class will begin February 4th and end on March 12th. Classes will meet twice a week on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 5:00 to 7:00 pm at the Aberdeen Cornerstones Career Learning Center at 420 South Roosevelt Street. The students who have lived in the United States four or five years or more will now fill out an N-400 form to begin the citizenship process. To do this they will meet with a LSS attorney who will assist them with the process. To register for the class or for more information call the Aberdeen Cornerstones Career Learning Center at (605) 626-2298 by January 28, 2015.

How well do you know U.S. history and civics? Could you answer the following questions? 1. How many amendments does the Constitution have? 2. What stops one branch of government from becoming too powerful? 3. What is the "rule of law"? 4. How many voting members are in the House of Representatives? 5. How many justices are on the Supreme Court? (Answers to these questions are on Page 17.)

Today in Weather History

1988: Moderate to heavy snow fell across western and northern South Dakota, as well as across most of Minnesota, from the evening of the 25th through the morning of the 27th. Much of the northern one-half to two-thirds of Minnesota and the western and northern sections of South Dakota were blanketed with 6-12 inches of new snow. Numerous accidents and minor injuries were indirectly related to the snowy conditions. Several snowfall amounts in South Dakota included 12 inches at Timber Lake; 10 to 12 inches at Seneca and Hoven; 11 inches at Aberdeen; 8 inches at Pierre, Eureka and Blunt; 7 inches at Chelsea, Redfield, Cottonwood, and Rapid City; and 6 inches at Ferney, Huron, and Eden. In Minnesota, 8 inches fell in Browns Valley, 6 inches fell at Wheaton, and 5 inches accumulated at Artichoke Lake.

1993: Strong winds accompanied one to four inches of snow in northeast and part of southeast South Dakota on the 24th through 26th, although ten inches of snow fell at Deerfield in the Black Hills. The strong winds damaged the roof of a retirement home being constructed at Alexandria just southeast of Mitchell in southeast South Dakota.

1927: The worst Christmas blizzard in a century buried the UK. While most of the country experienced snow, the south suffered from the brunt of the storm with drifts in places to 15 feet or more.

1985: Seattle, WA was in the midst of two and a half weeks of heavy fog. Christmas holiday travel was disrupted due to visibility of less than one eighth of a mile. Many flights were canceled and numerous accidents cluttered the highways.

2009: A huge blizzard raged across the Great Plains from the 24th through today. One to two feet of snow, propelled by winds up to 60 mph, buried the area from Oklahoma to the upper Mississippi Valley. Five people died in Oklahoma.

1776 - George Washington crossed the ice clogged Delaware River. He marched on Trenton in the midst of snow and sleet thus surprising and capturing many of the British garrison. (David Ludlum)

1947 - New York City received a record 26.4 inches of snow in 24 hours, with as much as 32 inches reported in the suburbs. The heavy snow brought traffic to a standstill, and snow removal cost eight million dollars. Thirty thousand persons were called upon to remove the 100 million tons of snow. The storm claimed 27 lives. (26th-27th) (David Ludlum)

1983 - Miami, FL, established a December record with a morning low of 33 degrees. Just three days earlier, and again three days later, record warm temperatures were reported in Florida, with daytime highs in the 80s. (The National

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Weather Summary)

1987 - Freezing rain plagued parts of the south central U.S., from northwest Texas to southwestern Missouri. Southwestern Missouri was turned into a huge skating rink as roads became sheets of ice. Damage to tree limbs and power lines compared to a hundred tornadoes, and half of the city of Springfield was left without electricity for 24 hours. Snow, sleet and ice covered the northwest two thirds of Oklahoma. 75,000 homes were left without electricity as ice accumulated one to two inches in a 40-mile band from Duncan to Norman to Tulsa to Miami. 25,000 of those homes were still without power a week later. The storm claimed the lives of seven persons. (24th-27th) (The Weather Channel) (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)








