

Groton Daily Independent

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Groton Area is starting 2 hours late this morning.

Thursday, December 17

School Breakfast: Breakfast pizza, fruit, juice, milk.

School Lunch: Ham and cheese sandwich, fruit, French Fries, broccoli and dip.

Senior Menu: Roast beef, potatoes, carrots and onions, gravy, peaches, multi-grain dinner roll.

Birthdays: Tammy Locke, Breanna Marzahn, Alan Townsend

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

7:00pm

MS/HS Christmas Concert at GHS Gym

Friday, December 18

Debate at Brookings

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

School Lunch: Quesadilla, corn, mixed veggie trays, fruit.

Senior Menu: Breaded codfish, parsley buttered potatoes, coleslaw, orange sherbet, whole wheat bread.

Birthdays: Jean Harrison, Pastor Craig Grams, Jasper Pray, Kelly Pappas, Dylan Hanson, Michaela Oleson

2:00pm: Elementary Christmas Concert at GHS Gym

4:00pm: Basketball Double Header at Deuel (JV girls at 4:00, JV Boys at 5:00, C boys at 4:00, Girls JV at 4:00, Boys JV at 5:00, Girls Varsity at 6:30, Boys Varsity at 8:00)

Saturday, December 19

Debate at Brookings

Birthdays: Jeff Howard, Tim Thurston, Brad Waage, Gretchen Dinger, Quenton Severson

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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All Events Streamed with the Groton Daily Independent can now be seen on



All future streams can be viewed at
<http://livestream.com/GDI>

Middle/High School Christmas Concert. 7 p.m., on Dec. 17
Elementary Christmas Concert, 2 p.m. on Dec. 18
and more!

A screenshot of the Livestream website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'livestream' on the left, 'WATCH EVENTS', 'BROADCAST LIVE', and a search box. On the right, there are links for '+1 (646) 490-1679', 'WHAT IS LIVESTREAM?', 'HELP', and 'LOG IN'. The main content area features a large banner for 'GDI Paper Paul' (Groton Daily Independent). Below the banner, there's a 'Following 2' section with icons for YouTube and Facebook. The 'Upcoming & Live Events' section displays two event cards: 'Girls Basketball Leola-Frederick at Groton Area Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015' and 'Boys Basketball Leola-Frederick at Groton Area Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015'. Each card includes a 'Sports on Paper Paul' logo and a 'Today' time indicator (4:30 PM CST and 6:01 PM CST respectively).

When you get to the page, it will look like that above. Click on the green Follow button, enter your email address or sign in with your Facebook account and you'll be notified of the streams. You watch the streams on your mobile device as well.

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Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Shih Tzus 19, Chipmunks 18, Pocket Gophers 14, Jackelopes 13, Coyotes 12, Foxes 8

Men's High Games: Brad Waage 236, Brad Larson 235, Steve Giedt 198, Tony Waage 198

Women's High Games: Sue Stanley 170, Vicki Jorgensen 169, Dar Larson 168, 164

Men's High Series: Brad Larson 618, Brad Waage 602, Roger Colestock 536

Women's High Series: Vicki Jorgensen 474, Dar Larson 479, Vicki Walter 453

Putney Putovers 4-H

The Putney Putovers 4-H club met November 9th, 2015 at the Groton Community Center. The meeting was called to order by President Carly Wheeting. The flag pledges were led by: US: Cole Simon, State: Porter Johnson and 4-H: Hannah Monson. Roll call was completed with the topic "Name Something in a First Aid Kit". The Secretary's Report was read by Hailey Monson; it was approved by Jillian Hughes and seconded by Taryn Taylor. The Treasurer's Report was read by Lucas Simon; it was approved by Alexis Simon and seconded by Hailey Monson. There were no new bills. Community service was reported by Alexis Simon helped with volleyball and taught at Sunday school. Also doing community service this month was Carter Simon, Cole Simon, Hailey Monson, Hannah Monson, Caleb Hanten, Alexis Hanten, Ashley Johnson, Aspen Johnson, and Tage Taylor. All of these individuals helped at their churches by serving or cleaning. In old business members picked up projects from the 4-H display, received premium checks from their fair projects, and 4-H record books were handed out. The 4-H Recognition Program was held November 8th and awards were handed out to those who could not attend.

In new business, communication with the Brown County 4-H office was discussed. They are currently using Facebook, weekly emails, and the monthly "Newshound". Dakota Sharpshooters are coordinating this year's Christmas tree. It will be located at the Brown County Courthouse and Safe Harbor is the designated charity; members are encouraged to donate. The 4-H year began October 1, 2015. Anyone eight years old on or before January 1, 2016 can join between now and May 31, 2016. Brown County 4-H dues were discussed. They are \$4 per person and the club voted to have this fee paid from the treasury. This motion was made by Tage Taylor and seconded by Alexis Simon. The Project Day series occurs on Wednesdays from 4-5pm and members are encouraged to attend if able.

The next meeting will be in January, and the date/time to be determined. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Lucas Simon and seconded by Porter Johnson. There was no talks and demonstrations this meeting. Snacks were provided by host/hostess Brenna and Porter Johnson.

---Hailey Monson, Secretary

Groton Coffee Cup League

Team Standings: Jungle Lanes 29 winners of first half, James Valley 28, Kens 26 1/2, Ten Pins 20 1/2.

High Games: Joyce Walter 189, Penny Stolle 176, Vicki Walter 171

High Series: Joyce Walter 484, Vicki Walter 470, Penny Stolle 567

Schinkel on Aberdeen Area Men's Chorus

Lee Schinkel has been caroling with the Aberdeen Area Mens Chorus at several nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Aberdeen, in December. Lee sponsored Joshua Heitz, of Groton; as a new member in the chorus.



Groton Chamber Holiday Boxes are out & about in Groton!

This Week (thru 12/18) – Professional
Management Supply

\$25 Chamber Bucks OR Mystery Gift!

Next Week (thru 12/23) – Olde Bank
Floral 'N More

**\$25 Chamber Bucks or a Fresh Floral Christmas Bouquet

Stop by each participating business and register for \$25
Groton Chamber Bucks – or a prize supplied by the business.



Merry
Christmas

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Here is how the Schwan's fundraiser works.

Customers phone in the order or order online
They use the code. 25179

If they regularly order online they are asked if they want to contribute to a fundraiser

That is when they put the code in.

Between Dec 2 and Jan 16, we will earn 20% of sales

If a customer orders an ecertificate-and online gift card we get \$10 for the \$25 ecertificate.

When you get an ecertificate, you can go in and purchase right away or you can print it out if you want to give it as a gift or save it for later.

Customers are limited to one ecertificate...BUT if you use an alternate email address you can purchase more than one

If you are not a regular Schwan's customer, when you place your order they will tell you what day
And approximate (2 hour) time they plan to deliver.

You can be a one time customer and support us.

If you order online you must give them a credit card number, however you can switch payment at the door.

It took me a few fundraisers to realize that if I purchase during the first 45 days I contribute 20% and save my ecertificates for after the Jan 16 date, duh! Before that I was purchasing ecertificates and using them right away.

Our greatest income will be during this 45 day period.
After that we will earn 5% until April 16.

Schwan's
Cares™
A Fundraising Network



Support Us

*Giving back to your community
never tasted so delicious.*

Schwan's Home Delivery offers over 350 delicious foods, flash-frozen at the peak of freshness and conveniently delivered to your door. Through Schwans-Cares.com, you can order from Schwan's Home Delivery and help our organization meet its fundraising goals. When you order by **January 16th, 2016**, 20% of product and 40% of eGift Card sales will go back to the organization.

Here are two ways to support us!

Order Online:

1. Visit Schwans-Cares.com
2. Enter Campaign ID: **25179** into the search box located in the upper right hand corner then click to open campaign.
3. Click "Shop to Give" and then select either the "Buy Now" or "Shop Now" option.
4. Select team member, if applicable
5. Start shopping!

Order by Phone:

Call 1-855-870-7208 and provide Campaign ID: **25179**

Thank you for your support!

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Shop online at Schwans-Cares.com
or call 1-855-870-7208



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Today in Weather History

1884 - A three week blockade of snow began at Portland, OR. A record December total of 34 inches was received. (David Ludlum)

1924 - A severe icestorm struck central Illinois. It coated the ground with nearly two inches of glaze at Springfield. The storm caused 21 million dollars damage along with much hardship. Ice was on the trees until the 4th of January, and electricity was not restored until January 10th. (David Ludlum)

1929 - An icestorm in western New York State resulted in much damage and hardship. A Buffalo report stated, "one was kept awake by the breaking limbs, which snapped off with a report much louder than a rifle shot." (17th-18th) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A storm in the southwestern U.S. brought heavy rain and heavy snow to parts of California, Nevada, Arizona, Utah and New Mexico. Charleston NV was blanketed with 12 inches of snow. Lake Havasu City AZ was drenched with 2.26 inches of rain. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Squalls brought locally heavy snow to the southeastern shores of Lake Michigan. Totals in Michigan ranged up to 14 inches at Harvey. Totals in Ohio ranged up to 16 inches at Chardon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Twenty-one cities from Kentucky to Pennsylvania reported record low temperatures for the date, including Columbus OH with a reading of 12 degrees below zero. Heavy snow continued in the Colorado Rockies. Vail received 65 inches of snow between the 14th and the 18th of December. Steamboat Springs was buried under

74 inches, and reported a total of 108 inches of snow between the 10th and the 18th of the month. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2002 - Thunderstorms preceding a strong cold front pushed into the U.S. Mississippi Valley, producing severe weather and tornadoes. Three people were killed in Missouri and Arkansas with more than 40 injuries (Associated Press).

2008 - A winter storm dumped as much as 3.6 inches of snow across Las Vegas, Nevada, prompting the closure of schools and highways. This was the largest December snowfall on record and the heaviest snowfall since January 1979 when a total of 7.5 inches fell (Associated Press).



**Groton
Holiday
Lighting
Contest**
Thursday,
Dec. 17th

2016 DOG LICENSES

AVAILABLE NOW!!

Licenses due by Dec. 31, 2015

Fines start after Dec. 31, 2015

Dogs CAN NOT be licensed without providing updated rabies shot information, please bring records for each dog to City Hall

Please contact City Hall as soon as possible if you no longer have any dogs

Spayed or neutered dogs are \$5 per dog, otherwise \$10 per dog

**Groton
Transit
Christmas**

Open

House

December 18th

9am to 4pm.








**Register for
Door Prizes**

**Come in for
Cider, Coffee
and goodies.**

All welcome!

