

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 1 of 31

- 1- Groton Ford ad
- 1- Pre-School 3-year-old screening ad
- 1- Recycling Trailers in Groton
- 1- Today's Information
- 2- Wrestling Photos
- 2- James Valley Telco Open House Ad
- 4- 5 things to do with an unexpected inheritance
- 5- Groton Chamber Holiday Boxes
- 6 - Today in Weather History
- 7- Local Weather Forecast
- 8- National Weather Map
- 8- Local Weather
- 9- Daily Devotional
- 10 - News from the Associated Press
- 30- From the White House - President's Message

Monday, December 7

State FFA Leadership CDE in Pierre
School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Cheese sticks, puzzle tots, carrots and dip, fruit.

Senior Menu: Turkey Chow Mein, rice and Chow Mein noodles, broccoli, Waldorf Salad, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Megan Weber • Morgan McNickle • Landon Marzahn

6:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study

5:30pm: Financial Aid Night

7:00pm: City Council Meeting

Tuesday, December 8

School Breakfast: Cinnamon roll, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Lasagna hot dish, corn, tea bun, romaine salad, fruit

Senior Menu: Hot roast beef combination, carrots, Mandarin oranges, peanut butter cookie.

Birthdays: Colton Monson

10:00am: United Methodist Women's Bible Study

6:30pm: JH GBB game at Groton (1 game only)

7:00pm: Emmanuel Lutheran Council

Wednesday, December 9

School Breakfast: French toast sticks, sausage links, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Hot dogs, baked beans, broccoli and dip, fruit.

Senior Menu: Swiss steak with mushroom gravy, mashed potatoes, mixed vegetables, fruit sauce, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Traci Davies, Shelby Tietz, Ann Rix, Brooklyn Gilbert, Doris Anderson, Sydney Holmes, Wesley Morehouse

7:00am: United Methodist Men's Bible Study

2015 Groton Area Elementary Preschool Developmental Screening for 3 year olds

Tuesday, Dec. 15, 2015

Parents of children ages 3 in the Groton Area School District are asked to contact Heidi Krueger at the Groton Area Elementary School during school hours at 397-2317 to set up a screening time or to confirm their screening time.

The Developmental Screening will take place at the Groton Area High School Arena. Please park and use the east entrance to the gym.

Open: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located at 10 East Railroad Ave.

The cardboard/paper

recycling trailer at the school is **Open**

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Put our experienced team to work for you!

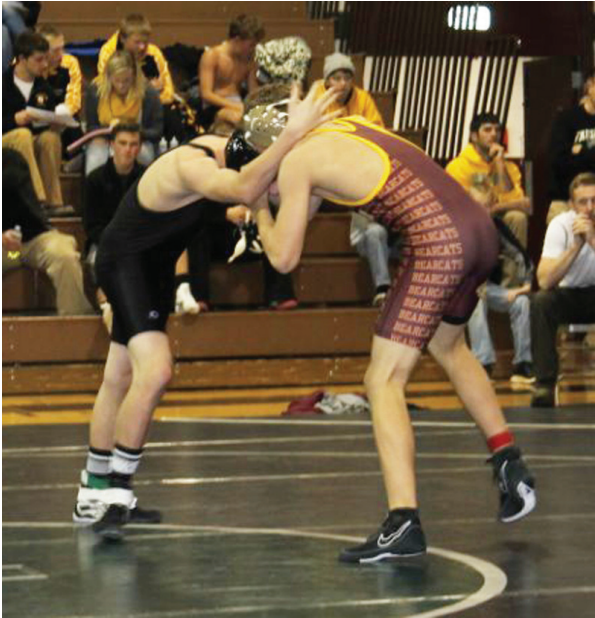
GROTON
Ford

GROTONFORD.COM 605-397-2311

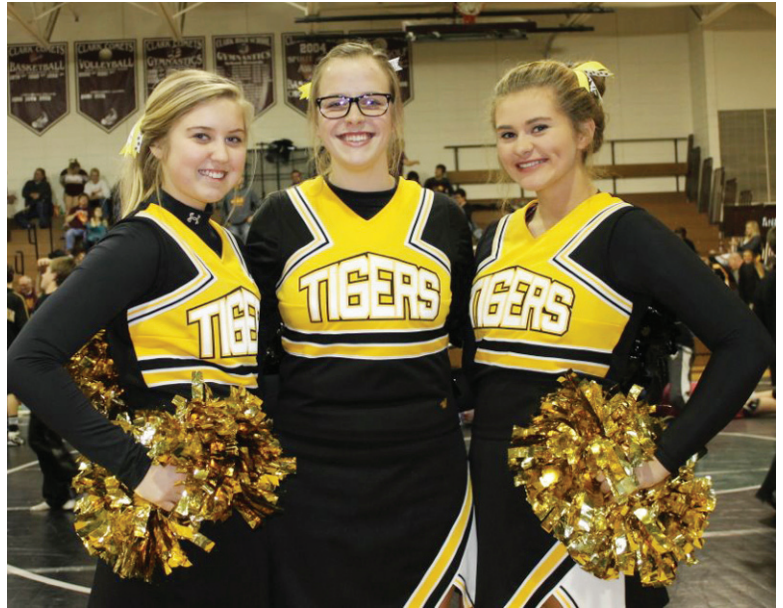
Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 2 of 31

Groton wrestlers at Clark-Willow Lake Tourney



Thomas Cranford wrestling Joey Hubsch from Webster, 126 lbs. (Photo by Kara Anderson)



Our awesome cheerleaders Brenna Johnson, Michaela Blumhardt, and Madison Sippel. (Photo by Kara Anderson)



**James Valley Telecommunication's
Holiday Open House**

**Tuesday, December 8th 10am-4pm
235 E 1st Ave Groton**

Christmas Treats, In-Store Specials &
Door Prizes (including a \$100 JVT Credit)!

12 Days of Christmas Giveaway
Register to win at jamesvalley.com

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 3 of 31



Brandyn Anderson wrestling heavy weight against Chase Sigdestad from Webster. (Photo by Kara Anderson)



Trevor Pray, 120 lbs, wrestling Preston Jones from Britton-Hecla. (Photo by Kara Anderson)



Trevor Pray taking on Carsten McNeil from Redfield-Doland. Pray won both his matches so he took 1st place at this tournament. (Photo by Kara Anderson)



Thomas Cranford wrestling Joe Woodring from Redfield-Doland. (Photo by Kara Anderson)



Brandyn Anderson wrestling Ethan Ninke from Webster Area. Brandyn won this championship match which also made him a 1st place winner. (Photo by Kara Anderson)

5 Things to Do With an Unexpected Inheritance

By Nathaniel Sillin

Unexpected money from a friend or relative can be a great surprise or a potentially difficult money lesson. How you plan for unexpected money issues overall can be a key to how well you'll handle a sudden windfall.

Many people don't do so well. A recent study (<http://researchnews.osu.edu/archive/inheritance.htm>) from Ohio State University suggests that adults who inherit money are saving only about half of what they receive. Researcher Jay Zagorsky reported that about only 11 percent of the participants had received an inheritance with the median amount only around \$11,340. Zagorsky suggests awareness of such high spending numbers suggest it is time for a campaign on saving inherited wealth.

Want to get there early? Here's a plan for dealing with an unexpected inheritance or any other surprise money issues in the future:

1. Start by getting control of your current finances. Why wait for an inheritance? In 2013, the Gallup organization reported that only 1 in 3 Americans actually prepared a written or computerized household budget. If you've never prepared a budget before, know that it is the traditional starting point for all personal finance decisions.

2. Start saving now. The long-term purpose of budgeting (<http://www.practicalmoneyskills.com/budgeting/>) is to find excess dollars so you can save and plan for the future. Even if it's a few dollars a week as other resources go toward everyday expenses, get in the habit of regular savings and investment now. Consider activating direct deposit to build those amounts automatically. If an inheritance happens, you will already have savings habits in place and account relationships set up to receive the money.

3. Line up qualified advice. Skilled financial or tax experts can help you review what you've done so far with your money and suggest ways to make your personal savings or investments go farther. Having this relationship in place before an expected – or unexpected – windfall is valuable. They'll know your situation and the best ways to handle new money. If an inheritance happens, consider a certified financial planner, certified public accountant and an attorney involved in trust or estate matters for your financial team.

4. Evaluate your relationships. Money can change people for better or worse. This is why you see so many troubling news stories about people who have an unexpected windfall. The best approach to sudden money is to go quietly and immediately into the planning phase – don't make announcements and involve only key loved ones who need to be part of the process.

5. Don't go on a spending spree. If you're lucky enough to receive an inheritance of significant size, planning doesn't mean quitting your job, buying a car or moving out of your current place, at least not immediately. Involve members of your financial team in your planning. After any tax or estate issues are settled and money is free for use, extinguish long-standing expenses, build an emergency fund and then establish savings and investments that are appropriate for you and your loved ones. Once details are complete, do have some fun, but try to keep the cost below 10 percent of the total inheritance amount.

Bottom line: Inherited money can help build a financial future. Get some advice, plan thoughtfully for taxes and investments and save a little bit for fun or luxury. Without proper planning, windfalls don't always last as long as you think.

Nathaniel Sillin directs Visa's financial education programs. To follow Practical Money Skills on Twitter: www.twitter.com/PracticalMoney.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 5 of 31



Groton Chamber Holiday Boxes are out about in Groton!

This Week (thru 12/04) – Dairy Queen

Next Week (thru 12/13) – Lori's Pharmacy

Stop by each participating businesses and register for \$25
Groton Chamber Bucks – or a prize supplied by the business.
Prizes will be drawn weekly – starting over each week with
entries!



Merry
Christmas

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 6 of 31

Today in Weather History

December 7, 1963: Winds of 50 to 60 mph resulted in blowing snow all day on the 7th, which reduced visibilities to near zero and produced snow drifts several feet deep in many areas. Snowfall in eastern South Dakota was generally from 3 to 7 inches with 1 to 2 inches in the western part of the state. Storm total snowfall included 8 inches at Sisseton, 5 inches at Watertown and Wheaton, 4 inches at Aberdeen, and 2 inches at Mobridge.

December 7, 1971: Heavy snow of 7 to 12 inches was reported in north central South Dakota on the 7th. Timber Lake and Eagle Butte each reported 12 inches of snow. Strong winds accompanied the snow and caused extensive drifting. Drifts up to 15 feet were reported in sheltered areas near Lemmon. Seven inches fell at Mobridge and 11 inches fell at Selby. McIntosh received 4 inches.

December 7, 1740: By all accounts, the Merrimack River in New Hampshire flooded on this day. This is likely the first recorded flood in New Hampshire. "The snow melted, and a freshet occurred in the Merrimack River, nothing like it having been experienced there for seventy years. At Haverhill, the stream rose fifteen feet, and many houses were floated off." (Perley, Sidney, 1891, *Historic storms of New England* p. 49-51).

December 7, 2006: A rare tornado tore through Kensal Rise in London. This T4 on the TORRO scale, equivalent to an F2 on the Fujita scale, injured 6 people and damaged 150 homes. According to the BBC, the last tornado which caused significant damage in London was in December 1954, in west London.