1988 - Low pressure produced heavy snow from North Dakota to western sections of the Great Lakes Region, with up to fourteen inches reported in the Chicago area. Cold arctic air hovered over the Plateau Region. Temperatures in the Big Smokey Valley of Nevada plunged to 31 degrees below zero. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Strong northerly winds behind an arctic cold front produced snow squalls in the Great Lakes Region and dangerous wind chill temperatures in the northeastern U.S. Wind chill readings as cold as 40 degrees below zero were reported in New York State. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - A major snow storm in Utah caused several fatalities due to avalanches. As much as 2 ft of snow fell in parts of the state, particularly south of Salt Lake City. Three people that were seen snowboarding in the Aspen Grove recreational area have been presumed dead, all others managed to escape or be rescued (Reuters).

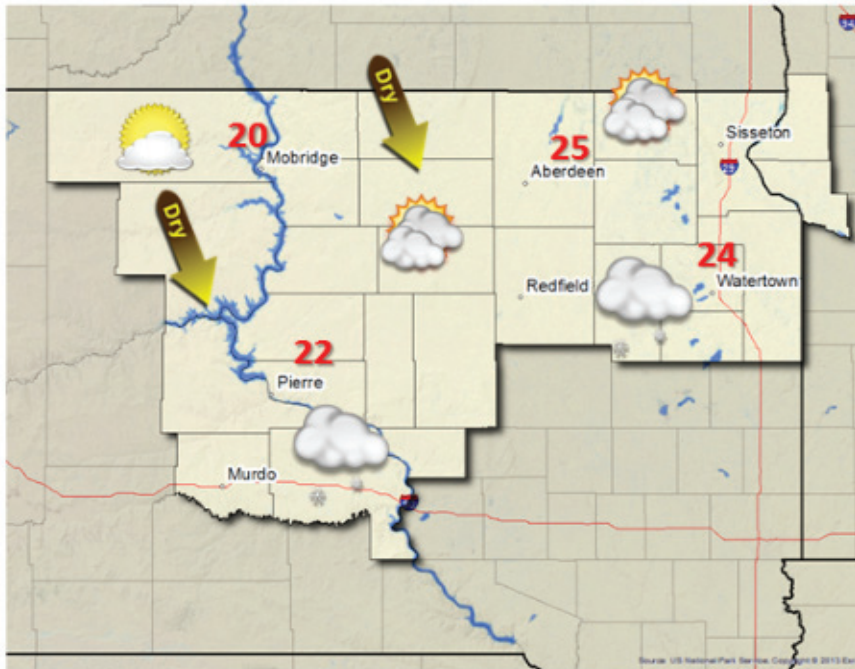
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TODAY	TONIGHT	SATURDAY	SATURDAY NIGHT	SUNDAY	SUNDAY NIGHT	MONDAY
						
Wintry Mix High: 25 °F	Partly Cloudy Low: 7 °F	Mostly Sunny High: 24 °F	Mostly Cloudy Low: 12 °F	Mostly Cloudy High: 20 °F	Mostly Cloudy Low: -2 °F	Cold High: 4 °F

Cooler and Drier Air Pushing in Today

Morning Flurries/Freezing Drizzle Diminishing



	Highs	Lows	Weather
Saturday	20-30 F	0- 10F	Seasonal
Sunday	15-25 F	5- 15F	Arctic Air arrives late
Monday	0-10 F	-5 to +5 F	Cold
Tuesday	Zero to +5 F	-10 to -20 F	Cold
New Years Eve	15 - 25 F	Zero to -10 F	WARMER

National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Updated: 12/26/2014 3:32 AM

Light snow and patchy areas of freezing drizzle will diminish this morning as cooler and drier air works into the area from the north. The weekend looks seasonal, with a plunge of cold arctic air on Sunday evening bringing a cold start to next week.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 29.4 at 9:01 AM

Low: 26.6 at 11:26 PM

Wind Chill:

High Gust: 21 at 3:55 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 54° in 1907