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Scattered Flurries	Scattered Flurries	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 23 °F	Low: 3 °F	High: 14 °F	Low: -9 °F	High: 28 °F	Low: 16 °F	High: 26 °F



Winter-Like Temperatures & Flurries

Follow us on *Social Media*





weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Today	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Today	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
									
<i>Breezy</i>					<i>Breezy</i>		<i>Breezy</i>		
20° 6°	17° 2°	30° 17°	28° 13°	29° 15°	23° -3°	15° -9°	28° 15°	27° 10°	28° 16°
NW 20	NW 13	S 11	N 9	W 7	NW 24	NW 14	S 16	N 11	W 8
Mobridge					Aberdeen				
Today	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Today	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
									
<i>Breezy</i>					<i>Breezy</i>	<i>Breezy</i>	<i>Breezy</i>		
25° 4°	19° 1°	37° 19°	30° 13°	33° 18°	24° 4°	13° -6°	30° 19°	27° 14°	28° 18°
NW 24	NW 11	S 11	N 10	W 9	W 24	NW 17	S 18	N 11	SW 11
Pierre					Watertown				

Published on: 12/17/2015 at 5:49AM

Winter-like temperatures and flurries will be the weather for the next few days. The coldest night of the season is coming Friday before temperatures take a slight uptick.

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Yesterday's Weather

High: 26.6 at 12:19 AM

Low: 18.2 at 10:01 AM

High Gust: 28 at 7:08 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 53° in 1939

Record Low: -24° in 1951

Average High: 25°F

Average Low: 5°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.28

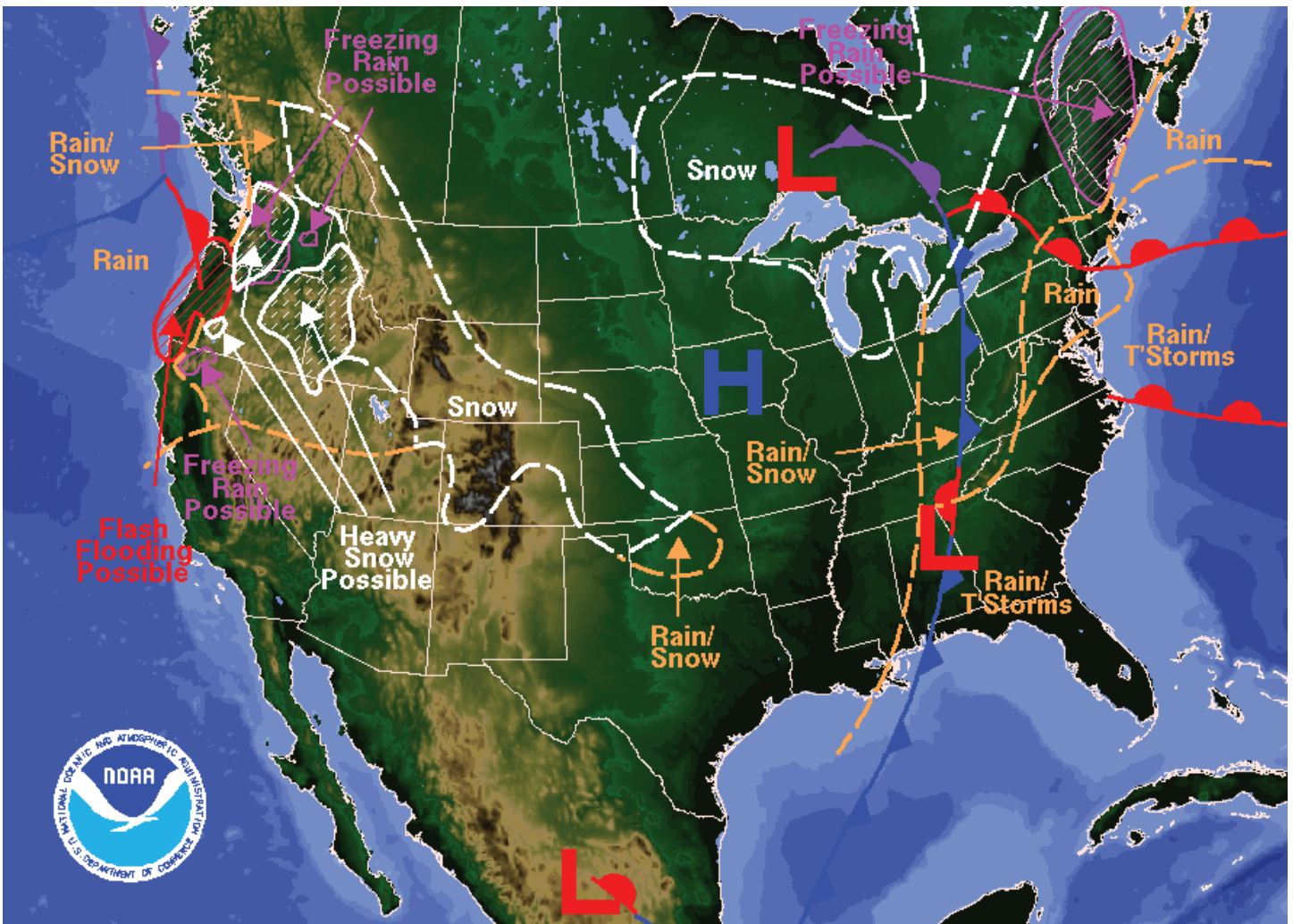
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.55

Average Precip to date: 21.48

Precip Year to Date: 20.37

Sunset Tonight: 4:51 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:08 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Thu, Dec 17, 2015, issued 5:06 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



GIVING OTHERS A CHOICE

A mother gave her son two beautiful apples, but one was larger and shinier than the other. Placing them in his hands, and wishing to teach him about sharing, she instructed him to "Give your little sister her choice."

A short time later, she noticed that he had kept the bigger one for himself. So, she asked, "Why didn't you give your sister her choice?"

"I did," came the reply. "I gave her the choice of the little one or none at all. And she took the little one."

There is a lot of selfishness even in the smallest of us. Size has little to do with whether or not we are self-centered or God-centered. It is easy to save rather than to share, to get rather than to give, to hoard rather than to help, to protect rather than to promote.

Paul reminds us that "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."

Prayer: Help me, Heavenly Father, to realize that the needs of others are an opportunity for me to give to them as You have given to me. May I be sensitive to others who are without the necessities of life, and share with them out of the abundance You have given me—especially Your salvation. In Your Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Philippians 2:1-8 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

News from the Associated Press

Snow storm moves out of the Dakotas but problems linger

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Several schools in northeastern North Dakota and northern South Dakota are starting classes late in the wake of a two-day snowstorm.

The snow moved out of the Dakotas late Wednesday, but cleanup continues. The storm dumped a foot of snow in western South Dakota and more than half a foot in southeastern North Dakota.

Many roads remain in poor driving condition. North Dakota's Transportation Department has issued a no-travel advisory for areas in the northeast, including Interstate 29 from Buxton to the Canadian border and U.S. Highway 2 from Grand Forks to the city of Michigan.

Rural electric cooperatives in central and southern North Dakota are working to restore power to the last of the homes and businesses that lost electricity. Outages at one point numbered more than 4,000.

Woman sentenced for stealing \$30K from Standing Rock shelter

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — A federal judge has sentenced a woman who admitted to stealing nearly \$30,000 from a shelter for victims of domestic violence on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation.

U.S. District Judge Charles Kornmann sentenced 54-year-old Dawn Muir to more than three years in prison and ordered her to repay the money to the Pretty Bird Woman House in McLaughlin. Muir, of Mandan, North Dakota, pleaded guilty to one count of larceny in June.

Federal authorities say Muir was the executive director of the shelter in February 2011, when she began to write checks for herself from an emergency fund that the facility maintained to provide food and relocation money to victims of domestic violence.

Authorities say Muir claimed the money was for mileage and travel reimbursement and other non-emergency tasks.

SD National Guard urges residents to support service members

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota National Guard is encouraging South Dakotans to support service members who are deployed overseas by wearing red shirts on Fridays.

The weekly event is called RED Shirt Friday, to remind businesses, schools and citizens to "Remember Everyone Deployed."

Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch is adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard.

He says wearing red shirts on Fridays sends a "strong and unified message" to service members and families that their sacrifices are remembered and appreciated.

South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is also involved in the event.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed all future Fridays that South Dakotans are deployed to be RED Shirt Fridays.

Right now, over 160 South Dakota Army and Air National Guard members are in Afghanistan and Kuwait.

List of 24 people being honored as Carnegie Heroes The Associated Press

Winners of Carnegie Hero medals announced Thursday:

— Cesar Andy Garcia, 18 of Ronkonkoma, New York, and Michael Thomas Frawley, 18, of Hamburg, New York, both saved a 9-year-old boy from drowning in Scranton, Pennsylvania on Nov. 23, 2014. The boy's father drowned attempting to help the child.

— Dennis C. Hunke II, 51, of Plainfield, Illinois, who died trying to rescue an 84-year-old woman from an out-of-control vehicle.

— Helen Goulet 72, of Courtenay, British Columbia, saved an 89-year-old woman from a house fire.

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— The Olson family, of Jefferson, South Dakota, helped a woman being threatened by her husband with a gun on May 10, 2014. Gary Olson, 64, his wife Mary Olson, 54, Shelby Olson, 20, stopped in a parking lot and let the woman into their car. The man shot at them, injuring Shelby Olson.

— Peter Todd Radke, 43, of Medina, Ohio, was killed May 31, 2014 trying to save a woman from drowning after she was struck by a wave on Lake Erie.

— Wayne L. Hoffman, 66, of Spring Green, Wisconsin, died on Dec. 23, 2014 trying to save a man struggling in the waters of Lake Superior in Minnesota.

— Michael Campanella, 40, of Clifton Park, New York and Adam Matthew Myers, 21, of Ballston Spa, New York, worked together to save a man trapped in burning station wagon on August 8, 2014 in Clifton Park.

— Kevin Michael O'Connor, 40, of Ottawa, Illinois, saved a man from drowning while kayaking in the Fox River in Geneva, Illinois on April 19, 2014.

— Laurence T. Norton III, 47, of New Orleans, rescued a woman being stabbed by a man with a large kitchen knife on Oct. 27, 2014 in the city. Norton grabbed the woman away from the man in a parking lot, tussled with the man and helped her into his dentist's office, administering first aid.

— Clifford W. J. Peterson, 40, a police constable from Ajax, Ontario, saved a man from falling off an icy bridge in Toronto on Dec. 8, 2013.

— Fraser A. Potts, 28, of Limoges, Ontario, saved a woman from drowning in a suicide attempt in Fairford, Manitoba on May 10, 2013.

— Jon Christopher Meis, 22, of Renton, Washington, saved an indeterminate number of people during a campus shooting in Seattle on June 5, 2014. He pepper-sprayed and tackled a gunman as he paused to reload his shotgun at a building at Seattle Pacific University.