1740 - In early December two weeks of mild and rainy weather culminated in the worst flood in fifty years in the Lower Connecticut River Valley. The Merrimack River swelled to its highest level, and in Maine the raging waters swept away mills, carried off bridges, and ruined highways. (David Ludlum)

1935 - Severe flooding hit parts of the Houston, TX, area. Eight persons were killed as one hundred city blocks were inundated. Satsuma reported 16.49 inches of rain. The Buffalo and White Oak Bayous crested on the 9th. (6th-8th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Heavy rain fell across eastern Puerto Rico, with 19.41 inches reported at Las Piedras. Flooding caused five million dollars damage. Another in a series of storms hit the northwestern U.S., with wind gusts above 100 mph reported at Cape Blanco OR. While snow and gusty winds accompanied a cold front crossing the Rockies, strong westerly winds, gusting to 93 mph at Boulder CO, helped temperatures in western Kansas reach the 60s for the sixth day in a row. Freezing drizzle in northeastern slowed traffic to 5 mph on some roads in Morrow County. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - An outbreak of cold arctic air brought up to 18 inches of snow to the Colorado Rockies, with 14 inches at Boulder CO, and seven inches at Denver. Heavy snow blanketed New Mexico the following day, with 15 inches reported near Ruidoso. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - A storm moving out of the Central Rocky Mountain Region spread snow across Kansas and Oklahoma into Arkansas and Tennessee. Snowfall totals ranged up to 7.5 inches at Winfield KS. Freezing rain on trees and power lines cut off electricity to 24,000 homes in northeastern Arkansas, and 40,000 homes in the Nashville TN area were without electricity for several hours. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 8 of 31

Yesterday's Weather

High: 39.9 at 10:50 PM

Low: 15.1 at 8:02 AM

High Gust: 29 at 10:47 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 60° in 1918

Record Low: -27° in 2013

Average High: 28°F

Average Low: 9°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.13

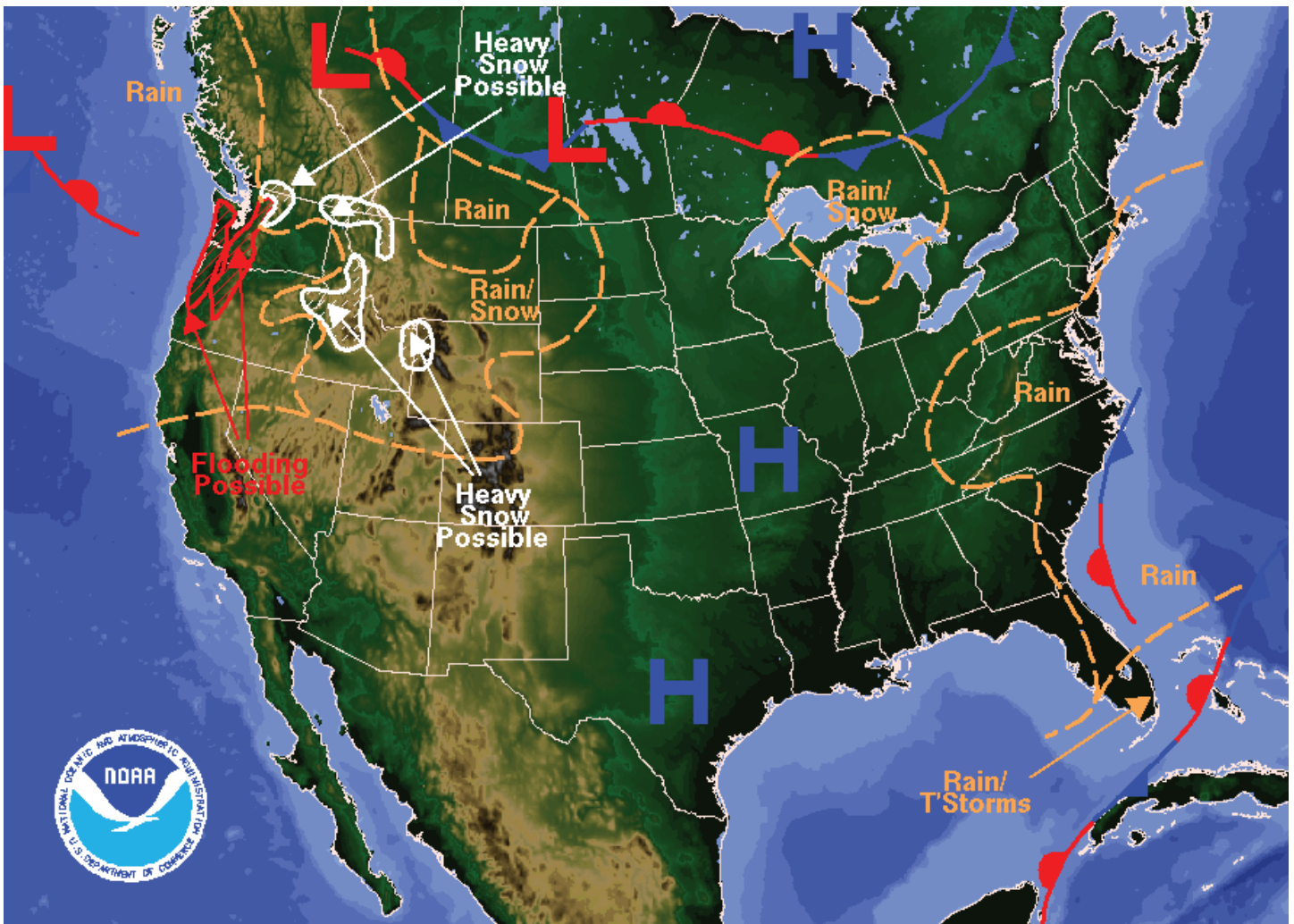
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.52

Average Precip to date: 21.33

Precip Year to Date: 20.34

Sunset Tonight: 4:50 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:00 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Mon, Dec 07, 2015, issued 4:38 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 9 of 31



NOT GOOD ENOUGH!

His old bicycle was worn out. He begged his dad for a new one.

Finally it was his birthday. When he came home from school that afternoon, he discovered a beautiful new bicycle in the garage. With great excitement he rode down the street to show it to his best friend.

Soon he returned home and waited for his father. When his dad arrived, he began to cry, "George got a new bike, too. It has a light on the handlebar. It's better than mine."

Jealousy! It begins at birth, rages in most hearts, and for some, lasts a lifetime.

In the Bible "jealousy" is sometimes described as the opposite of love and thankfulness and the enemy of gratitude.

It is the "attitude of gratitude" that exposes our faith in God. Often we only feel secure in what we have, not Whom we have, Jesus Christ. When times are good, bank accounts secure, the economy flourishing, and jobs secure, we rarely notice what others have.

As Christians we need to look at our lives through God's eyes. Looking at our lives through His eyes may enable us to find joy in the smallest event, happiness in the smile of a child, satisfaction in a job well done.

Embracing our lives just as they are and being thankful for what we have will enable us to give up the struggle to acquire what we want but do not need. Where we are and what we have is exactly the way things are to be. Rejoice and be thankful!

Prayer: Help me, Lord to accept all that I have as gifts of Your goodness, especially my salvation. Remove jealousy from my heart and envy from my mind. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Philippians 4:11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.

News from the Associated Press

Las Vegas Bowl snares BYU, Utah The Associated Press

The latest on the college football playoffs, bowl matchups and other news on selection Sunday (all times EST).

5:10 p.m.

LAS VEGAS BOWL: BYU and Utah, with campuses just 43 miles apart, will face each other in the Las Vegas Bowl.

The teams did not meet in the regular season.

This will be the farewell game for Bronco Mendenhall as BYU's coach. He will take over the as coach at Virginia after the game. Mendenhall spent 11 seasons with the Cougars, winning 70 percent of his games.

BYU (9-3) won nine games despite losing quarterback Taysom Hill and running back Jamaal Williams to injuries for most of the season.

Utah (9-3) won its first six games and was as high as No. 4 in the Top 25 but went 3-3 after that, with losses to USC, UCLA and Arizona. The Utes lost standout running back Devontae Booker with a torn meniscus in the Arizona game.

5:06 p.m.

PINSTRIPED BOWL: Indiana's long bowl drought is over. The Hoosiers will play Duke in the Pinstripe Bowl at Yankee Stadium on Dec. 26.

The Hoosiers (6-6), who are in their first bowl since 2007, had been tied with Colorado for most years without a postseason appearance. Duke (7-5) is in a bowl for the fourth straight year.

The teams will be meeting for the first time since the 1984 season opener, a 31-24 Duke victory. The Hoosiers and Blue Devils had one common opponent this season, with both beating Wake Forest.

4:53 p.m.

OUTBACK BOWL: Two teams riding five-game winning streaks will meet in the Outback Bowl.

No. 12 Northwestern (10-2, No. 13 CFP) and Tennessee (8-4, No. 23 CFP) will play for the second time on New Year's Day. The Volunteers won the previous meeting in 1997.

Four of the Wildcats' five straight wins have been decided by seven points or less.

Tennessee's four losses have come by a combined 17 points to teams with a combined record of 39-8, including two of the four College Football Playoff teams (Alabama, Oklahoma).

Northwestern is making its 12th bowl appearance and second straight in Florida. Northwestern's last trip to the Sunshine State came in the 2013 TaxSlayer Bowl and resulted in the program's first postseason victory since 1949.

4:45 p.m.

FOSTER FARMS BOWL: Nebraska will take its 5-7 record to Santa Clara, California to play UCLA in the Foster Farms Bowl.

The Cornhuskers were bowl eligible because there weren't enough 6-6 teams to fill out the bowl schedule.

Nebraska, in its first season under coach Mike Riley, won two of its last three, including a 39-38 win over Michigan State.

UCLA (8-4) had a chance to play in the Rose Bowl but lost to rival USC. The Bruins were 5-4 in the conference, one game behind the Pac-12 South champion Trojans.

Nebraska is one of three 5-7 teams to receive a bowl invitation.

4:38 p.m.

CITRUS BOWL: Jim Harbaugh gets to coach in a bowl game when Michigan takes on Florida in the Citrus Bowl on Jan. 1 in Orlando, Florida.

The school are meeting for the third time, with the Wolverines (9-3, No. 14 CFP) winning the first two. Michigan beat the Gators in the 2003 Outback Bowl and in the 2008 Capital One Bowl.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 11 of 31

Florida (10-3, No. 19 CFP) dropped its last two games, scoring just one offensive touchdown in losses to Florida State and Alabama.

The Gators have won seven of their last nine bowl games. Michigan has won just three of its last 11 bowl games.

4:30 p.m.

RUSSELL ATHLETIC BOWL: Baylor and North Carolina play for the first time when the teams meet in the Russell Athletic Bowl on Dec. 29 in Orlando, Florida.

Though the Bears (9-3, No. 17 CFP) and Tar Heels (11-2, No. 10 CFP) are still in a fairly high-profile bowl, recent losses have put a damper on promising seasons.