Record Low: -29° in 1990

Average High: 23°F

Average Low: 3°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.41

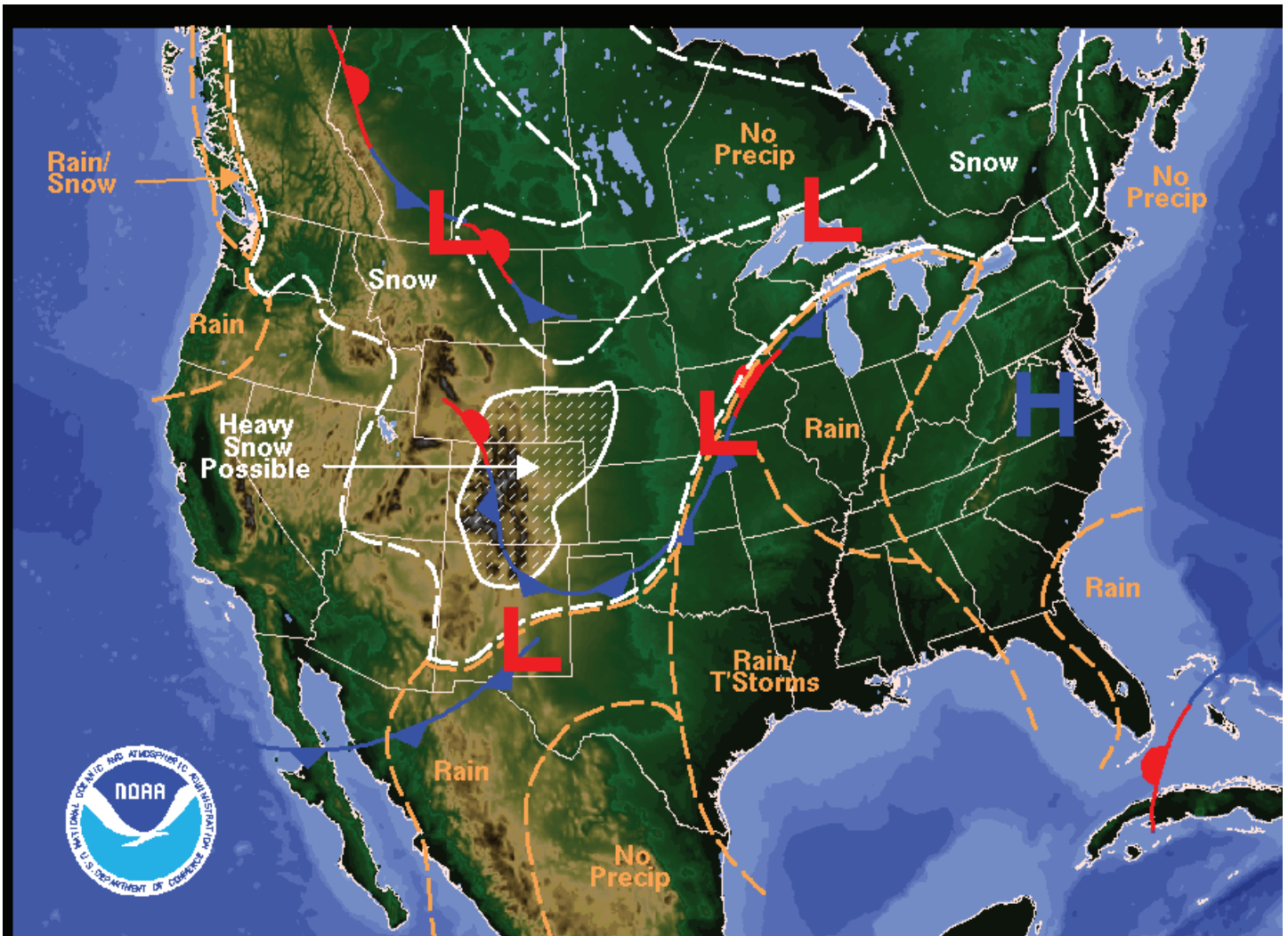
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.00

Average Precip to date: 21.61

Precip Year to Date: 13.99

Sunset Tonight: 4:57 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Fri, Dec 26, 2014, issued 2:44 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



A GIFT WORTH RECEIVING

"Mommy," asked a small child, "how long did Baby Jesus stay in the manger?"