— Steven A. Martin, 39, of Northern Cambria, Pennsylvania, rescued a woman trapped in a burning car on Sept. 6, 2014 in Patton, Pennsylvania.

— Neil C. Burkhardt, 32, of Portland, Oregon, tackled a woman who was firing a gun at a man in an office building on Feb. 4, 2014. He wrested the gun from the woman and held her at gunpoint until security arrived. The man was shot but recovered.

— Matthew L. Tranel, 39, of Maquoketa, Iowa, and Cory Alan Simonson, 29, of Maquoketa, Iowa, saved a 48-year old man whose wheelchair malfunctioned during a house fire.

— Joshua J. Gardner, 36, of Calgary, Alberta, saved a man whose SUV left the roadway and landed a golf course pond on July 5, 2014.

— Clifford A. Wright, 72, of Sarasota, Florida, saved two people from drowning when their car wound up in a pond after an accident and started to sink on Jan. 13, 2015.

— Stuart Chaffin, 45, of St. Cloud, Florida, saved an unresponsive driver whose car caught fire after an accident on Dec. 22, 2014 in Orlando.

— Boyce Coleman, 43, of Yonkers, New York, drowned on Sept. 7, 2014, trying to save a 5-year-old boy who floated away from the banks of the Hudson River during a community event. Jennifer Fanelli, 23, of Elmsford New York, took the boy from Coleman and swam back to shore.

— William J. Driscoll, 34, of Middleboro, Massachusetts, stopped a runaway vehicle with an unresponsive driver on a highway by ramming it with his own on Sept. 15, 2014.

Wednesday's Scores The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Lakota Nation Tournament

First Round

Crow Creek 64, Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 55

Little Wound 81, Tiospa Zina Tribal 54

Pine Ridge 51, Custer 42

Red Cloud 75, Oelrichs 33

St. Francis Indian 71, Omaha Nation, Neb. 59

White River 77, Crazy Horse 35

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Winnebago, Neb. 67, McLaughlin 30

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Lakota Nation Tournament

First Round

Cheyenne-Eagle Butte 84, Crazy Horse 25

Little Wound 67, Lower Brule 38

McLaughlin 85, Winnebago, Neb. 54

Red Cloud 69, Crow Creek 31

St. Francis Indian 52, Custer 51

Todd County 77, Tiospa Zina Tribal 36

Storm leads to power outages, closed schools in Dakotas

BLAKE NICHOLSON, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — A snowstorm hitting the Dakotas for a second day Wednesday cut electricity to hundreds of homes and businesses, caused problems for motorists and prompted dozens of schools to delay or cancel classes.

Electrical repair crews in central and southern North Dakota reduced outages from nearly 4,000 Tuesday to at least 500 by Wednesday evening, but officials worried that winds gusting to 30 mph could raise the number going into Thursday morning.

"As the wind picks up, we're worried that the number (of outages) will actually grow," said Tom Rafferty, spokesman for Verendrye Electric Cooperative in the Minot-Velva area. "We're out in full force, but the frost is so thick on the lines. It's mainly just the weight of the frost on the lines."

Rafferty said the utility had reports of outages from no more than 300 accounts, but by the evening, the number had increased to 450 and more reports were expected overnight as the combination of 5-inch frost and wind will likely bring down more lines and poles.

"We are telling people to find a place to stay," Rafferty said. "If you don't have power right now, you probably won't have it at least until tomorrow."

Mor-Gran-Sou Electric in southern North Dakota also was dealing with heavy frost on lines and outages. Chief of Staff Jackie Miller said the number of outages throughout Wednesday "was fluid."

South Dakota took the brunt of the storm on Tuesday, with some areas getting a foot of snow. The 4.3 inches of snow that fell at the Rapid City airport broke 34-year-old city records for the date, according to the National Weather Service. The snow total at the airport later reached 4.9 inches.

Transportation officials reopened Interstate 90 between Rapid City and Chamberlain Wednesday morning, but issued a no travel advisory in the evening between Ellsworth Air Force Base east to Vivian because of snow and ice-covered surfaces. The state Department of Transportation said those conditions combined with high winds led to multiple crashes in that area Wednesday afternoon.

The base closed to everyone but essential personnel on Tuesday, but allowed nonessential personnel to come in late Wednesday and authorized administrative leave for civilian workers.

The storm hit North Dakota hardest on Wednesday. The state Transportation Department issued travel alerts for northeast and central North Dakota. There were no immediate reports of any major accidents, though the Highway Patrol said a 31-year-old Jamestown man suffered serious injuries Tuesday afternoon when he lost control of his sport utility vehicle on an icy Interstate 94 near Valley City. He was hospitalized in Fargo.

Many schools in the two states closed Wednesday, or started late so buses weren't traveling on snow-clogged roads before sunrise. Mount Rushmore National Memorial in western South Dakota, which closed early on Tuesday, reopened several hours late on Wednesday.

Police: Driver fatally stabs himself after crashing in SD

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Police say a Montana man killed himself after he crashed his pickup truck in southeast South Dakota.

Sioux Falls Police spokesman Sam Clemens says several people saw the crash around noon Wednesday and tried to help the driver, who had just taken an Interstate 29 exit in Sioux Falls and veered off the roadway.

Clemens says the 57-year-old man from Billings, Montana, stabbed himself in the chest after the crash. He died at the scene.

Clemens says the man's pickup truck struck a light pole and may have rolled before it came to a stop.

Rapid City woman gets 6-year term for killing boyfriend

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City woman who killed her boyfriend has been sentenced to six years in prison.

Forty-four-year-old Corinne Vermillion last month pleaded guilty to manslaughter in a plea deal with prosecutors in which she avoided a murder charge and a possible life sentence in the January death of 37-year-old Donny Ladeaux.

Authorities say Vermillion stabbed Ladeaux in the heart with a kitchen knife during an alcohol-fueled argument.

Judge Heidi Linngren said during Tuesday's sentencing that she didn't give Vermillion the maximum sentence of 10 years in prison because she thinks Vermillion has a future. But Linngren also said the death of Ladeaux could have been avoided.

Vermillion gets credit for nearly a year that she's already spent behind bars. She'll be eligible for parole after slightly more than two years.

SD estate planner gets over 3 years in prison in fraud case

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota man who for years told people how to manage their money has been sentenced to more than three years in federal prison in a fraud case.

U.S. District Court Chief Judge Jeffrey Viken has sentenced 58-year-old Randall McKee. The estate planner and Sioux Falls resident was also ordered to pay more than \$685,000 in restitution after pleading guilty to one count of wire fraud.

McKee was indicted on multiple counts of wire fraud and money laundering last year after authorities accused him of setting up a real estate development scheme that bilked investors out of about \$625,000.

Authorities also accused McKee of using his position as a trustee for a disabled man to take more than \$80,000 for his own use.

McKee previously lived in Rapid City.

Department hosts Governor's Conference on Tourism next month

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The South Dakota Department of Tourism is hosting the annual Governor's Conference on Tourism next month.

Tourism Secretary Jim Hagen says the 2016 "Be Monumental" theme speaks to a drive in the tourism industry to continually be thinking big and looking for ways to innovate. He says the message is particularly appropriate considering the 75th anniversary of Mount Rushmore's completion and the centennial anniversary of the National Park Service.

This annual conference brings together nearly 600 people from across South Dakota and other parts of the U.S. to network with peers and learn about trends in the travel and hospitality business. Topics covered include customer service training, marketing trends and leadership skills.

The conference is planned for Jan. 19-21, in Pierre.

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Department of Health: Remember food safety during holidays

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — The Department of Health is reminding South Dakotans to follow simple safety tips this holiday season to keep unwelcome food-borne illnesses out of the festivities.

Bill Chalcraft is health protection administrator for the South Dakota Department of Health.

He says it's important to remember to thoroughly wash hands, clean cooking surfaces after dealing with raw meat and to store and heat foods at the correct temperatures.

Food-borne illnesses can cause diarrhea, fever and vomiting. Sometimes fluids are necessary to prevent dehydration.

South Dakota State women upset No. 16 DePaul, 88-79

BROOKINGS, S.D. (AP) — Macy Miller scored 19 points and Clarissa Ober had 15 points and 10 rebounds as South Dakota State knocked off No. 16 DePaul 88-79 on Tuesday night.

South Dakota State (9-2) raced to take a 13-point lead after one and 15 by intermission.

The Blue Devils (7-4) rallied, cutting the Jackrabbits' lead to eight points through three quarters but Ober sandwiched a pair of layups around a Miller 3-pointer to push the lead back to 13 points with 7:11 remaining.

DePaul cut the lead to five points, 84-79 with 35 seconds remaining but South Dakota State closed it out by hitting 4 of 6 from the free throw line.

Madison Guebert scored 16 points and Kerri Young dished out eight assists for the Jackrabbits, who now have beaten a Top 25 opponent in each of the last four seasons.

Chanise Jenkins and Megan Podkowa scored 22 and 21 points, respectively, to lead DePaul.

Storm drops up to 2 feet on Colorado; 500 flights canceled

DAN ELLIOTT, Associated Press

LONGMONT, Colo. (AP) — A powerful late-autumn storm dumped up to 24 inches of snow in the Colorado mountains on Tuesday before barreling onto the plains, prompting airlines to cancel about 500 flights at the Denver airport and leaving hundreds of miles of highways slippery with snow and ice.

The snow tapered off Tuesday afternoon as the storm moved northeast, leaving behind drifts up to four feet high.

"It's going to be western Nebraska's turn next," National Weather Service meteorologist Todd Dankers said. "It's going to end up eventually in Minnesota."

It was the first big storm of the season for most of Colorado and Utah. Schools closed in some towns in at least four states.

Some flights at Denver International Airport were more than four hours late after at least seven inches of snow fell there, airport officials said.

More than 600 miles of Colorado Interstate highways were snowpacked or icy, and gusts as strong as 58 mph left near-whiteout conditions in isolated areas of Colorado's eastern plains, Dankers said. Few highways were closed, however.

A snowplow slipped off a highway in the foothills west of Boulder early Tuesday and landed up-side-down in a creek, but the driver wasn't injured.

The accident happened at about 4:30 a.m. in Boulder Canyon, said Amy Ford, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Transportation. Nothing spilled from the truck into the creek, she said. The cause of the accident was under investigation.

The wind piled up drifts three to four feet deep in the small northeastern Colorado town of Merino. Schools and the town offices were closed but some businesses opened as usual.

"I think we're just more used to it," said Jada Gettman, owner of Grandpa's restaurant in Merino, which was open. "The snowing and blowing doesn't affect us as much."

About 24 inches of snow fell in the west-central mountains near McClure Pass, the National Weather Service said.