Baylor started 8-0, but lost three out of its past four games, including 23-17 to Texas on Saturday. The Bears have been hurt by injuries — they were down to their fourth-string quarterback Lynx Hawthorne during the Texas loss.

North Carolina won 11 straight before falling to Clemson in the ACC championship game on Saturday.

4:25 p.m.

SUGAR BOWL: Mississippi and Oklahoma State get to renew their recent postseason rivalry in the Sugar Bowl.

This will be the third time since 2004 that the Rebels (9-3, No. 12 CFP) and Cowboys (10-2, No. 16 CFP) meet in the postseason. The first two meetings were at the Cotton Bowl and Ole Miss won both — 31-28 on Jan. 2, 2004 and 21-7 on Jan. 2, 2010.

Now they will play in the Superdome on Jan. 1 at 8:30 p.m.

Ole Miss returns to a New Year's Six bowl for the second straight season.

The Cowboys won their first 10 games of the season before back-to-back losses to Baylor and Oklahoma.

4:19 p.m.

ROSE BOWL: A perfect season ended in the final seconds in the Big Ten title game, Iowa's consolation prize is a spot in the Rose Bowl against Pac-12 champion Stanford on Jan. 1.

The Hawkeyes (12-1, No. 5 CFP) beat out Ohio State to earn their first trip to Pasadena since Jan. 1, 1991.

Iowa put together a surprising 12-0 regular season before falling agonizingly short of the four-team playoff, losing to Michigan State on Saturday night.

While the Hawkeyes haven't made the Rose Bowl in a generation, Pasadena has become a second home for Stanford.

The Cardinal (11-2, No. 6 CFP) earned their third Rose Bowl berth in four years by beating Southern California on Saturday night.

4:11 p.m.

SUN BOWL: Miami and Washington State are headed to the Southwest for the Sun Bowl in El Paso, Texas, on Dec. 26.

The Hurricanes closed out a tumultuous season with an 8-4 record after firing coach Al Golden after a 58-0 loss to Clemson, and recently hiring former Georgia coach Mark Richt as their new coach.

The Cougars are a surprising 8-4 and are in their second bowl in the last three seasons under coach Mike Leach.

Washington State is led by sophomore quarterback Luke Falk, who averages 387.8 yards passing per game — tops in the country. Falk missed the Cougars' final game of the regular season with a concussion.

3:57 p.m.

PEACH BOWL: Houston and its high-scoring offense will take on Florida State on New Year's Eve in the Peach Bowl.

The Seminoles (10-2, No. 9 CFP) won the national championship two years ago and reached the college football playoffs last season, losing to Oregon in the semifinals.

Coach Jimbo Fisher's team lost to Georgia Tech and No. 1 Clemson.

Houston (12-1, No. 18 CFP) claimed a spot in a major bowl as the top-ranked team from the Group of Five conferences. The Cougars won the American Athletic Conference.

3:50 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 12 of 31

ST. PETERSBURG BOWL: Marshall and Connecticut are going to the St. Petersburg Bowl on Dec. 26. Marshall (9-3) is looking for its third bowl win in as many seasons, and brings coach Doc Holliday back to Florida — a place where he's recruited well. The Herd won the Boca Raton Bowl last year.

Connecticut (6-6) was 3-5 at one point, then finished with three wins in its last four games. The Huskies also knocked off Houston, probably the biggest reason why they ended up bowl-bound for the first time since their Fiesta Bowl run to end the 2010 season.

Tropicana Field — home of baseball's Tampa Bay Rays — is the game site.

3:41 p.m.

The Fiesta Bowl gets another marquee matchup.

The New Year's Day bowl will feature Ohio State and Notre Dame, two teams in the college football playoff mix until late in the season.

The defending champion Buckeyes (11-1) lost their only game to Michigan State and needed help to get into college football's final four. They didn't get it and wind up No. 7 in the final CFP ranking.

Notre Dame (10-2) fought through a slew of injuries to finish four points shy of a perfect record. The Fighting Irish are No. 8 in the final rankings.

3:37 p.m.

NEW ORLEANS BOWL: Arkansas State and Louisiana Tech will meet for the first time since 1998 when they play in the New Orleans Bowl on Dec. 19.

Arkansas State (9-3) won the Sun Belt Conference after a dominant 55-17 win over Texas State on Saturday.

Louisiana Tech (8-4) finished second in Conference USA's Western Division. The Bulldogs are led by former Florida quarterback Jeff Driskel, who transferred during the offseason and has thrown for 3,575 yards and 24 touchdowns.

3:26 p.m.

MIAMI BEACH BOWL: Western Kentucky and South Florida are heading to the Miami Beach Bowl on Dec. 21.

Western Kentucky (11-2) won the Conference USA title and features quarterback Brandon Doughty, who leads the nation with 45 touchdown passes this season.

South Florida (8-4) finished on a four-game winning streak, and has a chance for its first nine-win season since 2007. USF has won the last four meetings between the schools, the last of those coming in 2010.

The game is played at Marlins Park — about a 15-minute drive from Miami Beach. Last season, the bowl debuted with Memphis topping BYU 55-48.

3:17 p.m.

And the bowl matchups are rolling in:

As expected, it will be Iowa vs. Stanford in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1, featuring the Big Ten Conference runner-up against the Pac 12-champion Cardinal and their Heisman contender Christian McCaffrey.

Also on Jan. 1, the Sugar Bowl will match Mississippi against Oklahoma State and the Fiesta Bowl has Notre Dame against Ohio State.

On Dec. 31, the Peach Bowl pits AAC champion Houston against Florida State.

3:04 p.m.

Pizza for 20,000!

A huge pizza party is taking place at Death Valley to celebrate Clemson's unbeaten season and college playoff berth to play Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl on Dec. 31.

Coach Dabo Swinney is making good on his promise for a postseason pizza shindig at Memorial Stadium. About a month ago, the coach said it'd be pizza for everyone if the Tigers made the playoffs.

Swinney told crowd, "I know I open my mouth sometimes, but this is incredible."

Swinney had wide grin on his face most of the time, and raised both fists in the air, pumping them to the fans' applause when Clemson was announced as the top seed.

Fans dressed in purple and orange filled half the lower bowl at the 81,000-seat stadium.

2:39 p.m.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 13 of 31

The starting times for the college football playoff games are set, according to ESPN. No. 1 Clemson vs. No. 4 Oklahoma starts at 4 p.m. on Dec. 31 in the Orange Bowl; and No. 2 Alabama vs. No. 3 Michigan State starts at 8 p.m. on Dec. 31 in the Cotton Bowl.

2:11 p.m.

On bowl selection day, Georgia chose a coach.

The Bulldogs hired Alabama defensive coordinator Kirby Smart on Sunday, hoping he can accomplish what has been routine for the Crimson Tide but eluded Mark Richt during his 15 years between the hedges: Win a national title.

Smart was formally approved as Richt's successor during a meeting by the Georgia athletic association executive committee.

Smart played at Georgia in the 1990s and has been Nick Saban's defensive coordinator at Alabama since 2008.

Smart was expected to remain at Alabama through the playoffs, though Saban would surely carve out time for him to handle some of his new duties at Georgia.

1:59 p.m.

Heisman Trophy contender Baker Mayfield and coach Bob Stoops were out of town. Dabo Swinney was making good on his pizza party promise. Alabama players were allowed to sleep in.

That's what was happening when the college football playoff pairings were announced on Sunday, matching No. 1 Clemson against No. 4 Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl on Dec. 31 and No. 2 Alabama against No. 4 Michigan State in the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 31.

In Norman, Oklahoma, assistant coaches, players and fans attended a watch party while quarterback and coach were traveling.

In Clemson, South Carolina, thousands were in attendance to feast on the Tigers' success and a whole lot of pizza pies.

In Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where the Tide is preparing for a second straight playoff appearance, it was just another Sunday. So players were allowed to sleep in.

1:26 p.m.

BAHAMAS BOWL: Western Michigan will face Middle Tennessee on Dec. 24 in the Bahamas Bowl at Nasau's Thomas A. Robinson National Stadium.

The Broncos (7-5) earned a share of the Mid-American Conference West title and are in their second straight bowl after winning six of their past eight. They have the top receiving duo in the country in Daniel Braverman and Corey Davis.

Middle Tennessee (7-5) of Conference USA takes a four-game win streak to the Bahamas for their first bowl since 2013. The Blue Raiders are led by a pair of freshmen in QB Brent Stockstill and receiver Richie James.

1:15 p.m.

Alabama and Michigan State have been to the Cotton Bowl before, and not too long ago.

This time, the teams will be at AT&T Stadium to play each other in the college football playoff semifinals on Dec. 31.

The Big Ten champion Spartans completed last season on New Year's Day playing in their first Cotton Bowl. The SEC champion Crimson Tide opened this season with a victory over Wisconsin at the stadium, the home of the Dallas Cowboys.

The matchup is just the second between the teams. Alabama beat Michigan State 49-7 in the 2011 Capital One Bowl.

Alabama's Nick Saban was the coach at Michigan State from 1995-1999 before leaving for LSU, the Miami Dolphins and moving on to Tuscaloosa in 2007.

1:01 p.m.

Jeff Long says the decision was easy to select the top four teams for the College Football Playoff, calling Clemson "clearly the No. 1 team in the country."

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 14 of 31

Long is the chairman of the CFP selection committee — a 12-person group that makes the final decisions. The pairings announced Sunday will send unbeaten ACC champion Clemson (13-0) against Big 12 champion Oklahoma (11-1) in the Orange Bowl on Dec. 31, and SEC champion Alabama (12-1) against Big Ten champion Michigan State (12-1) in the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 31.

Perhaps the biggest debate was Michigan State finishing ahead of Oklahoma.

Long says the committee spent most of its time discussing Spartans-Sooners, mentioning that both teams are conference champs, have wins over Top 25 teams, and pointing out Michigan State has two wins over top 10 teams plus a win over the No. 4 team (Iowa) on Saturday night.

He says the Spartans' "body of work was just slightly ahead of Oklahoma."

12:46 p.m.

No. 1 Clemson meets No. 4 Oklahoma in the Orange Bowl on Dec. 31, one of the two semifinal matchups in this season's College Football Playoff and a rematch of a bowl game from last season.

Only this time, the stakes will be a bit higher. Way higher, actually.

The Tigers are well-versed in how to get around Sun Life Stadium, and embarrassed Miami 58-0 earlier this season on the same field they'll see for the bowl game.

Oklahoma will be in the Orange for the 19th time, the most of any school. The Sooners were thought to be doomed by a midseason loss to Texas, but have won seven straight by a combined score of 364-136 to get into the CFP mix.

Clemson beat Oklahoma 40-6 in last season's Russell Athletic Bowl.

The winner of this game meets either Alabama or Michigan State for the CFP national championship.

12:34 p.m.

Finally, we have our playoff pairings!

And really, there can't be too many arguments, can there?

Clemson finishes No. 1 in the College Football Ranking and will play No. 4 Oklahoma in one playoff semifinal, the Orange Bowl on Dec. 31.

Alabama finishes No. 2 in the final ranking, and will play No. 3 Michigan State in the other semifinal, the Cotton Bowl on Dec. 31.