Puzzled, the mother answered. "Not too long, I would imagine."

Unfortunately, there are far too many individuals who leave Jesus in the stable, seeing His birth as an end, not the beginning. Not everyone realizes that this day is the day that the journey to the cross actually began on earth. This One who was born on this day of days is often left wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. It seems that many have no understanding of the spiritual significance or importance of Christmas.

But for those of us who accept and acknowledge Christ as our Savior, we rejoice and say with the Apostle Paul, "Thank God for His Son – a gift too wonderful to describe!"

This Gift is the gift of God Himself: His only begotten Son. It is the source of His grace, the expression of His mercy, the revelation of His plan, the meaning of His purpose, the passion of His love, the assurance of His presence and the provision for our salvation. He knew what we needed then and what we need now. In Him we have faith to fight our fears and hope for a life in His presence. "Too wonderful" indeed.

Prayer: Thank You, Father, for this Gift we do not deserve, but could not live without. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: 2 Corinthians 9:15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Parts of South Dakota in for snow, bitter cold

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Parts of South Dakota could see a couple of inches of snow before bitter cold sets in.

The National Weather Service has issued a winter weather advisory for the southeastern part of the state for late Friday into early Saturday, with snow likely in the region.

Forecasters say arctic air will move into the area early next week. Overnight lows into Tuesday could be as cold as 15 degrees below zero, with wind chills even colder than that.

Skyforce guard Drew sets D-League assists record

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls Skyforce guard Larry Drew II dished out 23 assists against the Rio Grande Valley Vipers on Christmas night, breaking the NBA Development League record.

The previous record of 22 was set by Darryl McDonald of the Skyforce in 1992 and tied in 2007 by Idaho's Randy Livingston.

Drew also scored 16 points as the Skyforce downed the Vipers 135-129.

Sioux Falls to offer Christmas tree drop-off sites

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls will have two Christmas tree drop-off sites open to the public starting Friday.

The sites will operate from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Jan. 18.

One drop-off site is located on East Chambers Street, west of Cliff Avenue by the Household Hazardous Waste Facility. The other site is on Lyon Boulevard, west of the W.H. Lyon Fairgrounds.

Large and commercial loads won't be accepted. All ornaments must be removed before disposing of the tree.

There's no cost for dropping a tree.

Tribe official wants health care through Sanford

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A tribal president wants to tackle substandard health care on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation by kicking out the Indian Health Service and contracting with Sanford Health, a large provider

FRIDAY IS FRIED CHICKEN DAY
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Serving 5-9 p.m.

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in the Dakotas.

Oglala Sioux Tribal President John Yellow Bird Steele said recently the tribe needs to make clear that health care is still the federal government's obligation, but escape the Indian Health Service.

"I've just got the general idea of better health care, recognizing that the federal government is a failure," Yellow Bird Steele said. "It's not the people in the system, it's the system itself."

His proposal for Sanford Health to take over operations would have to be approved by the Oglala Sioux Tribal Council and could need to go to a referendum, said Councilwoman Sonia Weston, who chairs the tribal council's Health and Human Services Committee. Weston said her panel would review the plan to get more specific information but noted the process is in its early stages and that the idea has been proposed in the past.

Criticisms of the Indian Health Service from the tribes and federal elected officials are nothing new.

In late May, representatives of seven Montana and Wyoming reservations delivered a litany of health care woes and described an agency compromised by bloated bureaucracy during a U.S. Senate Indian Affairs Committee field hearing. They said IHS has been unable to fulfill its core duty — to provide health care for more than 2 million American Indians and Alaska Natives across the country as part of its trust responsibility to tribes that gave up their land when the United States was being formed.