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The town of Larkspur, in the foothills north of Colorado Springs, reported 17 inches of snow, and cities along the north-south Interstate 25 corridor reported up to a foot. Farther east, the Colorado plains received four to eight inches of snow.

The storm struck Utah before moving into Colorado, leaving about a foot of snow in the Salt Lake City area and more than two feet in other places.

The Utah Highway Patrol worked more than 400 accidents over the last two days as people struggled to get to work and school on icy, snow-packed roads.

The storm left a foot of snow in parts of Wyoming and Montana, leaving icy highways. School kids in Billings, Montana, the state's largest city, got their first snow day in more than 25 years.

Parts of Interstates 25 and 80 were closed in Wyoming, but travel was a lot more fun in Yellowstone National Park, where recent snow allowed the park to start welcoming snowmobile and tank-like snow-coach traffic.

Elsewhere, rain and snow pushed into New England after an unseasonably warm and dry weekend. Sherman, Maine, reported six inches of snow at midday Tuesday.

Much of the West Coast was dry with below-average temperatures. The Tuesday morning low was -13 degrees in Bridgeport, California, and 6 degrees in Big Bear City, California.

Tuesday's Scores The Associated Press

BOYS' BASKETBALL

Brandon Valley 66, Sioux Falls O'Gorman 10

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

Brookings vs. Yankton, ppd.

Milbank Area vs. Sisseton, ppd. to Dec 19.

GIRLS' BASKETBALL

Gayville-Volin 60, Wausa, Neb. 39

Howard 45, Chester 37

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 40, Brandon Valley 22

POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

Kimball/White Lake vs. Platte-Geddes, ppd.

Milbank vs. Sisseton, ppd. to Dec 19.

US Supreme Court to decide whether tribal convictions count

DAVE KOLPACK, Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court says it will decide whether a person with multiple domestic violence convictions in tribal court should be subject to harsher punishments for habitual offenders.

The appeal stems from a 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruling from a Montana case that was contrary to separate circuit court decisions on cases in North Dakota and Utah. The 9th Circuit threw out Northern Cheyenne Tribal Court convictions against Michael Bryant Jr. because Bryant did not have a lawyer. The judges said the lack of legal counsel violated the Sixth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

The 9th Circuit ruling went against decisions by the 8th Circuit in the case of Roman Cavanaugh Jr., an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota, and the 10th Circuit in the case Adam Shavanaux, a member of the Ute tribe in Utah.

Tribal courts generally provide for a maximum sentence of a year in jail on domestic violence convictions, mainly because the tribal system is not required to provide public defenders and could not pay for them if they were mandatory. Federal court allows for more severe punishment, but authorities must show a defendant is a habitual domestic offender or that a gun was involved in the crime.

The announcement by the Supreme Court that it will take up the Bryant case was welcomed by attorneys on opposite sides of the Cavanaugh case, defense attorney Alexander Reichert and former U.S. attorney

from North Dakota Timothy Purdon.

"I'm really excited. To see your idea make it to the Supreme Court is a phenomenal feeling," said Reichert, a Grand Forks defense attorney. "I was hoping that my case would go, that the Cavanaugh case would go, but that's fine as long as the issue goes on. I think it's a very important issue and I think we're right."

Purdon, now an attorney for the Minneapolis-based Robins Kaplan firm, said the decision is "great news for folks who are committed to improving public safety" on tribal lands.

"Domestic violence is an escalating crime. The abuser's conduct often gets worse and worse and worse, particularly if escalating conduct is not met with escalating consequences," Purdon said. "An important tool to stopping that escalation is bringing the federal government in, the U.S. attorney's office in, to charge someone as a habitual offender."

Federal prosecutors have long been frustrated by their inability to stop an epidemic of domestic violence on American Indian reservations. Department of Justice statistics show that an American Indian woman born in the United States has a 1-in-3 chance of being sexually assaulted in her lifetime, compared with 1-in-5 for the country as a whole.

Officials with the U.S. attorney's office in Montana, North Dakota and Utah declined to comment.

95-year-old SD woman who died in ND crash identified

HETTINGER, N.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified the 95-year-old woman who died in a rollover crash near Hettinger, in southwestern North Dakota.

The North Dakota Highway Patrol has identified the victim as Henrietta LeFebre, of Lodgepole, South Dakota.

The Highway Patrol says there was dense fog at the time of the incident, which happened at 9:15 a.m. Monday. LeFebre was driving a 2006 Chevy Colorado and lost control on a curve while northbound on state Highway 8. The pickup truck entered the ditch and rolled.

Authorities say LeFebre was not wearing a seat belt and was ejected. She was transported to a local hospital where she was pronounced dead.

SD shooting suspect faces new charges after victim dies

ROSLYN, S.D. (AP) — The suspect in a shooting that happened in Roselyn last month is facing new charges, including premeditated murder.

The new charges against 44-year-old Roslyn resident Jason Lewandowski come days after the man whom authorities say he injured, 33-year-old Jeremy Hendrickson, died at a hospital.

The office of South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley says a grand jury has indicted Lewandowski on one count each of premeditated first-degree murder, first-degree murder while perpetration or attempt to perpetrate burglary, commission of a felony while armed with a firearm, and first-degree burglary.

Authorities say Lewandowski entered Hendrickson's home on Nov. 20 and shot him. Lewandowski was arrested after leading officers on a chase that ended outside an Aberdeen hospital.

It wasn't immediately clear if Lewandowski has an attorney who could comment on his case.

Noem criticizes EPA after auditors say it broke campaign law

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — U.S. Rep. Kristi Noem is again criticizing the Environmental Protection Agency, this time after congressional auditors determined the agency broke the law in a social media campaign.

Noem on Tuesday said the EPA "must be held accountable" for the violations in the campaign that intended to generate public support for a controversial rule to protect small streams and wetlands from development.

The Government Accountability Office says the campaign violated restrictions against lobbying and propaganda by federal agencies. The agency blitzed social media urging the public to submit comments on the draft rule.

Noem says the EPA resorted to what auditors described as "covert propaganda" when it could not find

enough supporters for the rule, which she labeled as possibly “the largest federal land grab in our lifetimes.” The EPA says the rule will safeguard drinking water for 117 million Americans.

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. **UNCERTAINTY OVER WHAT HAPPENS NEXT AFTER OFFICER'S MISTRIAL IN FREDDIE GRAY'S DEATH**
Lawyers will meet in the judge's chambers in Baltimore Thursday to discuss dates for a possible retrial.

2. **PUTIN SAYS SYRIAN PEOPLE MUST CHOOSE LEADERS**

The Russian president tells a news conference that a new constitution for Syria must be drafted, and a new election prepared in which citizens themselves will determine its leadership.

3. **WHO IS IN HIDING AFTER ISLAMIC STATE KILLING**

After the slaying of a Syrian activist and his friend, the media collective the former belonged to — which secretly documents life at the heart of the militants' self-proclaimed caliphate in Raqqa— fears revenge.

4. **WHY YOU SHOULDN'T PANIC OVER FED RATE HIKE**

Investment returns depend on many factors beyond the central bank's announcement, especially because the pace of increases will be gradual.

5. **WHAT WOULD JUMPSTART U.S.-CUBA BUSINESS TIES**

The reestablishment of commercial U.S. flights to the island would be the biggest development since the two countries began normalizing relations last year.

6. **VA TO PROVIDE ROBOTIC LEGS TO PARALYZED VETS**

Veterans have been petitioning the department to do this because many cannot afford the \$77,000 needed to pay for the powered exoskeleton called the ReWalk.

7. **HOUSE POISED TO RENEW OVER \$600B IN TAX CUTS**

Though Pelosi is leading a Democratic charge against the measure, GOP leaders seem certain to push it through the chamber Thursday.

8. **AMERICAN FOOTBALL PREPARES ISRAELI TEENS FOR MILITARY COMBAT**

A growing number of native-born Israelis turn America's Game, once a niche expat activity, into a popular fixture in the Holy Land.

9. **KASHMIR BIRD MIGRATION AT RISK**

Environmental degradation and changing climate patterns lead to a decrease in the number of migratory birds making the annual Himalayan pit-stop.

10. **CUBAN BASEBALL DEFECTORS TEACH YOUTH**

They are doing it as part of a mission meant to warm relations between the U.S. league and this baseball-mad nation.

APNewsbreak: VA to provide robotic legs to paralyzed vets

JULIE WATSON, Associated Press

The Department of Veterans Affairs has agreed to pay for robotic legs that could allow scores of paralyzed veterans with spinal cord injuries to walk again.

Veterans have been petitioning the VA to do this because many cannot afford the \$77,000 needed to pay for the powered exoskeleton called the ReWalk. The device was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2014 for individuals to use at home. VA officials told The Associated Press that that the agency sent a memorandum Dec. 10 outlining its plans to train staff to be able to provide the ReWalk.

“The research support and effort to provide eligible veterans with paralysis an exoskeleton for home use is a historic move on the part of the VA because it represents a paradigm shift in the approach to rehabilitation for persons with paralysis,” said Dr. Ann Spungen, who led VA research on the system.

The company, ReWalk Robotics, said it has evaluated 45 paralyzed veterans who meet the height and weight requirements for the technology — which consists of leg braces with motion sensors and motorized joints that respond to subtle changes in upper-body movement and shifts in balance.

Gene Laureano, 53, is praying his application for robotic legs will go through soon. The former Army corporal remembers the day he first tried the ReWalk at New York's James J. Peters VA Medical Center in the Bronx two years ago.

"The tears came down," said Laureano, who was left paralyzed five years ago after falling off a ladder. "I hadn't spoken to somebody standing up in so long."

"I just kept remembering the doctor told me it was impossible for me to walk, and then I crossed that threshold from the impossible to the possible," he added.

When the study ended, however, so did his ability to walk. He's been waiting to get the robotic legs ever since.

Paralyzed veterans fired off letters to VA Secretary Robert McDonald this summer.

"I guess people who have been watching the research were very anxious and had expectations this would suddenly happen once FDA approval came out, but we were still building the infrastructure to support this great device," VA spokesman Jim Connell said.

The ReWalk was invented by Israeli entrepreneur Amit Goffer, who was paralyzed in an accident in 1997. Several competing products that use similar technology — nicknamed "electronic legs"— are also being tested in U.S. rehab hospitals.

None, including the ReWalk, are fast enough or can be worn long enough to replace wheelchairs. VA pilot studies found paraplegics who used the exoskeleton as little as four hours a week for three to five months experienced better bowel and bladder function, reduced back pain, improved sleep and less fatigue.

About 42,000 veterans are paralyzed. Of them, a fraction would meet the requirement for an exoskeleton. The apparatus requires specific height and weight requirements and works for paraplegics but not for quadriplegics. A supportive belt around the patient's waist keeps the suit in place, and a backpack holds the computer and rechargeable battery. Crutches are used for stability, and the FDA requires an assistant be nearby.