The winners will play for the national championship on Jan. 11 in Glendale, Arizona.

Alabama and Clemson won conference title games on Saturday night and held their ranking. Michigan State handed Iowa its first loss in the Big Ten title game to move into the playoffs, while Oklahoma had already completed its season and held on for the final playoff spot.

Clemson goes into the playoffs as the only undefeated team.

Noon

Alcorn State will face North Carolina A&T in the inaugural Celebration Bowl.

The Celebration Bowl pits the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference champion against the Southwestern Athletic Conference winner. The game takes place Dec. 19 at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

Alcorn State clinched its invite by winning the SWAC championship Saturday, 49-21 over Grambling State.

North Carolina A&T shared the MEAC title with Bethune-Cookman and North Carolina Central. North Carolina A&T got the bowl spot because of a higher Sagarin rating.

11:46 a.m.

The final regular-season Top 25 is out and Michigan State has moved up two spots to No. 3 behind Clemson and Alabama.

The Associated Press' poll has been released before the College Football Playoff selection committee reveals the field for the national semifinals.

Playoff pairings will be announced at 12:30 p.m.

No. 1 Clemson receives 59 first-place votes, No. 2 Alabama has nine, and Michigan State one from the media panel.

The Spartans, who were No. 2 early in the season, edge up after beating Iowa 16-13 in the Big Ten

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 15 of 31

championship game.

Oklahoma slips one spot to No. 4. Stanford moves up to No. 5 after winning the Pac-12 title. Iowa drops two spots to sixth after its first loss.

Ohio State, Notre Dame, Florida State and North Carolina round out the top 10.

11:15 a.m.

The Associated Press plans to release its final regular-season Top 25 poll before the four-team college football playoffs and the rest of the bowl pairings are announced.

The college football playoffs show begins at noon on ESPN.

There could be a few changes near the top of the AP poll following Saturday night's conference title games. The biggest could come from the Big Ten championship game, where Michigan State handed Iowa its first loss of the year.

Going into the game, Iowa was No. 4 in the College Football Ranking, with Michigan State No. 5. The top two teams, Alabama and Clemson, won their conference title games, while No. 3 Oklahoma did not play.

The four teams in line for the playoffs appear to be Clemson, Alabama, Oklahoma and Michigan State.

South Dakota flags at half-staff on Pearl Harbor anniversary

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Flags on public buildings in South Dakota will remain at half-staff Monday in honor of the victims of the attacks on Pearl Harbor 74 years ago.

The directive from South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard is in accordance with a proclamation from President Barack Obama. Monday has been designated as National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.

The surprise attack by Japan on Dec. 7, 1941, on the U.S. Navy base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii claimed some 2,400 American lives and pushed the U.S. into World War II.

Flags in South Dakota are already at half-staff. They were lowered last week to honor the 14 people killed in a shooting Wednesday at a social service center in San Bernardino, California.

1 man killed, 2 others injured in Codington County crash

WATERTOWN, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Highway Patrol says one man was killed and two others were injured over the weekend in a rollover crash on a highway in Codington County.

Twenty-eight-year-old Trent Smith was driving a pickup truck along Interstate 29 in Watertown on Saturday morning when he lost control of the vehicle and it went into a ditch, struck a pole and rolled. He was partially ejected from the truck and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Two passengers were completely ejected from the vehicle. Both men suffered injuries that aren't considered to be life-threatening.

No one in the truck was wearing a seatbelt at the time of the accident.

Charity to pack 250,000 meals slated to go to Zambia

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Kids Against Hunger is loading a shipment of 250,000 meals that are being donated to ministries of the Presentation Sisters working in Zambia, Africa.

The ministries are part of the work of Presentation Sisters from Ireland, India, England, New Zealand, Zambia and the United States.

Kids Against Hunger says Sister Deb Nelson recently wrote home to say the country is anticipating a dry year, which means there will be not be as much food available. The organization says shipping can take months, but the food should arrive at a great time of need.

Soukup Construction has volunteered to load the container so the meals can ship. The work will be done at the Kids Against Hunger center on Monday afternoon.

States encouraged to mull South Dakota sobriety program

JAMES NORD, Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Twice a day for three years, Chris Mexican has showed up at the county jail in Pierre to blow into a tube and prove he hasn't been drinking.

After several drunken driving convictions, it has allowed him to remain free and to become a better, more clearheaded father to his kids. The 43-year-old carpenter worries about losing the routine when he completes the program as early as Christmas Eve.

"If I do ever drink again, I get all that misery back. I get refunded that if I want, and this if I want," Mexican said, motioning toward the locked building.

South Dakota's 24-7 sobriety program has helped curb drunken driving and domestic violence, and some incentives for states that adopt the model were included in the \$305 billion transportation law that President Barack Obama signed Friday.

The program offers those accused or convicted of an alcohol-related crime an alternative to jail. The provision in the highway law, pushed by U.S. Sen. John Thune, creates an incentive grant totaling about \$18 million over four years for states that implement the sobriety program.

It's akin to existing funds for states that have adopted seatbelt requirements or ignition interlock laws.

"This will give other states a chance to find out if it works as well," said U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, who was South Dakota governor when the program began.

The new transportation law also allows states that implement a 24-7 program to avoid a penalty that routes construction funds to highway safety.

An independent study released in 2013 by the RAND Corp., a nonprofit think tank, found that South Dakota's program cut the rate of repeat DUI arrests at the county level by 12 percent and domestic violence arrests by 9 percent in its first five years.

"These are large reductions when you consider that we're talking about the community level," said Beau Kilmer, who conducted the study and continues to research the program.

Experts say incentive grants are an effective way to encourage states.

"When it's a federal law, the word spreads and other communities that are looking for solutions find out about it, so they're much more likely to adopt it themselves," said safety advocate Joan Claybrook, a former National Highway Traffic Safety Administration chief.

South Dakota started the practice in 2005. Participants come to a site each morning and evening to blow into an alcohol breath test. Those who live farther away or who have difficulty remaining sober wear alcohol-monitoring bracelets or have ignition interlock systems in their vehicles.

Over the past decade, nearly 40,000 people have participated in South Dakota's twice-daily program, compiling a pass rate of more than 99 percent.

North Dakota and Montana have started similar monitoring systems, and more states are running or planning pilot programs.

South Dakota's attorney general, Marty Jackley, has also discussed the program with his counterparts in other states.

And West Virginia Attorney General Patrick Morrisey said South Dakota's "very positive" results warrant examination by his state, where a program would require legislative support.

"One of the benefits of having 50 states serve as experiments is you can learn from states that are applying new laws successfully," Morrisey said.

Some national organizations don't favor 24-7 used on its own. For example, Mothers Against Drunk Driving's priority is pushing for strong ignition interlock laws in every state because the measure is proven to be effective, Chief Government Affairs Officer J.T. Griffin said.

The 24-7 program isn't perfect. Some people still drink by calculating how much they can consume between tests without getting caught, though many are eventually busted.

At the Hughes County Jail on the east side of town, Brian Drapeau, 44, said he blew about twice the legal driving limit at an evening test for the program about a month ago. He said drinking vodka alone in his apartment led to half a day in jail.

"It was pretty tough on everybody," he said. "Sitting in there for 12 hours is just like, 'what am I doing?'"

Mount Marty's a cappella group competing with other schools

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Mount Marty College's vocal a cappella group has been selected for an eighth straight year to be part of an international competition.

The group Smooth Benediction will travel to Springfield, Missouri, in February to participate in the Midwest quarterfinal of the International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella. Mount Marty's group will go against nine other colleges from Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas.

The school in Yankton says Smooth Benediction is a highly selective a cappella choir in the collegiate "Pitch Perfect" style, singing primarily top billboard charts, musical theater and popular oldies.

The International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella takes place from January through April. Groups from across the U.S. and Europe compete for a chance to sing at the historic Beacon Theatre in New York City during the final round.

Special Japanese doll on display at Cultural Heritage Center

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — A special Japanese doll that was sent to America as part of friendship gesture in the 1920s is being displayed at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

The doll, Miss Tottori, belongs to the South Dakota State Historical Society. It is one of 58 dolls that were sent to the United States in 1927 as good-will gifts to American children from the children of Japan. Japanese children received American "blue-eyed" dolls in exchange.

The Historical Society says that after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the Japanese ordered the destruction of the American dolls, but 335 survived. Meanwhile, in the U.S., the Japanese dolls went into storage and were lost. Only 45 of the original dolls have been located.

Miss Tottori will be on display through December.

San Bernardino county to reopen for business after attacks

AMY TAXIN, Associated Press
BRIAN SKOLOFF, Associated Press

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (AP) — Thousands of employees of San Bernardino County are preparing to return to work Monday, five days after a county restaurant inspector and his wife opened fire on a gathering of his co-workers, killing 14 people and wounding 21.

The reopening of much of the government's offices signals an effort to return to normalcy for a community that has been in shock and mourning since the killings Wednesday.

On Sunday, residents gathered at a church, a mosque, a makeshift street-corner memorial and other sites to mourn the victims and call for the community to unite in mourning and not be divided by the disclosure that the killers were a religious Muslim couple.

"It's unfortunate that we're on this list now, a list like Newtown, Aurora and others where such tragic events occurred," Rep. Pete Aguilar, D-Calif., told a crowd at a mosque. "It's not how I want San Bernardino remembered."

President Barack Obama delivered a prime-time address Sunday night, telling the nation the attack was an "act of terrorism designed to kill innocent people." While there was no evidence the shooters were directed by a terror network overseas or were part of a broader plot, "the two of them had gone down the dark path of radicalization," he said.

Investigators were looking into what led Tashfeen Malik and Syed Farook to attack Farook's co-workers at a holiday luncheon. Malik, 29, and Farook, 28, were killed in a furious shootout with police hours later.

Meanwhile, Pakistani intelligence officials said Malik attended a religious school while living in Pakistan. The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity under regulations, identified the school on Monday as the Al-Huda International Seminary. Its founder has been criticized for promoting a conservative strain of Islam but the school has no known links to extremists.

Following the attack, the county shut down except for essential services, with many of its 20,000 employees not working, said Felisa Cardona, a county spokeswoman. While most employees will head back to

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 18 of 31

work Monday, those at the Environmental Health Services division, where Farook and many of the victims worked, will be off at least one more week, she said.

On Sunday, scores of mourners visited a growing memorial on a corner near the social service center where the shooting took place. There were American flags, poster that read "Pray for the world," balloons, candles and cards. Many said they hoped the community would pull together.

At the St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church, where shooting victim Yvette Velasco worshipped, the service focused on the need to get beyond the anger. Many parishioners said they would reach deep into their faith to find some way to forgive.

More than 100 people gathered for an interfaith memorial service at a mosque where Farook had occasionally prayed. Silver-framed photos of the victims were placed on a table at the Islamic Community Center of Redlands, with a candle lit for each.

Muslim community members said they are feeling both grief over the loss and fear of a backlash against their community. They encouraged community members to come together and not live in fear.

"It is really sad that we meet because of this. It is sad that only in death are we able to celebrate humanity," 30-year-old mosque member Ajarat Bada said, fighting back tears.