At a public meeting last week, Yellow Bird Steele decried incorrect prescriptions and diagnoses at Indian Health Service facilities.

Yellow Bird Steele has also discussed the health care plan with the leaders of at least two other tribes.

Rosebud Sioux President Cyril Scott said he supports reform efforts to improve "below substandard" health care, but said the changes would have to go through his tribal council. Cheyenne River Sioux Chairman Harold Frazier couldn't be reached for comment.

A spokeswoman for the Indian Health Service declined to comment. Ruth Krystopolski, executive vice president of care innovation for Sanford Health, said through a spokesman that the company welcomes continued conversations on how it can meet tribal needs.

U.S. Sen John Thune said he routinely hears concerns about the effectiveness of the Indian Health Service and is interested in learning about new methods of delivering better care.

"There's an awful lot of room for improvement," he said.

Deadwood gambling revenue sees small increase

DEADWOOD, S.D. (AP) — Gaming officials in the state say Deadwood's November gambling revenue saw a small increase over the same month last year.

Gamers in the Northern Hills town generated more than \$7 million in gross revenue in November. Officials say revenue was up 0.61 percent, or \$43,000, last month compared to November 2013.

The South Dakota Commission on Gaming says slot machine play fell nearly 4 percent to \$5.9 million last month. At the same time, table game play jumped more than 35 percent to \$1.1 million.

Mike Rodman is the executive director of the Deadwood Gaming Association. Rodman says the commercial casino industry nationwide has shown signs of weak performance.

He adds that the increase in table game business shows that patrons are increasingly enjoying gaming options beyond slot machines.

AP News in Brief

Beachside memorials and prayers across Asia mark 10th anniversary of Indian Ocean tsunami

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (AP) — Crying onlookers took part in beachside memorials and religious services across Asia on Friday to mark the 10th anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami that left more than a quarter million people dead in one of modern history's worst natural disasters.

The devastating Dec. 26, 2004, tsunami struck a dozen countries around the Indian Ocean rim, killing 230,000 people. It eradicated entire coastal communities, decimated families and crashed over tourist-filled beaches the morning after Christmas. Survivors waded through a horror show of corpse-filled waters.

As part of Friday's solemn commemorations, survivors, government officials, diplomats and families of victims gathered in Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and elsewhere. Moments of silence were planned in several spots to mark the exact time the tsunami struck, a moment that united the world in grief.

"I cannot forget the smell of the air, the water at that time ... even after 10 years," said Teuku Ahmad Salman, a 51-year-old resident who joined thousands of people in a prayer service in Banda Aceh, Indonesia.

"I cannot forget how I lost hold of my wife, my kids, my house," he said sobbing, recounting that he refused to believe for years that they had died but finally gave up looking for them.

Sony's 'The Interview' woes highlight struggle to meld gadget, entertainment businesses

TOKYO (AP) — Sony's iconic gadgetry and the star appeal of Hollywood may have appeared to be a perfect match when the electronics giant bought Columbia Pictures in 1989. A quarter century later, it's apparent that Sony Corp. has not attained the magic synergy it was hoping for.

The stolid silence of Sony's Tokyo headquarters over the hoopla surrounding Sony Pictures Entertainment's "The Interview" underscores the longstanding divide between the Japanese parent company and its U.S.-led and -run motion pictures subsidiary, successor to Columbia Pictures.

Marrying the cultures of Sony Corp., a quintessentially Japanese company, and its Hollywood studio was such a challenge that company founder Akio Morita and his successor as chairman, Norio Ohga, never really tried, analysts say. Instead, they left Sony Pictures to mostly run itself.

"They're separate businesses run by separate management," said Damian Thong, a senior analyst at Macquarie Capital Securities (Japan). "Since the late 1990s it's been run basically as a stand-alone business."