ReWalk Robotics CEO Larry Jasinski said a dozen VA centers are expected to start training staff to provide the system. The program will likely be expanded in the future.

Former Army Sgt. Terry Hannigan, a 62-year-old paralyzed Vietnam veteran, was the first veteran to get the robotic legs as part of a test of the system. She uses them to walk through the mall and shop at the grocery store.

"It definitely is a show stopper, especially in the mall with kids. Some say things like 'Wow, look at Robocop!'" They ask a lot of questions, but I don't mind," Hannigan said.

When she was confined to a wheelchair she said she had to ask people to pass her things out of her reach.

"To be able to hear the conversation, not miss half of what's being said because it's over your head, that in itself is a big plus," she said. "Now I can walk up, shake someone's hand. I can hug, kiss them. That might be a small thing, but the only other time I would get body contact was when a family member or caregiver would pick me up and put me in bed."

Officer's mistrial in Gray's death a letdown for both sides

JULIET LINDERMAN, Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — As jurors deliberated the fate of one of six police officers charged in the death of Freddie Gray, Baltimore braced for a possible repeat of the protests, destruction and dismay that engulfed the city in April, when Gray died of a broken neck in the back of a police van. But instead of a dramatic conclusion, there was confusion.

Baltimore Circuit Judge Barry Williams declared a mistrial Wednesday after jurors made it clear they were hopelessly deadlocked over whether Officer William Porter had committed any crimes due to actions he didn't take prior to Gray's death.

The mistrial leaves prosecutors, defense attorneys and a populace anxious to find closure back at square one. Lawyers are scheduled to meet in the judge's chambers Thursday to discuss dates for a possible retrial.

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Members of the community still trying to process the news gathered outside the courthouse Wednesday afternoon following the verdict and about 100 demonstrators carried signs of protest as they marched peacefully through the streets.

"I'm not expecting our community to repeat April," said Erika Alston, a community leader who runs a children's after-school program in the heart of West Baltimore, in reference to the violence, looting and unrest that erupted the day of Gray's April 27 funeral. "But it is a bit of a kick in the chest."

Jurors took three days to deliberate on the charges against Porter, which included manslaughter, assault, reckless endangerment and misconduct in office. On Tuesday, after only nine hours of deliberation, they told Williams they were deadlocked. He sent them back to try again.

The message was the same on Wednesday, after roughly 16 hours of deliberation. The jurors said they were at an impasse on every charge. A unanimous verdict, they told Williams, was impossible.

For a week, Democratic Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake had urged citizens to remain calm and peaceful no matter the outcome, while Police Commissioner Kevin Davis canceled leave for the department's officers in anticipation of the jury's decision.

But the mistrial was a disappointment for some residents in need of a definitive resolution. Small crowds of protesters gathered with signs and bullhorns. They marched through downtown, converging on City Hall, while scores of police followed, forming lines in the streets to keep them away from the courthouse. Two demonstrators were arrested outside the courthouse.

With the impact of the trial muted, that left many to wonder what comes next.

Gray died April 19, a week after his neck was broken in the back of a police van.

Prosecutors said Porter is partially to blame because he didn't call an ambulance when Gray indicated he needed medical aid and didn't buckle Gray into a seat belt, leaving him handcuffed and shackled but unrestrained in a metal compartment, unable to brace himself when the van turned a corner or braked.

Porter told jurors he didn't think Gray was injured when he checked on him on the floor of the wagon, and helped him onto a bench inside. Instead, Porter told the van driver, Caesar Goodson, to take Gray to the hospital. Porter also said he didn't buckle Gray in because it wasn't his responsibility; the wagon driver is in charge of making sure the prisoner is strapped in while the van is moving.

But jurors couldn't decide whether Porter's failures amounted to a crime — an outcome legal analysts say isn't surprising given the difficulty of proving a case with no eyewitnesses or unequivocal evidence as to exactly how or when Gray was critically injured.

Steve Levin, a Baltimore defense attorney and former federal prosecutor who followed the case, said the result was unfortunate for both sides. Prosecutors did not present strong evidence on the more serious charges against Porter, but the hung jury suggests that at least one juror wanted to convict him on those counts, Levin said.

"The state proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Freddie Gray died. Beyond that, they weren't able to prove anything," Levin said. "They proved a tragedy, but I don't think they proved a crime."

Porter was the first of six to stand trial: Goodson, who faces the most serious charge of second-degree "depraved-heart" murder, is scheduled to go to trial Jan. 6. Prosecutors intended to call Porter to testify against Goodson and another officer whose trial is slated to begin after Goodson's. The mistrial will likely complicate prosecutors' plans, and as such, their strategy moving forward.

Prosecutors will have a harder time calling Porter to testify because of his Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate himself, according to attorney Warren Alperstein. Options for the state could include granting Porter immunity in exchange for his testimony, trying to persuade the judge to postpone the other trials while retrying Porter or striking him from their witness list altogether.

David Harris, a law professor at the University of Pittsburgh with expertise in policing issues, said State's Attorney Marilyn Mosby created a false impression about the simplicity of obtaining convictions with her swift decision to charge six officers in Gray's death.

"It was never going to be easy. Prosecution of police officers is never easy, but when you look at some of the facts in this case, you've got to understand nothing here is a slam dunk," Harris said.

Gray's stepfather said at a news conference Wednesday that the family isn't upset by the mistrial, and

looked forward to 12 fresh jurors being given a new chance to evaluate the case.

"We are not at all upset with them and neither should the public be upset," Richard Shipley said. "They did the best that they could. ... We are confident there will be another trial with a new jury."

Some residents who saw charging the police officers as a step toward justice and healing in the city said the mistrial was a failure to deliver on that promise.

Duane "Shorty" Davis, a community activist, said he was not surprised.

"If any of the officers get convicted, it will be a surprise to me," Davis said, adding that he doesn't think Mosby has been sincere in her vow to prosecute the officers but was compelled to bring charges after the April unrest.

"I think the state's attorney put on a weak case. I think the state's attorney went in there with the intention of losing," Davis said. "The prosecution had no intention of winning the case because of their relationship with the police department. They're not going to eat their own."

N.W.A. joins quartet of 1970s hitmakers in rock hall

DAVID BAUDER, AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The groundbreaking Los Angeles rap act N.W.A. will join a quartet of 1970s era FM radio rockers — Chicago, Cheap Trick, Deep Purple and Steve Miller — as 2016 inductees into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

N.W.A., led by Dr. Dre and Ice Cube, was elected after three unsuccessful nominations in a year when a movie about their career, "Straight Outta Compton," was a box office hit. Their hard-core tales of life on the street on songs like "F--- the Police" made them a provocative chart presence in the late 1980s and influenced an empire of other acts.

Both Miller and Cheap Trick made it during their first year on the ballots.

The induction ceremony for the Cleveland-based hall will be held April 8 in Brooklyn's Barclays Center. HBO will televise highlights later in the spring.

Guitarist Miller came out of the San Francisco rock scene and became a dependable maker of pop hits like "Take the Money and Run," "Fly Like an Eagle," "Jet Airliner" and "Jungle Love."

Midwestern favorites Cheap Trick succeeded with a highly-amped version of Beatles-influenced melodies on hits "Surrender" and "Dream Police." Their "Live at Budokan" album is one of rock's best-known live sets. Guitarist Rick Nielsen and rumped drummer Bun E. Carlos gave them an indelible live presence.

The guitar riff for Deep Purple's "Smoke on the Water" remains one of the most recognizable in rock history. Guitarist Ritchie Blackmore was a stalwart in a hard rock act that competed with Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath for the loyalty of metalheads.

Before they shortened their name from the Chicago Transit Authority, Chicago was known for its jazz-rock fusion. Behind the vocals of Peter Cetera, they had a string of pop hits including "Saturday in the Park," "25 or 6 to 4," "If You Leave Me Now" and "Does Anyone Really Know What Time it Is?"

More than 800 voters of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Foundation selected the inductees.

The influential disco-era band Chic is becoming the Susan Lucci of music, failing to win induction in its 10th year as a nominee. Janet Jackson, The Cars, Los Lobos and Yes were among the other nominees rejected.

Eye on safety, California sets rules for self-driving cars

JUSTIN PRITCHARD, Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — California regulators have unveiled a roadmap that would let consumers begin using self-driving cars, though manufacturers would have to prove the emerging technology is safe before a licensed driver could get chauffeured around town.

The approach California's Department of Motor Vehicles offered Wednesday in precedent-setting draft regulations is cautious, though it does allow that Californians could be behind the wheel of a self-driving car by 2017.

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Among other safety-related requirements, the cars must have a steering wheel, and a licensed driver must be ready to take over if the machine fails.

Google, which is pushing to get cars without a steering wheel or pedals to consumers, expressed "grave disappointment" with the rules, which the tech giant said would slow deployment of technology with huge life-saving potential.

Though no manufacturer has said it thinks the cars are ready just yet, at least a dozen are developing the technology. Google has suggested a model could be ready for limited use sooner than the public expects. In September, the safety chief of its self-driving car project, Ron Medford, said the technology is "close to working pretty damn well."

California's go-slow approach could benefit Texas, which this summer emerged as a competitor in the deployment of self-driving cars when officials in the capital city of Austin welcomed Google prototypes for company-sponsored testing.

"Given the potential risks associated with deployment of such a new technology, DMV believes that manufacturers need to obtain more experience in testing driverless vehicles on public roads prior to making this technology available to the general public," the agency said in a written summary of its draft regulations.

Those draft rules set out how the DMV wants to move beyond the current small-scale testing of prototypes on public roads. The DMV can change the rules over the coming months before they are finalized, and the industry is sure to lobby for significant changes.

That process will further delay rules that were due at the start of 2015.

There are no comprehensive federal rules addressing the technology, and as the largest auto market in the U.S., rules in California are a landmark in the development of self-driving technology.

Under California's framework, manufacturers would receive a permit for three years, during which time consumers could lease the cars but manufacturers would be required to keep tabs on how safely they are driving and report that performance to the state.

Before the DMV grants that three-year permit, an independent certifier would need to verify a manufacturer's safety assurances. Google and traditional automakers advocated for manufacturer self-certification of safety, the standard for other cars.

Drivers would need special, manufacturer-provided training, then get a special certification on their licenses. If a car breaks the law, the driver would be responsible.

Though the timeline for public access is squishy, in principle the DMV could finalize the rules and a manufacturer could satisfy the safety requirements as early as 2017.

That said, the draft rules surely will postpone the technology's rollout in California.

"This points to a very long slog ahead for not just Google, but really other automakers as well," said Bryant Walker Smith, a law professor at the University of South Carolina who studies self-driving car regulation. He added: "California's proposed rules are fantastic news for Texas."