10 Things to Know for Today

The Associated Press

Your daily look at late-breaking news, upcoming events and the stories that will be talked about today:

1. WHAT OBAMA OFFERS IN HIGH-PROFILE TERROR SPEECH

The president's rare prime time address delivers no new policy prescriptions and no fresh military strategies, but it comes with one major message: It's going to be OK.

2. SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY TO REOPEN FOR BUSINESS AFTER ATTACKS

Resuming the work of the government's offices signals an effort to return to normalcy for a community that has been in shock and mourning since the killings Wednesday.

3. VENEZUELAN OPPOSITION WINS LEGISLATIVE VOTING IN LANDSLIDE

It trounces the ruling party and alters the balance of power after almost 17 years of socialist rule.

4. CLIMATE TALKS SHIFT FROM BINDING TARGETS TO 'NAME AND SHAME'

"Meeting national emissions pledges will emerge as a key measure of international moral and diplomatic standing after a Paris agreement, with countries reluctant to flout their targets and risk being treated as pariahs," says Paul Bledsoe, a former Clinton White House adviser.

5. JUSTICE DEPARTMENT TO INVESTIGATE CHICAGO POLICE

The civil rights probe would follow others recently launched in Baltimore and Ferguson, Missouri, according to a person familiar with the matter.

6. WHY SOME ISRAELIS ARE ANGERED

As Netanyahu prepares to push through a landmark natural gas deal, he is facing a backlash by protesters who accuse him of using backroom dealings to push through the plan.

7. SANDERS UNVEILS CLIMATE CHANGE PLAN

The Democratic presidential candidate vows to cut U.S. carbon emissions by 40 percent by 2030 and impose a tax on carbon dioxide pollution.

8. WHO SAYS LATEST TESTS SHOW NO CANCER

Jimmy Carter announces that MRI scans find no signs of the disease, four months after he revealed the presence of lesions on his brain.

9. GROCERY CHAINS LEAVE FOOD DESERTS BARREN

AP research shows the industry at large has avoided impoverished places where it's needed most.

10. OBAMA UPSTAGED ON TWITTER'S LIST OF 2015 TWEETS

Messages shared by the boy band One Direction top the social platform's charts, eclipsing the president's celebration of gay marriage legalization.

Doctors: Latest brain scan is good news for Jimmy Carter

KATHLEEN FOODY, Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — A recent MRI showing no cancer on Jimmy Carter's brain is "very positive" news for the former president but will not end his medical treatment, doctors said.

Carter, 91, announced Sunday that doctors found no evidence of the four lesions discovered on his brain this summer and no signs of new cancer growth. He revealed in August that he had been diagnosed with melanoma and had begun treatment, including surgery to remove part of his liver, targeted radiation therapy and doses of a recently approved drug to help his immune system seek out any new cancer cells.

Carter said he will continue every three weeks to receive the drug, Keytruda, one type of "immunotherapy" that melanoma specialists credit for improving treatment of the disease without the side effects of traditional chemotherapy drugs that can cause hair loss and other symptoms, said Dr. Douglas Johnson, a melanoma specialist at Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center who is not involved with Carter's treatment.

The drugs also have shown promise as a "long-lasting" treatment, but doctors continue to learn more as the drugs are used outside of clinical trials, he said.

"So many cancer treatments can be effective in the short-term, causing tumors to shrink," he said. "Immune therapy, in at least a subset of patients, has truly long-lasting responses."

Carter has said he experienced no side effects during treatment, a positive sign for his doctors, said Dr. Keith Flaherty, a melanoma specialist at Massachusetts General Hospital's Termeer Center for Targeted Therapies who is not involved in Carter's treatment.

"If (a patient) breaks the right way, the likelihood that he will do well in the short term is extremely high," Flaherty said. "There have been instances of relapse two to three years in while using immunotherapy treatment, but you'd say there is a good reason to be quite optimistic. At President Carter's age, it's very likely he's going to enjoy an excellent quality of life."

But doctors caution that they are still learning about the long-term effect of Keytruda and similar drugs, which have only received approval for wide patient use in the last five years.

"President Carter's doctors certainly will continue close surveillance as they would for any patient in this situation," said Dr. Len Lichtenfeld, deputy chief medical officer for the American Cancer Society. "One hopes that by using immunotherapy the body can respond to whatever happens but cancer cells are clever and can develop workarounds for the various treatments."

Doctors will continue to scan Carter's brain and the rest of his body to ensure the disease hasn't spread, Johnson said. The scans typically are done every three months, for a year or two after tests show no signs of cancer growth, he said.

Carter's unexpected comments Sunday came first at the small church where he frequently teaches Sunday school lessons in his hometown of Plains, Georgia.

"And when I went this week, they didn't find any cancer at all," Carter told the congregation, prompting gasps and applause as he smiled slightly. "So I have good news."

As word spread from Maranatha Baptist Church, Carter issued a brief statement confirming the scan showed no signs of the four lesions that doctors discovered this summer on his brain or new cancer growth.

Carter has remained active during treatment, including a home-building project with Habitat for Humanity and work at The Carter Center, the human rights organization he founded after leaving the White House.

California newest airport terminal extends to Mexico

ELLIOT SPAGAT, Associated Press

SAN DIEGO (AP) — The U.S.-Mexico border is one of the world's most fortified international divides. Starting Wednesday, it will also be one of the only that has an airport straddling two countries.

An investor group that includes Chicago billionaire Sam Zell built a sleek terminal in San Diego with a bridge that crosses a razor-wire border fence to Tijuana's decades-old airport. Passengers pay \$18 to walk to Tijuana International Airport, a springboard to about 30 Mexican destinations.

Target customers are the estimated 60 percent of Tijuana airport passengers who come to the United

States, nearly 3 million a year. Now they drive about 15 minutes to a congested land crossing, where they wait up to several hours to enter San Diego by car or on foot.

Grocery chains leave food deserts barren, AP analysis finds

MIKE SCHNEIDER, Associated Press

EATONVILLE, Fla. (AP) — As part of Michelle Obama's healthy eating initiative, a group of major food retailers promised in 2011 to open or expand 1,500 grocery or convenience stores in and around neighborhoods with no supermarkets by 2016. By their own count, they're far short.

Moreover, an analysis of federal food stamp data by The Associated Press reveals that the nation's largest chains — not just the handful involved in the first lady's group — have since built new supermarkets in only a fraction of the neighborhoods where they're needed most.

The Partnership for a Healthier America, which also promotes good nutrition and exercise in its anti-obesity mission, considers improving access to fresh food a key part of the solution. But the AP's research demonstrates that major grocers overwhelmingly avoid America's food deserts instead of trying to turn a profit in high-poverty areas.

Among the AP's findings:

— The nation's top 75 food retailers opened almost 10,300 stores in new locations from 2011 to the first quarter of 2015, 2,434 of which were grocery stores. Take away convenience stores and "dollar stores," which generally don't sell fresh fruits, vegetables or meat, and barely more than 250 of the new supermarkets were in so-called food deserts, or neighborhoods without stores that offer fresh produce and meats.

— As the largest supermarket chains have been slow to build in food deserts, dollar stores have multiplied rapidly. Three chains — Dollar General, Family Dollar and Dollar Tree — made up two-thirds of new stores in food deserts. And the dollar store sector is consolidating: Dollar Tree merged with Family Dollar this year, creating the largest dollar-store chain in the nation and, in the process, less competition and less incentive to diversify what these stores offer.

— Excluding dollar stores and 7-Elevens, just 1.4 million of the more than 18 million people the USDA says lived in food deserts as of 2010 got a new supermarket in the past four years.

On top of all that, it's difficult to say how many more people live in newer food deserts created by recent store closures.

Viola Hill used to walk several times a week to a Schnucks supermarket a block away from her apartment in her struggling north St. Louis neighborhood, until that store shuttered last year. Now, she can get to a supermarket only once a month, when she pays a friend \$10 to drive her to one several miles away.

"I have to get enough food to last me a whole month," said Hill, a retiree who likes to cook chicken and green beans. "It hurt us really badly when they closed because we depended on the Schnucks for medication and my food there. It was a lot of people hurt, not just me."

Schnucks officials said they were losing money on the store, which now sits boarded up with weeds growing in its parking lot.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture considers a neighborhood a food desert if at least a fifth of the residents live in poverty and a third live more than a mile from a supermarket in urban areas, or more than 10 miles in rural areas, where residents are more likely to have cars.

The first lady's group's 2014 progress report, its most recent, says the companies that made pledges have opened or renovated 602 grocery stores or other food retail locations, well below halfway toward their collective goal.

The partnership counted companies as having met their commitments if the stores they opened or renovated fell within a mile of a USDA-designated food desert in a city, or within 10 miles of a rural one. The AP analyzed which of the new stores that opened lie directly within food deserts.

Research has shown that a lack of access to healthy foods contributes to health problems, such as obesity and diabetes. Proximity to a supermarket can make a big difference in what people eat, especially if they don't drive, although other factors such as food culture also play a role.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 21 of 31

Even though a neighborhood without a supermarket may have a corner grocer, the large chains have much greater leverage and economies of scale to bring a wider variety of products at cheaper prices.

Jock Riggins likes to cook and tries as often as he can to make his favorite meal of cube steak with bell peppers, rice and gravy. But getting to the supermarket nearest to his home in Eatonville, Florida, north of Orlando, requires pedaling his rusted bicycle down a clogged, six-lane road with narrow shoulders, and balancing bags of groceries in each hand on the way back.

"If I don't have my vegetables for my food I substitute with sandwiches," said Riggins, 51, who gets by working odd jobs. "If there was a supermarket closer, I wouldn't have to go way out on Lee Road. It would be better."

A FOOD OASIS

Less than 3 miles from Eatonville is what could only be described as a food oasis. In the span of a little over a mile on a single avenue in the tony Orlando suburb of Winter Park, there are two Publix supermarkets, a Trader Joe's, a Chamberlin's Natural Food Market and the site of a future 40,000-square-foot Whole Foods Market. With the exception of Chamberlin's, where the offerings are mostly organic or specialized, prices in the food oasis are cheaper than what Riggins gets in his neighborhood, and the selections are boundless by comparison.

There are no fresh fruits, vegetables or meats at the Family Dollar or Poncho's Market corner store in Eatonville, and a \$3 loaf of Nature's Own wheat bread at those stores cost \$2.19 at Publix on a recent visit. The same half-gallon of milk was 11 percent more expensive at the Family Dollar than at Publix, and Poncho's was out of milk.

Some of the dollar store chains have started dipping their toes into selling fresh produce. Dollar General has opened up about 150 Dollar General Market stores that sell fresh vegetables, fruit and meat, though that format makes up only 1 percent of the chain's 12,000-plus stores.

"The dollar stores are popping up everywhere in the food deserts, but that doesn't mean anything if the owners don't give customers the opportunity for fresh produce," said Norman Wilson Sr., a food desert activist who is pastor of a Pentecostal church in Orlando.

Florida lawmaker Dwight Bullard introduced legislation this year with incentives to build stores in food deserts, which tend to have higher unemployment than other neighborhoods. In urban areas, food deserts also tend to have a high percentage of minorities.