Sony Corp. in Tokyo refused requests for comment on developments related to "The Interview," referring all inquiries to Sony Pictures in the U.S. After first withdrawing the movie from a planned Christmas release on as many as 3,000 screens, Sony Pictures made the movie available on various digital platforms Wednesday, a day after Sony and independent theaters agreed to release it in over 300 venues on Christmas.

Wake to be held for Rafael Ramos, 1 of 2 NYPD officers killed in patrol car ambush shooting

NEW YORK (AP) — Mourners of a New York Police Department officer killed with his partner in an ambush shooting will gather at a Queens church for his wake.

Officer Rafael Ramos will be remembered Friday evening at Christ Tabernacle Church, in the Glendale section of Queens, where he was a longstanding and deeply committed member, according to family and friends.

His funeral is scheduled to be held there on Saturday and Vice President Joe Biden has said he will attend it.

Ramos was killed Dec. 20 along with his partner, Officer Wenjian Liu, as they sat in their patrol car on a Brooklyn street. The shooter, Ismaaiyl Brinsley, later killed himself.

Investigators say Brinsley was an emotionally disturbed loner, who started off his rampage by shooting an ex-girlfriend in Baltimore. He also posted threats to police online, and made references to high-profile cases of unarmed black men killed by white police officers.

Sanders says he'll decide by March whether to launch 'unique effort' to seek White House

BURLINGTON, Vt. (AP) — Vermont independent Sen. Bernie Sanders says he'll decide by March whether to launch a 2016 presidential campaign and, if so, whether he'll seek the Democratic nomination. Either way, Sanders says he wouldn't run just to nudge the debate to the left.

"I don't want to do it unless I can do it well," he told The Associated Press. "I don't want to do it unless we can win this thing."

Sanders, a socialist, said he grew up "solidly lower middle class" in a Jewish family in Brooklyn — his father, an immigrant from Poland, sold paint for a living —and his views about the distribution of wealth were formed early.

"A lack of money in my family was a very significant aspect of my growing up ... kids in my class would have new jackets, new coats, and I would get hand-me-downs," Sanders said.

After the University of Chicago, Sanders came to Vermont in the 1960s as part of the counterculture, back-to-the-land movement that turned the state from solid Yankee Republican into one of the bluest in the country.

With Christmas visit to US troops, Obama marks end of combat in Afghanistan, says world safer

KANEOHE BAY, Hawaii (AP) — President Barack Obama marked the end of more than a decade of combat in Afghanistan by paying tribute to America's military, telling troops on Christmas Day that their sacrifices have allowed for a more peaceful, prosperous world to emerge out of the ashes of 9/11.

At an oceanfront Marine Corps base in Hawaii, Obama told troops that while tough challenges remain for the U.S. military in hotspots like Iraq and West Africa, the world as a whole is better off because American troops put country first and served with distinction. He said Americans and their president could not be more thankful.

"Because of the extraordinary service of the men and women in the American armed forces, Afghanistan has a chance to rebuild its own country," Obama said to applause from Marines and their families.

"We are safer. It's not going to be a source of terrorist attacks again."

Thirteen years and \$1 trillion later, the U.S. is preparing to pull the vast majority of its combat troops out of Afghanistan by year's end, as the U.S. and its partners seek to turn the page on a bloody chapter that started the day that al-Qaida militants struck American soil on Sept. 11, 2011. From a peak 140,000 troops in 2010, the U.S. and NATO plan to leave just 13,500 behind for training and battlefield support.

Although there are reasons for cautious optimism, including a new Afghan president whose seriousness of effort has inspired U.S. confidence, the broader picture still looks grim.

Ahead of polls, some Israeli ultra-Orthodox women call for greater representation

JERUSALEM (AP) — A struggle for women's rights is brewing within Israel's deeply conservative ultra-Orthodox community, where women, largely shut out of politics, are beginning to demand greater representation in the country's parliament.