Austin's mayoral spokesman Jason Stanford said his city's government already believes self-driving cars are "legal and safe" and is "thrilled to host innovative ideas like this."

California's DMV has said it wanted regulations to protect public safety, but not be so onerous that they would stifle development of a technology that could prove safer than human drivers.

After all, cars that can safely drive themselves under all conditions wouldn't rely on drivers who may be drowsy, distracted, buzzed — or unable to drive because of their age or a disability. Boosters say the technology could prevent many of the more than 32,000 deaths on U.S. roads each year.

The cars use a suite of sensors — including radar, lasers and cameras — and onboard computers to drive.

Eleven companies already have permission to test on California's public roads, with Ford the latest addition. There have been scattered collisions, nearly all involving Google cars. Those collisions have been minor, and the tech giants says each has been caused by drivers of other cars.

Google spokesman Johnny Luu said the company was "gravely disappointed" by the draft regulations.

"Safety is our highest priority and primary motivator as we do this," he said in a written statement.

The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers industry group was not publicly critical, perhaps because tra-

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ditional automakers the group represents are phasing in features such as automatic braking and cruise control that adjusts to the speed of other vehicles — instead of jumping to a car that drives itself, as Google envisions.

Meanwhile, a consumer group applauded the draft rules as appropriately cautious.

The DMV “did exactly what they should do, which is put the public safety first,” said John Simpson, privacy project director at Consumer Watchdog and frequent Google critic.

Rumors fly as mystery shrouds buyers of Las Vegas newspaper

SALLY HO, Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — The ownership mystery surrounding the sale of the Las Vegas Review-Journal has captured the attention of the media industry as the newspaper’s staff and some politicians demand to know the identity of the new boss.

The timing of the deal and the purchase price have Twitter buzzing and rumors flying that a wealthy GOP donor bought the largest newspaper in a swing state to influence the presidential election. Even a White House hopeful has weighed in on the matter.

The recently incorporated News + Media Capital Group LLC announced last week that it bought the Las Vegas Review-Journal and some affiliated publications for \$140 million. That’s a markup of about 37 percent from the paper’s last sale earlier this year, when the similarly named New Media Investment Group bought it.

Wednesday night, the newspaper cited anonymous sources as saying that the son-in-law of billionaire casino owner Sheldon Adelson arranged the \$140 million purchase on Adelson’s behalf.

The report said that Patrick Dumont, who is listed on the website of Las Vegas Sands Corp. as the company’s senior vice president of finance and strategy, put together the deal at the behest of his father-in-law, the chairman and CEO of the casino operator.

It said that the 41-year-old Dumont, a New York attorney, in 2009 married Sivan Ochshorn, a daughter of Adelson’s wife, Dr. Miriam Adelson, from a prior marriage. Sivan Ochshorn Dumont is listed as owner/agent of Israel Hayom, which is owned by the casino mogul.

Adelson, meanwhile, broke several days of silence on the newspaper purchase late Tuesday night, telling CNN that he has “no personal interest” in the RJ’s new owner.

Ron Reese, a spokesman for Las Vegas Sands Corp., said in an email Wednesday that he had no information on the matter and wouldn’t comment on reports of Adelson buying the paper.

Newspaper officials have not publically identified those behind the new company. Publisher Jason Taylor didn’t return calls for comment Tuesday, but he has previously said he can’t identify the group’s backers, who approached the paper months ago.

He said he doesn’t expect them to be involved in news or editorial decisions because Gatehouse Media LLC, a subsidiary of the previous owner, will keep running the publication with a Sunday circulation of 184,000.

The secrecy has generated criticism.

Education reporter Neal Morton took to Twitter to note that quotes that appeared in some versions of the paper’s story about the sale later disappeared online. That included one in which News + Media’s manager, Michael Schroeder, implored staff to focus on their jobs and not worry about the new owners.

Schroeder offered no comment in an email Tuesday. Morton and other staffers who expressed frustration on social media and demanded to know the identity of the buyer have declined to comment to The Associated Press.

Michael Hengel, the newspaper’s editor, said he wasn’t surprised by the unease in the newsroom.

“We’re all concerned about the identity of the investors, and they’re expressing their concerns,” said Hengel, who referred further comments to Gatehouse boss Mike Reed. He didn’t respond to an email inquiry.

The speculation reached to Republican presidential candidate Jeb Bush, who tweeted Monday that the only question left unanswered from his meeting with the paper’s editorial board was: “Who owns the

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newspaper?"

U.S. Rep. Dina Titus, a Nevada Democrat whose district includes Las Vegas, called for transparency on the House floor Wednesday. She applauded the paper's journalists for pressing for answers.

"We know nothing about the group, nothing about their business ties, their political positions, or their potential conflicts of interest ... It's time for the new owners to take off their mask and prove they have nothing to hide," Titus said of the new buyers.

Ken Doctor, a media analyst, said the sale is troubling and unlike others with private owners. New buyers typically identify themselves and pledge publicly to keep the newspaper independent.

"You don't say 'no comment' all the time. You might say it sometimes when you don't know stuff or when there's legal consequences and liabilities, but generally, the press has the general obligation to speak," he said.

The Society of Professional Journalists urged the new owners to come forward, saying the group is "very disappointed and concerned by the owners' lack of transparency."

Speculation had been focusing on Adelson with pundits theorizing that the deep-pocketed GOP king-maker could be planning to use the paper to sway the presidential race. Nevada is fourth in the primary process, with balloting in February.

In the 2012 campaign, Adelson spent more than any other donor, at about \$90 million. His influential Republican Jewish Coalition presidential forum draws the top GOP candidates. Tuesday's CNN-hosted Republican debate also took place at the Venetian, a Las Vegas casino-hotel that's part of Adelson's empire.

Prior to the Wednesday night report, the publication's previous story on the sale speculated that it's Adelson, tracing his ties to the few details already known. U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, talking Tuesday to reporters in Washington, also hinted at the casino mogul, who owns an Israeli newspaper.

The secret won't be held for long. The paper will have to disclose the owner to the federal government because it has a joint operating agreement with its rival, the Las Vegas Sun.

Brian Greenspun, publisher and editor of the Sun, which is delivered along with the Review-Journal, said he has not been formally notified of the sale and does not know the new owner's identity.

"You certainly can't keep it from the Justice Department," Greenspun said.

Clinton says she wants to go beyond 'Buffett rule' on taxes

KEN THOMAS, Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — With billionaire investor Warren Buffett looking on, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton said Wednesday she wants to raise taxes on the wealthy and expand upon the so-called "Buffett rule" pushed by the Obama administration to raise tax rates on the richest Americans.

"I want to go even further, because Warren is 100 percent right, as usual," Clinton said at a rally in Omaha, Nebraska, that featured a public endorsement from Buffett, the famed investor and one of the wealthiest people in America. "I want to be the president for the struggling, the striving and the successful."

Introducing Clinton, Buffett offered a litany of statistics describing a growing chasm between the nation's rich and poor, lamenting, "Millions and millions and millions of Americans have been left behind." Buffett was the namesake for the push by the Obama administration to seek a tax rate of 30 percent on those earning \$1 million or more.

The so-called "Oracle of Omaha" said he would be "delighted" if Clinton takes the oath of office, asserting that she will not forget about middle-class Americans. Buffett said he had watched all of the Republican presidential debates but Clinton was a better choice for voters. "You know, I used to love Abbott and Costello," he said. "Vaudeville was never this good," he added, suggesting the GOP debates have been comedy.

In her primary campaign against Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, Clinton has pushed back against concerns among some liberals that her time in the Senate representing New York left her too close to Wall Street bankers — a notion that Buffett's appearance was aimed at allaying.

Republicans sought to brand her as a tax-and-spend liberal, unsympathetic to the economic pains of

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everyday American families.

"Hillary Clinton's economic agenda is more about redistribution than growth," said Republican National committee spokesman Michael Short, in a statement. "Campaigning with the third richest person on the planet is an odd way to communicate that she understands and cares about the needs of millions of Americans."

Clinton aides said she would provide more details in the new year on how she would push for higher taxes on the wealthy beyond the framework of the "Buffett rule." Some of her signature domestic spending proposals, including plans to curb student debt and rebuild roads and bridges, would be paid for by raising taxes on the wealthy.

The high-profile event came a day after Clinton described her strategy to combat domestic terrorism, an issue in the spotlight since the deadly attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California. While she largely ignored Tuesday night's Republican debate, Clinton indicated that a combination of policies addressing the economy and homeland security would be central in her campaign.

The Omaha rally brought Clinton to deep-red Nebraska, which is holding its caucus March 5, prompting her to joke that local Democrats should tell their Republican friends, "I don't have horns." The message could resonant in neighboring Iowa, where Clinton is trying to defeat Sanders in the opening Democratic contest on Feb. 1.

Buffett has referred to Clinton as a "hero of mine" in the past and predicted last year that she would succeed President Barack Obama, whom he also supported.

Democrats say Buffett carries a rare dual appeal on Wall Street and Main Street. The investment guru's annual shareholder meeting is dubbed "Woodstock for Capitalists" and drew an overflow crowd of more than 40,000 people from around the globe last spring.

"What he brings to the table is that he's one of the few highly-respected business people who average people view as one of them," said Marc Lasry, a New York hedge fund manager and Democratic donor, in an interview. "He's liked by lots of different kinds of people."

Buffett supported Clinton's first Senate campaign in 2000, raised money for her presidential campaign in 2008 and later endorsed Obama and appeared at fundraisers for the president. Buffett joined Clinton at an Omaha fundraiser earlier in the morning.

The chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway Inc. has long voiced his displeasure with the growth of unlimited money in politics and the emergence of the super PACs. But he made his first donation to a super PAC last year, giving \$25,000 to the pro-Clinton Ready for Hillary group, raising hopes among some Democrats that he might open his wallet again and in an even bigger way.

Clinton ended the day with two town hall meetings in Iowa, where she frequently nodded her head in agreement as three supporters in Mason City urged attendees to caucus for her on Feb. 1.

Earlier, at a church in Iowa City, Clinton gushed about her 14-month-old granddaughter, Charlotte. "She's in love with Elmo. She is so delicious. My husband and I are head over heels crazy about her," she said.

One questioner offered her an unusual choice: Would she rather be president or pop singer Beyonce? Clinton joked that she'd "rather be president because I can't sing."

But she promised, "I will be as good a president as Beyonce is a performer."

Florida man to display 'Festivus Pole' at Oklahoma Capitol

SEAN MURPHY, Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — A Florida man said Wednesday his plan has been approved to display in the Oklahoma Capitol rotunda a "Festivus Pole" based on a fictional holiday depicted in the popular 1990s sitcom "Seinfeld."