Bullard's bill went nowhere.

"Part of the frustration was centered around the fourth Publix I'd seen servicing the same community. ... It made me scratch my head and say, 'Geez, what about those communities where you can go blocks and blocks and blocks without seeing a real grocery store?' It doesn't make sense to me," said Bullard, a Democratic state senator, whose district covering urban and rural parts of South Florida is overwhelmingly black and Hispanic.

Publix spokesman Dwaine Stevens said he couldn't comment on how store locations are decided due to their "strategic and proprietary nature."

Supermarkets often build stores close to each other to compete in an area and highlight each store's niche, said Ira Goldstein, president of policy solutions at The Reinvestment Fund, a Philadelphia-based community development firm that has invested in grocery store construction in low-income neighborhoods. The stores typically look for neighborhoods that can support their format rather than changing their format to fit the neighborhood.

"That brings choice and variety to the market but it doesn't necessarily solve the problem in an inadequately served area," Goldstein said.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack believes stores that open in food deserts need to be attuned to the particulars of their communities to succeed.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 22 of 31

"You have to cater to the people who live there. You have to know who they are," Vilsack said during a recent visit to Orlando.

That's where the large supermarket chains often run into trouble, since they have rigid formats that often miss the nuances of a community, said Jeff Brown, CEO of Brown's Super Stores in the Philadelphia area.

"They're not selling what they should be selling because they don't understand," said Brown, whose company has seven stores in underserved neighborhoods.

Stores that succeed generally have other amenities, such as a pharmacy, doctor's clinic or a bank embedded in the supermarket, he said.

Building stores in low-income neighborhoods comes with unique complications, according to the Food Marketing Institute, a Washington-based trade group for food retailers. A large customer base on food stamps creates erratic flows with a rush of business in the beginning of the month when food stamps are issued, but slow business at the end of the month. Insurance and security can be more costly in neighborhoods perceived to be high crime, and workers from neighborhoods with high unemployment sometimes need extra training for basic job skills.

The average supermarket operates on a 1 or 2 percent profit margin and must be sustainable for at least a decade to recoup any profit, so retailers can't afford to pick unprofitable locations, said David Fikes, vice president of consumer and community affairs for the Food Marketing Institute.

The industry also is in flux. Two of its biggest players — Stop & Shop owner Ahold USA and Delhaize Group SA, the Brussels conglomerate that owns the Food Lion and Hannaford chains in the U.S. — recently announced merger plans. Safeway Inc. and Albertsons merged earlier this year, and Kroger announced last month that it would buy Roundy's Supermarkets stores in Illinois and Wisconsin.

One of the nation's oldest large food retailers, A&P, recently returned to bankruptcy court, and Super-Valu recently announced plans to spin off its Save-A-Lot stores. Even Wal-Mart warned recently that its profits would take a hit.

All of that, analysts say, suggests the grocery industry isn't likely to change its patterns for where it does business, and where it doesn't.

"We would love to have a supermarket in every neighborhood across America, whether if it's a food desert or not," Fikes said. "But it's got to be sustainable for all involved."

Today in History The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, Dec. 7, the 341st day of 2015. There are 24 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese navy launched a surprise attack on the U.S. Navy base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii as part of a plan to pre-empt any American military response to Japan's planned conquest of Southeast Asian territories; the raid, which claimed some 2,400 American lives, prompted the United States to declare war against Japan the next day.

On this date:

In 43 B.C., Roman statesman and scholar Marcus Tullius Cicero was slain at the order of the Second Triumvirate.

In 1787, Delaware became the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

In 1842, the New York Philharmonic performed its first concert.

In 1909, chemist Leo H. Baekeland received a U.S. patent for Bakelite (BAY'-kuh-lyt), the first synthetic plastic.

In 1946, fire broke out at the Winecoff (WYN'-kahf) Hotel in Atlanta; the blaze killed 119 people, including hotel founder W. Frank Winecoff.

In 1965, Pope Paul VI and Orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras I simultaneously lifted the mutual excommunications that had led to the split of their churches in 1054.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 23 of 31

In 1975, author-playwright Thornton Wilder, 78, died in Hamden, Connecticut.

In 1985, retired Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart died in Hanover, New Hampshire, at age 70.

In 1987, 43 people were killed after a gunman aboard a Pacific Southwest Airlines jetliner in California apparently opened fire on a fellow passenger, the pilots and himself, causing the plane to crash. Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev set foot on American soil for the first time, arriving for a Washington summit with President Ronald Reagan.

In 1990, actress Joan Bennett died in Scarsdale, New York, at age 80.

In 1995, a 746-pound probe from the Galileo spacecraft hurtled into Jupiter's atmosphere, sending back data to the mothership before it was presumably destroyed.

In 2004, Hamid Karzai (HAH'-mihd KAH'R'-zeeye) was sworn in as Afghanistan's first popularly elected president.

Ten years ago: Federal air marshals shot and killed an airline passenger, Rigoberto Alpizar, at Miami International Airport after he claimed to have a bomb. (It turned out that Alpizar, who suffered from bipolar disorder, had no bomb.)

Five years ago: Elizabeth Edwards, the estranged wife of former U.S. Sen. John Edwards, died at her home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, at 61 after fighting breast cancer. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange surrendered to authorities in London, where he was jailed for nine days before being freed on bail as he fought extradition to Sweden for questioning in a rape investigation. Mike Tyson, three-division champion Julio Cesar Chavez of Mexico and Russian-born Kostya Tszyu, a junior welterweight champion, were selected for induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame and Museum; also selected were Mexican trainer Ignacio "Nacho" Beristain, referee Joe Cortez, and "Rocky" actor and screenwriter Sylvester Stallone.

One year ago: Six prisoners held for 12 years at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, arrived in Uruguay amid a new push by President Barack Obama to close the U.S. prison. Britain's Prince William and his wife, Catherine, arrived in New York City on their first official visit to the U.S. Ken Weatherwax, who'd played Pugsley on "The Addams Family" television series in the 1960s, was found dead at his home in Box Canyon, California; he was 59.

Today's Birthdays: Linguist and political philosopher Noam Chomsky is 87. Bluegrass singer Bobby Osborne is 84. Actress Ellen Burstyn is 83. Sen. Thad Cochran, R-Miss., is 78. Broadcast journalist Carole Simpson is 75. Baseball Hall of Famer Johnny Bench is 68. Actor-director-producer James Keach is 68. Country singer Gary Morris is 67. Singer-songwriter Tom Waits is 66. Sen. Susan M. Collins, R-Maine, is 63. Basketball Hall of Famer Larry Bird is 59. Actress Priscilla Barnes is 58. Former "Tonight Show" announcer Edd (cq) Hall is 57. Rock musician Tim Butler (The Psychedelic Furs) is 57. Actor Patrick Fabian is 51. Actor Jeffrey Wright is 50. Actor C. Thomas Howell is 49. Producer-director Jason Winer is 43. NFL player Terrell Owens is 42. Rapper-producer Kon Artis is 41. Pop singer Nicole Appleton (All Saints) is 40. Latin singer Frankie J is 39. Country singer Sunny Sweeney is 39. Actor Chris Chalk is 38. Actress Shiri Appleby is 37. Pop-rock singer/celebrity judge Sara Bareilles (bah-REHL'-es) is 36. Actress Jennifer Carpenter is 36. Singer Aaron Carter is 28.

Thought for Today: "O tempora! O mores!" (Oh the times! Oh the customs!) — Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 B.C.-43 B.C.).

Liftoff: 1st US shipment in months flying to space station

MARCIA DUNN, AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — A U.S. shipment of much-needed groceries and other astronaut supplies rocketed toward the International Space Station for the first time in months Sunday, reigniting NASA's commercial delivery service.

If the Orbital ATK capsule arrives at the space station Wednesday as planned, it will represent the first U.S. delivery since spring.

"Santa is on his way!" Tory Bruno, president of rocket maker United Launch Alliance, announced via Twitter. More than anyone, perhaps, the six space station astronauts were thrilled following all the weather-related

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 24 of 31

delays. They managed to photograph the rising rocket from their windows as both craft sailed over the Atlantic. "Caught something good on the horizon," commander Scott Kelly reported in a tweet.

To NASA's relief, the weather cooperated after three days of high wind and cloudy skies that kept the Atlas V rocket firmly on the ground. Everything came together on the fourth launch attempt, allowing the unmanned Atlas to blast off with 7,400 pounds of space station cargo, not to mention some Christmas presents for the awaiting crew.

Just before liftoff, Bruno urged, "Everyone cross your fingers and think happy weather thoughts."

It apparently worked.

The Atlas soared through clouds and, 21 minutes later, ended up placing the Cygnus cargo carrier in the perfect orbit. Ecstatic launch controllers applauded, shook hands and hugged one another. "We're real happy to be back in space," said Frank Culbertson, president of Orbital's space systems group.

United Launch Alliance manager Vernon Thorp couldn't help but notice all the number fours in Sunday's launch equation. Liftoff occurred at 4:44 p.m. on the fourth launch attempt, and Orbital's designation for the mission was — yep — number four. "I guess the numbers just all lined up right today," Thorp told reporters.

The space station astronauts — two of them, including Kelly, deep into a one-year mission — have gone without American shipments since April. Two private companies contracted for more than \$3.5 billion by NASA to replenish the 250-mile-high lab are stuck on Earth with grounded rockets. Orbital ATK bought the United Launch Alliance's rocket, the veteran Atlas V, for this supply mission.

Orbital's previous grocery run, its fourth, ended in a fiery explosion seconds after liftoff in October 2014. SpaceX, the other supplier, suffered a launch failure in June on its eighth trip.

Russia also lost a supply ship earlier this year. But it picked up the slack and has another resupply mission scheduled just before Christmas; Japan has chipped in as well.

Much-needed food is inside Orbital's cargo carrier, named Cygnus after the swan constellation. NASA normally likes to have a six-month stash of food aboard the space station, but it's down a couple months because of the three failed flights. Space station program manager Kirk Shireman expects it will take another year to get the pantry full again — provided there are no more accidents.

Also aboard the newest Cygnus capsule: clothes, toiletries, spacewalking gear, air-supply tanks and science experiments.

This is the first time that the United Launch Alliance's Atlas V has served the space station. Normally used for hefty satellite launches, it is the mighty successor to the Atlas used to put John Glenn into orbit in 1962. Boeing intends to use the Atlas V to boost the Starliner capsules it's building to ferry astronauts to the space station beginning in 2017.

Orbital plans to use another Atlas rocket for a supply run in March, then return its own Antares rocket to flight from Virginia in May.

SpaceX — also part of NASA's commercial crew effort — aims to restart station deliveries in January with its Falcon rockets.

While acknowledging 2015 has been a difficult year because of the disrupted supply chain, Shireman said commercial space is inevitable and will drive down launch costs. NASA's 30-year shuttle program proved expensive and complicated, and, on two flights, deadly.

"It is our future," Shireman stressed last week.

The Cygnus launched Sunday is named after Mercury 7 astronaut Deke Slayton, a pioneer in commercial spaceflight before his death in 1993.