More than 20 percent of Israeli lawmakers are female, but not one woman serves from the country's two ultra-Orthodox, or haredi, parties. In haredi communities, women are expected to manage a home, raise children and provide an income for the family, often while the husband studies Torah.

Those beliefs remain firmly entrenched, but in the run-up to the March 17 elections, traditional views of the role of women in haredi politics are being challenged in mainstream and ultra-Orthodox media — a shift that activists say marks a major stride toward more equitable representation.

The two haredi parties in the Knesset, Shas and United Torah Judaism, have long been central players in Israeli coalition governments, often figuring as kingmakers. Each party represents observant Jews who tend to vote based on their rabbis' instructions, and who largely oppose having women as lawmakers because it would be considered immodest.

Only a few haredi women have served in parliament, but never as members of ultra-Orthodox parties, and those who have served usually faced a backlash from their communities. Women do serve in the Jewish Home party, which mainly represents less conservative Modern Orthodox Jews.

Small Michigan college sees local benefit, national potential in loan reimbursement program

ADRIAN, Mich. (AP) — When it came time to pick a college, Abby Slusher leaned toward a private school near her southeastern Michigan home for the small campus and class sizes. Her mother pushed Adrian College for another reason: A new program guaranteeing every graduate would make more than \$37,000, or get some or all student loans reimbursed.

Adrian is among the first colleges to take out insurance policies on every incoming freshman and transfer student who have student loans and at least two years of school remaining.

"She said, 'Look at me, I'm still trying to pay my student loans off — this would be great. I don't want you in this situation,'" said Slusher, 18, who is studying to become a social worker. "And seeing her in this situation, I don't want that."

The idea has been around for a few decades at Yale Law School and specific programs elsewhere such as seminary and social work degrees. Some small, religious schools started offering guarantees to all new students in recent years, but Adrian President Jeffrey Docking is taking it further by framing the program as a solution to skyrocketing tuition costs and student loan defaults. His crusade has gotten

the attention of U.S. lawmakers and education officials.

“Obviously, we feel like this is a big solution to a big problem — maybe the biggest problem right now in higher education,” Docking said. “We felt like we needed to make a grand statement.”

Once essential at weddings, India’s colorful brass bands struggle amid changing tastes

NEW DELHI (AP) — The wedding season is in full swing in India, marking what should be the busiest time of year for the traditional brass bands that lead raucous processions announcing the arrival of the bridegroom to the neighborhood.

Dressed in faded military-style uniforms or long silken tunics and turbans, brass bands playing the latest Bollywood tunes have long been a must-have at any Indian wedding.

But as the tastes of young, wealthier Indians shift to more modern music, young couples increasingly choose DJs playing electronic music instead of live bands. The shift is leaving band owners and musicians struggling to find gigs, exacerbating an already difficult existence.

Poor wages, irregular work hours and endless travel eventually take their toll, said Shanawaz Ali, a bandmaster who plays several instruments.

“At the end of more than 35 years of playing in different bands, I have no savings. Nothing,” said Ali, who has urged his children to take up other trades. “There is no future in the band musician’s profession.”

Today in History

The Associated Press

Today is Friday, Dec. 26, the 360th day of 2014. There are five days left in the year. The seven-day African-American holiday Kwanzaa begins today. This is Boxing Day.

Today’s Highlight in History:

On Dec. 26, 2004, more than 230,000 people, mostly in southern Asia, were killed by a 100-foot-high tsunami triggered by a 9.1-magnitude earthquake beneath the Indian Ocean.

On this date:

In 1776, the British suffered a major defeat in the Battle of Trenton during the Revolutionary War.

In 1799, former President George Washington was eulogized by Col. Henry Lee as “first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen.”

In 1908, Jack Johnson became the first African-American boxer to win the world heavyweight championship as he defeated Canadian Tommy Burns in Sydney, Australia.

In 1914, actor Richard Widmark was born in Sunrise Township, Minnesota.

In 1933, Nissan Motor Co. was founded in Yokohama, Japan, as the Automobile Manufacturing Co.