Chaz Stevens, of Jupiter, Florida, will display a "Festivus Pole" next Wednesday in the building's first-floor rotunda near an existing display of giant nutcrackers and a gift-laden sleigh.

Stevens said the pole pays homage both to gay rights and the Seinfeld episode in which a character's quirky father describes a holiday that includes feats of strength and the airing of grievances.

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The 6-foot-pole is wrapped in the colors of the gay pride rainbow flag and topped with a disco ball. Stevens said the original display first erected in Florida three years ago was made of empty Pabst Blue Ribbon beer cans, but this year's pole has evolved to reflect the advance of gay rights.

The approval of the pole in Oklahoma comes just months after the state Supreme Court ruled that a permanent Ten Commandments monument had to be removed from the Capitol grounds.

"Out goes the Ten Commandments. In comes the gay pride Festivus pole," Stevens said. "It's a beautiful way to talk about 2015."

Similar poles are expected to be put up in Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan and Washington, Stevens said. Applications are pending in at least two other states.

John Estus, a spokesman for the Oklahoma Office of Management and Enterprise Services, the agency that oversees state buildings, said Stevens' application for a display was considered just like any other.

"It's the same thing as reserving space: You fill out a form, it's evaluated, and it's approved or denied," Estus said. "This is no different than somebody standing with a sign in the rotunda."

In Arkansas, Secretary of State Mark Martin's office denied the request in a Dec. 4 letter that cited several problems with the application, including failure to comply with trademark law and a lack of specifics on how the pole would be anchored.

Trump says he's been 'a little bit divisive' in GOP race

LYNN ELBER, AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — One day after a debate clash with Jeb Bush, Donald Trump said he's been "a little bit divisive" and wants to see Republicans come together.

In an appearance on Jimmy Kimmel's late-night show Wednesday, the GOP presidential candidate looked relaxed as Kimmel queried him about campaign issues.

Trump, who has argued for temporarily banning Muslims from entering the United States, said he's gotten calls of thanks from friends who are Muslim.

"Those may have been crank calls," Kimmel replied, smiling.

The ABC host then turned to immigration, using the example of his on-air sidekick, Guillermo Rodriguez, to question Trump's call for mass deportation.

Kimmel said Rodriguez came to the United States illegally from Mexico but went through the legalization process. He suggested to Trump that people who are willing to risk everything to get to the United States are good for the country.

Trump was unfazed, calling Hispanics "unbelievable people" but not backtracking on his position. He called for a Mexico-U.S. border wall with "a big beautiful door" for legal entry.

Kimmel said it appeared Trump had made an effort to be nicer to his fellow candidates in the debate, including lauding Sen. Ted Cruz's temperament after previously calling him a something of a "maniac."

"I would like to see the Republican party come together, and I've been a little bit divisive in the sense of hitting people hard," Trump replied.

That didn't stop him from repeating his characterization of Jeb Bush as low-energy, although he added he was a "nice person."

Bush, well behind front-runner Trump in national polls, said during the debate that the billionaire couldn't insult his way to the presidency and called him a "chaos candidate."

Kimmel ended the interview by sharing a mock children's book, in the style of Dr. Seuss, which he said he'd ghost-written for Trump.

"Here are some frogs I do not like at all. We must kick these frogs out and then build a wall," Kimmel read from one page.

Trump had canceled a previously scheduled appearance on "Jimmy Kimmel Live," but Kimmel didn't make an issue of being stood up.

Fed rate rise welcomed in stock markets around the world

The Associated Press

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LONDON (AP) — Global stock markets surged Thursday as the Federal Reserve's decision to raise interest rates for the first time in nearly a decade ended a period of uncertainty that had been roiling investors for the past few months. The Fed's signal that rate rises over the coming months will be gradual also helped soothe concerns.

KEEPING SCORE: Taking their cue from Asia earlier, European stock markets posted big gains. Germany's DAX advanced 3.2 percent to 10,807 while the CAC-40 in France rose 2.3 percent to 4,732. The FTSE 100 index of leading British shares was 1.5 percent higher at 6,149. U.S. stocks were also poised for a solid open after advancing in the wake of the Fed's decision Wednesday — Dow futures and the broader S&P 500 futures were up 0.2 percent.

FED, FINALLY: The Fed raised its main interest rate by a quarter of a point, a move that was widely anticipated in the markets. That rate had been near zero for seven years to foster an economic recovery after the U.S. mortgage crisis that sparked a global recession. The rate hike was a long-expected vote of confidence in the U.S. economy. At the same time investors were encouraged that Fed emphasized that further increases will be gradual.

THE QUOTE: "If Fed Chair Janet Yellen was ever to pull a rabbit out of the hat, now was the time to do it and she succeeded magnificently," said Michael Ingram, market strategist at BGC Partners. "Punch-drunk markets have applauded."

DOLLAR OFFENSIVE: The dollar was a big gainer too as investors welcomed the higher returns they will get from holding onto the U.S. currency. The euro was down a further 0.3 percent at \$1.0854 while the dollar rose 0.1 percent to 122.47 yen.

ASIA'S DAY: Japan's Nikkei 225 jumped 1.6 percent to 19,353.56 and Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 0.8 percent to 21,872.06. South Korea's Kospi added 0.4 percent to 1,977.96. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 advanced 1.5 percent to 5,102.00. China's Shanghai Composite gained 1.8 percent to 3,580.00.

ENERGY: In the oil markets, the mood remained fragile. Benchmark U.S. crude was down 13 cents at \$35.39 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The futures contract dropped \$1.83, or 4.9 percent, to close at \$35.52 in New York on Wednesday. Brent crude, a benchmark for international oils, was up 20 cents at \$37.58 a barrel in London.

Israel: Soldiers kill Palestinian who tried to stab them

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli soldiers shot and killed a Palestinian in the West Bank on Thursday after he charged at them with a knife, the Israeli military said.

Soldiers were conducting "routine security activity" near the West Bank village of Hawara when they approached a Palestinian to question him, the military said. The Palestinian ran toward the soldiers wielding a knife, and they shot and killed him, the army said.

Palestinian security officials identified the killed Palestinian as 16-year-old Abdallah Nasarah.

Over the last three months, Palestinians have carried out near-daily attacks on Israelis, killing 19 Israelis and an American Jewish student. At least 116 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire. Israel says 79 were assailants, and the rest were killed in clashes with Israeli forces.

Earlier Thursday, Israeli forces arrested 17 Palestinian suspects for what the military called "illegal activity" in the West Bank.

On Wednesday, the U.S. State Department issued a renewed travel warning to U.S. citizens traveling to Israel, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, noting that in recent months, violence — particularly in Jerusalem and the West Bank — has reached levels "not seen in those areas in a decade."

It advised U.S. citizens to "be aware of the continuing risks of travel" to the region, though it noted that hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens safely visit Israel and the West Bank each year. It also advised U.S. citizens to leave Gaza immediately.

The Latest: Putin backs joint fight against terror

MOSCOW (AP) — The latest news from Russian President Vladimir Putin's end of year news conference. All times local.

3:05 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says that Russia doesn't see a new anti-terror coalition led by Saudi Arabia as hostile to its interests, but he called for pooling global efforts to fight against terrorism.

Speaking at Thursday's news conference, Putin said that he doesn't quite understand the purpose of creating the new coalition, because many of its members are part of the U.S.-led coalition.

At the same time, he adds that Russia has cooperated with Saudi Arabia despite their differences on the Syrian crisis.

2:55 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says Russia is working with Egypt to restore air links that Moscow cut following the crash of a Russian airliner on the Sinai Peninsula. Moscow has said the plane was downed by an explosive device.

Putin said at Thursday's news conference that Russia decided to suspend air travel with Egypt because its agencies aren't immediately capable of guaranteeing safety of Russian citizens. He says that the move wasn't political and he praised the Egyptian president for his "great personal courage" in fighting terror.

He says the air links will be restored after Russian and Egyptian officials work out a set of measures to ensure safety, including the presence of Russian representatives at Egyptian airports.

2:15 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says that Russia honestly won the right to host the 2018 World Cup.

Asked to comment on the ongoing investigation into the alleged corruption at FIFA, he said that Russia has done nothing wrong. He said that the nation has won the right to host the soccer tournament in an "honest competition."

Putin has praised FIFA's suspended president, Sepp Blatter, for his contribution to the world soccer. And the Russian leader repeated his belief that Blatter deserves a Nobel prize for his efforts.

2:05 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says Russia is committed to fighting doping in sports and will cooperate with international organizations to do that.

Speaking at a televised news conference Thursday, Putin said doping harms athletes' health and those who use it must be punished.

At the same time, he said that athletes who aren't involved in doping should not be punished alongside the violators.

Putin said that "Russia must and will be open for a joint fight with doping," adding that he will demand that the nation's sports officials fully cooperate with international structures.

1:55 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says that Russia is ready to work to improve ties with the United States, and to work with anyone who is elected its next president.

Speaking at a news conference Thursday, Putin said that his talks with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry earlier this week have shown that Washington is ready to "move toward settling the issues that can only be settled through joint efforts."

1:20 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says Russia wants a quick settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Putin, speaking Thursday at a televised news conference, said that "we are interested in seeing the

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conflict settled as quickly as possible.”

He urged the Ukrainian government to swiftly approve legislation on holding local elections in Ukraine, but he says the Ukrainian authorities were dragging their feet on the issue.

Put says Russia wants the conflict settled and is ready to use its influence with the rebels in eastern Ukraine to reach a compromise.

1:10 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says that Russia will discuss a possible exchange of prisoners with Ukraine.

Speaking Thursday at a televised news conference, Putin said Russia has had no regular troops in eastern Ukraine. At the same time, he adds that there have been people “performing some military tasks.”

Asked if Moscow is ready to exchange the two men Ukraine says were Russian soldiers for Ukrainian pilot Nadezhda Savchenko and other prisoners, Putin said any exchange must be equal and details could be discussed with the Ukrainian authorities

1:00 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says that Russian military operation in Syria will continue until a political process starts. Putin said at a televised news conference that once the Syrians decide it’s time to stop fighting and launch talks, “we aren’t going to be more Syrian than the Syrians themselves,” and Moscow will wrap up its military action.

He says that he was unsure whether Russia needs a permanent military base in Syria. He said new Russian weapons, such as sea- and air-launched cruise missiles, give Moscow enough punch to strike an enemy and there may be no need for a permanent base in Syria.

12:50 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says the Syrian people themselves must determine who rules the country.

Putin, who met U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry earlier this week, said at a news conference Thursday that Moscow supports a U.S. draft of a U.N. Security Council resolution on Syria. He says a new constitution for Syria must be drafted, and a new election prepared in which the Syrians themselves will determine its leadership.

He adds that Russia believes that a political settlement is the only way to end the Syrian crisis.