'Hunger Games' finale fends off spooky 'Krampus' flick

RYAN NAKASHIMA, AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — The "Hunger Games" finale spoiled an early Christmas for the holiday horror comedy "Krampus" to maintain its top spot at the North American box office for the third week running.

The Jennifer Lawrence-led film took in an estimated \$18.6 million in the U.S. and Canada, bringing its

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 25 of 31

domestic total to \$227 million, according to Rentrak estimates Sunday.

The anti-Santa Claus thriller from Universal, the only film to debut in the top 10 this week, brought in \$16 million.

The normally slow weekend following Thanksgiving was up 26 percent from a year ago thanks to the fresh fodder from Universal, which slipped in between the release of two huge franchise movies— "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 2," and "Star Wars: Episode VII — The Force Awakens," which is due out Dec. 18.

"Even though it's horror at its base, you needed to have enough time for the film to open and lead up to Christmas," said Nicholas Carpou, Universal Pictures' president of domestic distribution. "Being the only wide commercial release on this date really did wonders for this film."

Modestly budgeted for under \$15 million, "Krampus" is likely to add to the profits of what has been a record year for Universal following the release of movies like "Jurassic World," "Furious 7," and "Minions."

Meanwhile, the final movie installment for bow-wielding Katniss pushed past \$500 million worldwide, another hit for Lionsgate, which has staked its claim on the young adult market. It hopes to keep rolling with its franchise film strategy with "Allegiant," the third film in the "Divergent" series due out in March.

"Creed," the boxing film where Sylvester Stallone reprises his role as Rocky Balboa, came third, and the Disney/Pixar animated tale "The Good Dinosaur" came fourth. Each had around \$15.5 million in ticket sales.

Overall ticket sales are running 4 percent ahead of last year and are on track to top \$11 billion in the U.S. and Canada for the first time, said Rentrak's senior media analyst Paul Dergarabedian.

Dergarabedian says it remains to be seen whether the global excitement around J.J. Abrams' "Star Wars" will drown out a bevy of other options coming out later this year. That ranges from director Alejandro Inarritu's "The Revenant" to the Amy Poehler and Tina Fey-led comedy, "Sisters," which has knowingly marketed its film with a "Star Wars" parody trailer and the hashtag #youcanseethemboth.

Among other films competing for attention in the coming weeks are: "Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip," the Will Smith-led football movie "Concussion," and "Joy," an underdog tale that reunites stars Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper with "American Hustle" director David O. Russell.

"Hopefully the rising tide of 'Star Wars' will raise all movies," Dergarabedian said.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Rentrak. Where available, the latest international numbers for Friday through Sunday are also included. Final domestic figures will be released Monday.

1. "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 2," \$18.6 million (\$32.4 million international).
2. "Krampus," \$16.0 million (\$3.3 million international).
3. "Creed," \$15.5 million (\$1.4 million international).
4. "The Good Dinosaur," \$15.5 million (\$19.4 million international).
5. "Spectre," \$5.4 million (\$23 million international).
6. "The Night Before," \$4.9 million.
7. "The Peanuts Movie," \$3.5 million (\$2.2 million international).
8. "Spotlight," \$2.9 million.
9. "Brooklyn," \$2.4 million.
10. "Secret In Their Eyes," \$2.0 million.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at international theaters (excluding the U.S. and Canada), according to Rentrak:

1. "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 2," \$32.4 million.
2. "Spectre," \$23 million.
3. "The Good Dinosaur," \$19.4 million.
4. "In The Heart Of The Sea," \$17.1 million.
5. "The Martian," \$13.5 million.
6. "Point Break," \$12 million.
7. "Fall In Love Like A Star," \$11 million.

8. "Bridge of Spies," \$10 million.
9. "Inside Men," \$6.6 million.
10. "Victor Frankenstein," \$5 million.

Ho, ho, snow: Santa's helpers get jolly on the slopes

NEWRY, Maine (AP) — Santa and his helpers hit the ski slopes to spread some holiday cheer on Sunday. All told, a mob of 150 right jolly ol' elves hopped on skis and snowboards for the 16th annual Skiing Santas event at Sunday River ski resort.

The event serves as a festive kickoff to the holiday season.

"It's really fun because everyone is a little wild and crazy," said Catherine Bolender, 53, of Waterboro, who's been participating for about a dozen years. "It's a fun, festive event."

Thom Bureau, a snowboarder, agreed that it's chaotic — and unforgettable.

"When you're on the chairlift, you look back as you're getting off, and the whole chairlift is full of Santas. It's kind of freaky, actually," he said.

The event has become so popular that it's difficult to get a ticket.

Brad and Heather Cope of Newton Falls, Ohio, said the online registration filled up in 4 minutes on Nov. 30. They said they were lucky to make the cut.

"We were both on our computers at noon to make sure we got it," said Brad Cope, a former ski instructor who installs swimming pools. Heather is a Maine native and nurse practitioner.

Resort officials say the event raised a little more than \$3,000 for the Sunday River Community Fund, a local charity.

Participants were required to donate at least \$15 to the fund. In exchange, they were allowed to ski for free and to receive another lift ticket good through Dec. 18.

US Muslims struggle with how they should condemn extremism

RACHEL ZOLL, AP Religion Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — By now, the tableau has become tragically familiar: American Muslims standing before a bank of cameras, condemning an attack linked to Islamic extremism.

After the San Bernardino, California, rampage, the local chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations didn't even wait for law enforcement to announce a motive. Just hours after the husband-and-wife shooters were identified as Muslim on Wednesday, the civil rights group held a news conference with the perpetrators' brother-in-law, Farhan Khan.

And so we had a stunned, slightly disheveled Muslim man, surrounded by Muslim leaders, saying his family had no hint of the plot. "I love this country," Khan said.

"Perception is reality," said Salam Al-Marayati, president of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, a policy and advocacy group based in Los Angeles. "There was enough information out there at that time that people believed it was (extremism) and that has an impact on Muslim communities. You have to be proactive."

But some in the Muslim community say a new game plan is needed. A younger generation is especially impatient with the condemnations of Islamic extremism from Muslim groups after every attack. They argue that the statements merely reinforce false notions that Muslims are collectively responsible for the violence.

"America is ready for a more sophisticated conversation when it comes to these things," said Shahed Amanullah, a former U.S. State Department adviser and co-founder of Affinis Labs, which helps develop apps to counter the appeal of Islamic extremism and build online communities for young Muslims. "You can't press release your way out of this."

The public pleas that all Muslims should not be blamed for attacks in the name of Islam grew in the aftermath of the 2001 strikes on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The attacks occurred at an especially vulnerable moment for the U.S. Muslim community, which was more inwardly focused at the time and not nearly as accepted in American culture as Christianity and Judaism. The few American Muslim groups with any public profile issued a flurry of press releases condemning the

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 27 of 31

attacks and calling Islam a peaceful religion, encouraged mosques to hold open houses, organized inter-faith events and held Islam 101 sessions for law enforcement officials and community leaders.

Muslim groups largely kept to script after extremist attacks in places such as London in 2005, Fort Hood, Texas, in 2009, Boston in 2013 and, most recently, last month in Paris.

But many Americans continued to blame Islam itself for extremism. A Pew Research Center survey last year found an increasing share of Americans believe Islam is more likely than other religion to encourage violence among its followers. A growing number of U.S. Muslims resented suggestions that they had a special obligation to condemn attacks — no other religious group, they argued, is expected to issue such statements after self-professed followers of their faiths commit a crime.

At a Georgetown University event last month on anti-Muslim bias, speaker Linda Sarsour said she struggled with Muslims who take part in such news conferences.

"It reinforces the fallacy that I have something in common with" the Islamic State group, said Sarsour, a prominent Muslim leader from New York. She said she condemns terrorism not as a Muslim, but "as a human" who is outraged and saddened by violence. The audience applauded.

Ibrahim Hooper, spokesman for the national Council on American-Islamic Relations, the civil rights group that is the primary force behind the condemnations and news conferences, said he is well aware of the criticism. He said every time his organization posts a statement on Facebook condemning Islamic extremists, commenters complain: "We shouldn't have to do this. You're feeding into a false linkage of Islam to terrorism."

At the same time, Hooper said, "I'm getting hate calls all day long saying, 'Sure you condemn terrorism, but we don't believe you.'"

Since the Paris attacks, and after the California assault, U.S. Muslim leaders have been reporting a fresh outburst of threats and vandalism at mosques.

"To remain silent — I don't think that's a viable alternative, especially when the New York Post front page screams 'Muslim Killers,'" as it did after the San Bernardino shootings, Hooper said.

But Amanullah said in the wake of such attacks, Muslim groups should not be preoccupied with protecting Muslims from a backlash. They should instead join the broader discussion, emphasizing shared concerns about preventing violence, while also doing something to help, he said.

"I think the average American, when they see that Muslims are acting like other Americans and not any different, I think that would resonate with people," Amanullah said. "I think it's organically happening with younger generations of Muslims. Younger Muslims are investing in broader struggles in this country." He pointed to a recent Ramadan fundraising drive among American Muslims to raise money to rebuild black churches that have been the target of arson.

"That's the kind of stuff that changes hearts — doing blood drives, cleaning up neighborhoods, tutoring people," he said.

Tarek El-Messidi, 35, an American Muslim leader from Knoxville, Tennessee, serves as one example. Through his organization Celebrate Mercy, which teaches about the Prophet Muhammad, he used social media to urge Muslims to send condolence letters to the family of Ambassador Chris Stevens, who was killed along with three others in the 2012 attack on the U.S. diplomatic outpost in Benghazi, Libya. The effort drew 7,700 letters from 115 countries, El-Messidi said.

After this year's killings in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, of three young American Muslims who had been focused on public service, El-Messidi helped create the "Feed Their Legacy" effort, which organized canned food drives in honor of the victims among mosques in 30 states. He said about 200,000 meals were provided for the poor.

"The narrative is being defined for us, and we're being defined by these extremist acts and the poll numbers show that," El-Messidi said. "I personally do feel like condemning is an unfortunate necessity right now because our community is misunderstood. But I think that's partially the Muslims' fault because we're not changing the narrative. Condemning is just a Band-Aid solution. It feels like putting a Band-Aid over a tumor."

For Asra Nomani, an advocate of Islamic reform and author of "Standing Alone: An American Woman's

Struggle for the Soul of Islam," the deeper problem is an unwillingness of American Muslims to truly confront extremism in the religion. Resistance to issuing the condemnations, she said, is a sign of denial about what's wrong with how the religion is being interpreted.

"I disagree with that whole logic of people who say we don't need to apologize and we don't need to condemn it," Nomani said. "We're not owning up to the problem when we say: 'This isn't my Islam. I didn't pull the trigger. I don't believe in extremist ideas.' I think we're setting ourselves up for this animosity that comes our way."

AP Exclusive: Texas birth certificate rules often unenforced

WILL WEISSERT, Associated Press

SETH ROBBINS, Associated Press

BROWNSVILLE, Texas (AP) — Texas has for seven years said it won't accept Mexican identification cards when issuing birth certificates for children of people in the United States illegally. But it doesn't appear to have stepped up enforcement until recently, amid mounting political pressure to get tougher on immigration, records obtained by The Associated Press show.