In 1944, during the World War II Battle of the Bulge, the embattled U.S. 101st Airborne Division in Bastogne, Belgium, was relieved by units of the 4th Armored Division. Tennessee Williams’ play “The Glass Menagerie” was first performed at the Civic Theatre in Chicago.

In 1966, Kwanzaa was first celebrated.

In 1972, the 33rd president of the United States, Harry S. Truman, died in Kansas City, Missouri, at age 88.

In 1974, comedian Jack Benny died in Los Angeles at age 80.

In 1994, French commandos stormed a hijacked Air France jetliner on the ground in Marseille, killing

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four Algerian hijackers and freeing 170 hostages.

In 1996, 6-year-old beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey was found beaten and strangled in the basement of her family's home in Boulder, Colorado. (To date, the slaying remains unsolved.)

In 2006, former President Gerald R. Ford died in Rancho Mirage, California, at age 93.

Ten years ago: An unmanned Russian cargo ship docked at the international space station, ending a shortage that forced astronauts to ration supplies. Peyton Manning of the Indianapolis Colts broke Dan Marino's single-season touchdown pass record when he threw his 48th and 49th of the season against San Diego. (The Colts defeated San Diego in overtime, 34-31.) Hall of Famer Reggie White, one of the greatest defensive players in NFL history, died in North Carolina at age 43.

Five years ago: A 23-year-old Nigerian man, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab (OO'-mahr fah-ROOK' ahb-DOOL'-moo-TAH'-lahb), who claimed to have ties to al-Qaida, was charged with trying to destroy a Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas Day. Buddhist monks chanted on white-sanded beaches in Thailand and thousands prayed at mosques in Indonesia to mark the fifth anniversary of the Asian tsunami. Percy Sutton, the pioneering civil rights attorney who represented Malcolm X before launching successful careers as a political power broker and media mogul, died in New York at 89.

One year ago: Rounding out a tough and frustrating year, President Barack Obama signed a bipartisan budget deal easing spending cuts and a defense bill cracking down on sexual assault in the military. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe paid his respects at the Yasukuni Shrine honoring Japan's war dead in a move that drew sharp rebukes from China and South Korea, as well as disappointment from the United States. LeBron James of the Miami Heat was selected as The Associated Press' 2013 Male Athlete of the Year.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Donald Moffat is 84. Actor Caroll Spinney (Big Bird on TV's "Sesame Street") is 81. Rhythm-and-blues singer Abdul "Duke" Fakir (The Four Tops) is 79. Record producer Phil Spector is 75. "America's Most Wanted" host John Walsh is 69. Country musician Bob Carpenter (The Nitty Gritty Dirt Band) is 68. Baseball Hall of Fame catcher Carlton Fisk is 67. Retired MLB All-Star Chris Chambliss is 66. Baseball Hall of Famer Ozzie Smith is 60. Former Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind., is 59. Humorist David Sedaris is 58. Rock musician James Kottak (The Scorpions) is 52. Country musician Brian Westrum (Sons of the Desert) is 52. Rock musician Lars Ulrich (Metallica) is 51. Actress Nadia Dajani is 49. Rock musician J is 47. Country singer Audrey Wiggins is 47. Rock musician Peter Klett (Candlebox) is 45. Rock singer James Mercer (The Shins; Flake) is 44. Actor-singer Jared Leto is 43. Actress Kendra C. Johnson (TV: "Love Thy Neighbor") is 38. Rock singer Chris Daughtry is 35. Actress Beth Behrs is 29. Actor Kit Harington (TV: "Game of Thrones") is 28. Actress Eden Sher is 23. Pop singer Jade Thirlwall (Little Mix Actor) is 22. Actor Zach Mills is 19.

Thought for Today: "Time is the longest distance between two places." - From "The Glass Menagerie" by Tennessee Williams (1911-1983).

Answers

1. 27
2. Checks and balances or separation of powers
3. No one is above the law.
4. 435
5. 9