That could validate complaints from immigrant parents suing in federal court, claiming the state is denying "birthright" U.S. citizenship for their Texas-born children guaranteed under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The AP used open records requests to get annual "self-assessment" surveys completed by local registrars. They show that officials in at least five cities and counties along the U.S.-Mexico border told the Texas Department of State Health Services during the past three years that they were allowing parents to get copies of birth certificates using a Mexican identification known as the *matricula consular*.

"Most of applicants are here illegally as they claim, and are therefore unable to obtain a valid form of identification from the United States," Janie Madero, then-registrar in McAllen, wrote in a 2013 survey response. "Therefore our office accepts the *matricula consular* so they can obtain the birth certificate for their children who were born here."

Elsewhere along the border, Arizona generally doesn't accept the *matricula consular* while New Mexico does. California lets notaries decide whether the Mexican ID is acceptable.

Texas says it doesn't trust the *matricula consular* because of forgery fears, not politics. Hospitals provide documentation of births in Texas, but parents have to obtain birth certificates from registrars or other officials.

In June 2008, the health department wrote to the Mexican consulate in Austin saying federal authorities had determined the *matricula consular* wasn't a "secure" form of identification and that it therefore wouldn't be accepted for people obtaining birth certificates for their newborns.

The state began spelling out that policy in registrar handbooks in 2010.

But the survey results show some registrars repeatedly admitting to accepting the Mexican documents since 2013, the furthest back the state keeps records, and Texas officials not asking them to stop doing so until recently — if at all.

The Department of State Health Services oversees Texas' Vital Statistics Unit. It reports issuing just one cease and desist letter to a county registrar in Brownsville who was accepting the *matricula consular*, and that didn't come until this July.

Two months later, it wrote letters instructing against accepting the Mexican document in response to inquiries from registrars in Dallas and nearby McKinney.

Those three letters were all the state provided when asked for correspondence related to the *matricula consular* since 2008. Health services spokesman Chris Van Deusen subsequently said his department had "identified some additional communications with local registrars about the *matricula*" but that the lawsuit made those confidential.

When and how strictly Texas began enforcing its ID rules are important since more than two-dozen parents in the country illegally have sued, saying the state is effectively denying citizenship the U.S. Con-

stitution guarantees to all born on U.S. soil.

Immigration attorneys suggest that the state only got serious about enforcement after women and children from Central America began pouring over Texas' southern border last summer. Further raising the political stakes was President Barack Obama's announced executive actions on immigration in November 2014, which sought to temporarily shield from deportation up to 4 million people in the U.S. illegally.

Efren Olivares, one of the lawyers representing immigrant parents suing, said there was a "tightening of the screws" amid Obama's announcements and Central Americans crossing into Texas at record rates. "We believe there is an intent behind this," Olivares said.

Jennifer Harbury with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid said the state "knew from the self-assessment forms that it was being accepted statewide" but didn't begin objecting until recently.

"It certainly doesn't look like it could have possibly been a coincidence," Harbury said.

Van Deusen said the three letters don't reflect other efforts to enforce the matricula consular rule, such as when the state calls registrars, or sees them personally during about 50 visits conducted annually to registrars' offices.

Still, the survey results show that some registrars said repeatedly that they were accepting the Mexican IDs without consequences.

In the border town of Pharr, registrars admitted to accepting the matricula consular in 2013, 2014 and 2015 surveys, and are still doing so. In Brownsville, registrars said they were in 2013 and 2014, but no letter came saying not to until this summer.

Van Deusen declined to comment on accusations that the policy change was political, saying the state will "respond in court as the suit progresses."

"Our policy (is) to address any inconsistencies with how local registrars handle vital records at the time we learn of them," he added. "Those policies and their application are not related to immigration."

Pharr registrar Maritza Gutierrez said she is still accepting the matricula consular, though only with other forms of identification, such as utility bills.

"It's our prerogative that we take it," Gutierrez said.

Beijing issues 1st smog red alert, urging schools to close

CHRISTOPHER BODEEN, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Beijing issued its first-ever red alert for smog on Monday, urging schools to close and invoking restrictions on factories and traffic that will keep half of the city's vehicles off the roads.

The red alert — the most serious warning on a four-tier system adopted a little over two years ago — means authorities have forecast more than three consecutive days of severe smog.

An online notice from the Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau said it issued the alert to "protect public health and reduce levels of heavy air pollution."

Readings of PM2.5 particles climbed toward 300 micrograms per cubic meter on Monday and are expected to continue rising before the air begins to improve with the arrival of a cold front on Thursday. The World Health Organization designates the safe level for PM2.5 particles at 25.

Along with school closures and limiting cars to driving every other day depending on the last number of their license plate, a raft of other restrictions will seek to reduce the amount of dust and other particulate matter in the city of 22.5 million people. Officials said extra subway trains and buses would be added to handle the additional strain on public transport.

It's the second time this month that notoriously polluted Beijing has experienced a prolonged bout of smog, sending PM2.5 levels in the suburbs as high as 976 micrograms. Beijing was also shrouded in persistent smog for most of November, when power demand soared due to unusually cold weather.

While pollution in the capital improved slightly in the first 10 months of the year, heavy smog that can be seen from outer space regularly forces Beijing schools to suspend outdoor activities and can even prompt highway closures because of reduced visibility.

There previously have been stretches of severe smog that lasted more than three straight days. However,

those had been forecast to last three days or less, so they did not trigger a red alert. The alert requires a forecast of more than 72 straight hours with PM2.5 levels of 200 micrograms per cubic meter or more.

Polluted air throughout broad swaths of China has had severe health effects. A study led by atmospheric chemist Jos Lelieveld of Germany's Max Planck Institute and published this year in Nature magazine estimated that 1.4 million people die prematurely because of pollution in China each year.

Most of the pollution is blamed on coal-fired power plants, along with vehicle emissions and construction and factory work. China, the world's biggest carbon emitter, plans to upgrade coal power plants over the next five years to tackle the problem, and says its emissions will peak by around 2030 before starting to decline.

While emissions standards have been tightened and heavy investments made in solar, wind and other renewable energy, China still depends on coal for more than 60 percent of its power.

From The White House

President Obama's message from the Oval Office

Tonight, I addressed the nation from the Oval Office on my top priority as President: Keeping the American people safe.

It weighs heavily on the hearts and minds of all of us in the wake of the terrible tragedy in San Bernardino. Fourteen Americans -- dads, moms, daughters, sons -- were taken from us as they came together to celebrate the holidays. Each of them a public servant. All of them a part of our American family.

The FBI is still gathering the facts about what happened in San Bernardino, but here is what we know. We have no evidence that the killers were directed by a terrorist organization overseas, or that they were part of a broader conspiracy here at home. But it is clear that these killers had embraced a perversion of Islam, stockpiled assault weapons, and committed an act of terrorism.

Our nation has been at war with terrorists since al Qaeda killed nearly 3,000 Americans on 9/11. Since then, we've hardened our defenses. Our intelligence and law enforcement agencies have disrupted countless plots and worked around the clock to keep us safe. Our military and counter-terrorism professionals have relentlessly pursued terrorist networks overseas -- disrupting safe havens, killing Osama bin Laden, and decimating al Qaeda's leadership.

But over the last few years, the threat has evolved as terrorists have turned to less complicated acts of violence like the mass shootings that are all-too common in our society. For the past seven years, I have confronted the evolution of this threat each morning. Your security is my greatest responsibility. And I know that, after so much war, many Americans are asking whether we are confronted by a cancer that has no immediate cure.

So, tonight, this is what I want you to know: The threat of terrorism is real, but we will overcome it. We will destroy ISIL and any other organization that tries to harm us. Here's how:

First, our military will continue to hunt down terrorist plotters in any country where it is necessary, using air strikes to take out ISIL leaders and their infrastructure in Iraq and Syria. And since the attacks in Paris, our closest allies -- France, Germany, and the United Kingdom -- have ramped up their contributions to our military campaign, which will help us accelerate our effort to destroy ISIL.

Second, we will continue to provide training and equipment to Iraqi and Syrian forces fighting ISIL on the ground so that we take away their safe havens. In both countries, we are deploying Special Operations forces who can accelerate that offensive.

Third, we are leading a coalition of 65 countries to stop ISIL's operations by disrupting plots, cutting off their financing, and preventing them from recruiting more fighters.

Fourth, with American leadership, the international community has established a process and timeline to pursue cease-fires and a political resolution to the Syrian civil war. Doing so will allow the Syrian people and every country to focus on the common goal of destroying ISIL.

Groton Daily Independent

Monday, Dec. 07, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 136 ♦ 31 of 31

That is our strategy -- designed and supported by military commanders, counter-terrorism experts, and countries committed to defeating these terrorists. And we constantly examine further steps needed to get the job done. That is why I have ordered the Departments of State and Homeland Security to review the visa program under which the female terrorist in San Bernardino originally came to this country. And that is why I will urge high tech and law enforcement leaders to make it harder for terrorists to use technology to escape from justice.

Here at home, we can do more together to immediately address this challenge.

To start, Congress should act to make sure that no one on a No Fly List is able to buy a gun. What possible argument can be made for allowing a terrorist suspect to buy a semi-automatic weapon? This is a matter of national security. I know there are some who reject any gun safety measure, but no matter how effective our intelligence and law enforcement agencies, we cannot identify every would-be mass shooter. What we can do, and must do, is make it harder for them to kill.

Next, we should put in place stronger screening for those who come to America without a visa so that we can know if they've traveled to war zones. And finally, if Congress believes, as I do, that we are at war with ISIL, then it should vote to authorize the continued use of military force against these terrorists.

This is what we should do. But I'd like to also say a word about what we should not do.

We should not be drawn once again into a long and costly ground war in Iraq or Syria. That's what groups like ISIL want. We also cannot turn against one another by letting this fight become a war between America and Islam. That, too, is what groups like ISIL want. ISIL does not speak for Islam. They are thugs and killers, and account for a tiny fraction of more than a billion Muslims around the world who reject their hateful ideology.

If we are to succeed in defeating terrorism, we must enlist Muslim communities as our strongest allies in rooting out misguided ideas that lead to radicalization. It is the responsibility of all Americans -- of every faith -- to reject discrimination. It is our responsibility to reject religious tests on who we admit into this country. It is our responsibility to reject language that encourages suspicion or hate. Because that kind of divisiveness, that betrayal of our values, plays into the hands of groups like ISIL. We have to remember that.

I am confident America will succeed in this mission because we are on the right side of history. Even as we debate our differences, let's make sure we never forget what makes us exceptional: We were founded upon a belief in human dignity -- the idea that no matter who you are, or where you come from, or what you look like, or what religion you practice, you are equal in the eyes of God and equal in the eyes of the law.

Let's not forget that freedom is more powerful than fear. That we have always met challenges -- whether war or depression; natural disasters or terrorist attacks -- by coming together around our common ideals. As long as we stay true to who we are, then I have no doubt that America will prevail.

Thank you,

President Barack Obama