Putin says Russia and the U.S. agree on the need to ensure work on a new constitution and create mechanisms of control over future elections.

12:45 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says Turkey acted contrary to its own interests by downing a Russian warplane. Speaking at a televised news conference Thursday, Putin said that he sees no possibility of overcoming the diplomatic strain under the current Turkish leadership.

He says that Russia had been willing to accommodate Turkey’s interests and said he was stunned to see that Ankara hadn’t tried to explain its action and immediately turned to NATO for help instead.

Putin says the deployment of Russian air defense missiles to Syria has put an end to violations of Syrian airspace by Turkish military aircraft

12:30 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says he says no need for a significant shake-up of his Cabinet. Speaking Thursday at a televised news conference, Putin said the Cabinet is coping well with the economic crisis and he sees no need to revamp its membership. He said drastic personnel changes would do no good.

Russia’s economy is set to decline by 3.8 percent this year, and the average income in Russia dropped this year for the first time in Putin’s rule.)

12:10 p.m.

President Vladimir Putin says that Russia's economy is showing signs of stabilization despite plummeting oil prices.

Putin, speaking Thursday at a news conference televised live, said that despite a GDP drop caused by a drop in global oil prices, Russia's main commodity, the nation's industries have started to rebound.

He said the nation's currency reserves stand at \$364 billion and a capital outflow has slowed.

American football prepares Israeli teens for military combat

ARON HELLER, Associated Press

KFAR SABA, Israel (AP) — Under the bright lights, a call of "set, hike" echoes out, followed by the clatter of helmets smashing against pads at a high school football game. But these aren't American teenagers hoping to play college ball — they are Israelis with an eye on joining elite military combat units.

A growing number of native-born Israelis have taken to the army-like strategy, camaraderie and collisions of the gridiron and turned America's Game, once a niche expat activity, into a popular fixture in the Holy Land. Some 2,000 Israelis now play the game, thanks in large part to the support of New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft.

In the central city of Kfar Saba, the hometown Hawks are Israel's four-time defending high school champions and their coach, the son of a former Israeli military chief, is churning out nearly as many commandos as victories.

"Football is a great tool for building a young man," said head coach Itay Ashkenazi, 36. "The mentality of football is very similar to what you try to instill in elite combat units."

Ashkenazi used to be a special forces commando himself, and his father, Gabi Ashkenazi, was the military chief of staff from 2007 to 2011. Yet Ashkenazi, who was a star quarterback in the adult Israel Football League until retiring a few seasons ago, says football has meant more to him than the military, and he tries to instill that love of the game in his young charges.

"Most of them coming in, they don't know football, they don't know anything about it. But you try to 'sell' the football as a tool for what they are going to do afterward, which is the army," said Ashkenazi, who owns an insurance company in addition to his part-time work as coach.

"They fall in love with the atmosphere. They fall in love with the values we try to build up, you know, the team concept, the getting tough mentality and physicality," he said.

He said word was getting out that his players made for good soldiers. The military itself had no comment.

Military service is compulsory for most Israelis, and Ashkenazi's players have gone on to careers in some of the army's most prestigious units, serving in elite commando, reconnaissance and undercover units. The army is Israel's most admired institution, but Palestinians and human rights groups see the military as a tool of Israel's occupation of lands sought by the Palestinians for a future independent state.

Soccer and basketball reign supreme in Israel, but football has gained ground in recent years thanks to live NFL TV broadcasts and the expansion of the IFL, now in its 9th year. Organizers hope it will soon join the ranks of secondary sports like tennis, handball and volleyball.

The game has really taken off on the high school level, where seven teams play across the country. It is no longer unusual to see kids tossing the pigskin in the park after school.

Unlike baseball, which still mostly appeals to American-Israelis, football has resonated with natives thanks to a "bottom-up" grassroots approach, said Steve Leibowitz, who got the sport started in the 1980s and later founded American Football in Israel, the official federation.

Leibowitz has since ushered football from its touch and flag origins to the current tackle leagues and a national team that ranks 17th in the world. Despite the sport's inherent English terminology, he said his philosophy called for "Hebrew in the huddle."

He said the teenagers started organizing themselves and turned to him for equipment only when they had enough players to field teams.

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"They like the idea of the strategy of it all, the planning before you exit the huddle, how everyone has a job, everyone has a role, just like in the army," he said.

The turning point came when Kraft, the Jewish owner of the Patriots, was on a visit to Israel in 1999 and was approached by a hotel worker who played the game. A surprised Kraft reached out to Leibowitz and began financing the sport, which spawned five separate leagues for men and women that he continues to sponsor.

Jerusalem's Kraft Stadium is named for him, its artificial turf featuring a Patriots logo at midfield and its offices adorned with Patriots memorabilia. Tom Brady and other Patriots stars have visited over the years, and last summer Kraft brought a group of 19 Hall of Famers to Israel to promote the sport.

The Patriots declined to comment.

Israeli football is still very different from the U.S. game. High school teams play 9-on-9 on a 60-yard field on modified soccer pitches. The teams are forced to always go for two points after a touchdown because there are no proper goal posts. Their chest-bumping and pre-game chants still draw curious gazes from onlookers.

The Kfar Saba Hawks have been the juggernaut of the six-year-old league. They improved to 5-0 this season after an 82-0 drubbing last week of the Mazkeret Batya Gorillas. They haven't lost in four years and the players say the games have actually become easier than the grueling practices, where they tackle each other with gusto, run wind sprints and drop for push-ups after bungled plays.

Bar Shaul, the Hawks' 17-year-old starting tight end and captain, said no other sport has excited him like football, and that nothing provides better preparation for the military service that awaits him.

"The values emphasized in football and the values emphasized in the army are the same values. It's that you depend on your friend and your friend depends on you and you look in his eyes and you are sure 100 percent that he will be there for you," he said. "We feel like we are going out to battle, that we are going out to war."

Teammate Koren Copelovitz said he has grown in confidence since becoming the team's starting quarterback, a leadership role he thinks will carry over to the army.

"We get a lot for respect for being a football player because everybody knows how hard we train and how hard we play and how much success we've had," he said.

Today in History The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Dec. 17, the 351st day of 2015. There are 14 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 17, 1865, Franz Schubert's Symphony No. 8, known as the "Unfinished" because only two movements had been completed, was first performed publicly in Vienna, 37 years after the composer's death.

On this date:

In 1777, France recognized American independence.

In 1903, Wilbur and Orville Wright of Dayton, Ohio, conducted the first successful manned powered-airplane flights near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, using their experimental craft, the Wright Flyer.

In 1925, Col. William "Billy" Mitchell was convicted at his court-martial in Washington of insubordination for accusing senior military officials of incompetence and criminal negligence; he was suspended from active duty.

In 1939, the German pocket battleship Admiral Graf Spee was scuttled by its crew, ending the World War II Battle of the River Plate off Uruguay.

In 1944, the U.S. War Department announced it was ending its policy of excluding people of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast.

In 1957, the United States successfully test-fired the Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time.

In 1969, the U.S. Air Force closed its Project "Blue Book" by concluding there was no evidence of ex-

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traterrestrial spaceships behind thousands of UFO sightings. An estimated 50 million TV viewers watched singer Tiny Tim marry his fiancée, Miss Vicky (Budinger), on NBC's "Tonight Show."

In 1975, Lynette Fromme was sentenced in Sacramento, California, to life in prison for her attempt on the life of President Gerald R. Ford. (Fromme was paroled in August 2009.)

In 1979, Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance executive, was fatally injured after leading police on a chase with his motorcycle in Miami. (Four white police officers accused of beating McDuffie were later acquitted, sparking riots.)

In 1981, members of the Red Brigades kidnapped Brig. Gen. James L. Dozier, the highest-ranking U.S. Army official in southern Europe, from his home in Verona, Italy. (Dozier was rescued 42 days later.)

In 1994, North Korea shot down a U.S. Army helicopter which had strayed north of the demilitarized zone. The co-pilot, Chief Warrant Officer David Hilemon, was killed; the pilot, Chief Warrant Officer Bobby Hall, was captured and held for nearly two weeks.

In 2011, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il died after more than a decade of iron rule; he was 69, according to official records, but some reports indicated he was 70.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush, in his weekly radio address, acknowledged he'd personally authorized a secret eavesdropping program in the U.S. following 9/11, calling it "crucial to our national security." Protesters in Hong Kong tried to storm a convention center where World Trade Organization delegates were negotiating a global accord on farming, manufacturing and services. John Ruiz lost the WBA heavyweight title, dropping a disputed majority decision to Nikolay Valuev of Russia in Berlin. Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist Jack Anderson died in Bethesda, Maryland, at age 83.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama signed into law a huge, holiday-season tax bill extending cuts for all Americans, saluting a new spirit of political compromise as Republicans applauded and liberals seethed. Federal prosecutors reached a settlement with the estate of Florida philanthropist Jeffrey (cq) Picower in which his widow, Barbara, agreed to return \$7.2 billion that her husband had reaped from Bernard Madoff's giant Ponzi scheme. Don Van Vliet (vleet), a musician and artist who'd performed a complex brand of experimental rock under the name Captain Beefheart, died in Arcata, California, at age 69. New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees was voted the 2010 Male Athlete of the Year by members of The Associated Press.

One year ago: The United States and Cuba restored diplomatic relations, sweeping away one of the last vestiges of the Cold War. Sony Pictures canceled the Dec. 25 release of "The Interview," a black comedy about a plot to assassinate North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, after hackers threatened terrorist attacks and the largest multiplex chains in North America pulled the film. Veteran broadcast journalist Richard C. Hottelet, 97, the last of the original "Murrow's Boys," died in Wilton, Connecticut.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Armin Mueller-Stahl is 85. Pope Francis is 79. Singer-actor Tommy Steele is 79. Rock singer-musician Art Neville is 78. Actor Bernard Hill is 71. Actor Ernie Hudson is 70. Political commentator Chris Matthews is 70. Comedian-actor Eugene Levy is 69. Actress Marilyn Hassett is 68. Actor Wes Studi is 68. Pop musician Jim Bonfanti (The Raspberries) is 67. Actor Joel Brooks is 66. Rock singer Paul Rodgers is 66. Rhythm-and-blues singer Wanda Hutchinson (The Emotions) is 64. Actor Bill Pullman is 62. Actor Barry Livingston is 62. Country singer Sharon White is 62. Producer-director-writer Peter Farrelly is 59. Rock musician Mike Mills (R.E.M.) is 57. Pop singer Sarah Dallin (Bananarama) is 54. Country musician Tim Cheurning is 53. Country singer Tracy Byrd is 49. Country musician Duane Propes is 49. Actress Laurie Holden is 46. DJ Homicide (Sugar Ray) is 45. Actor Sean Patrick Thomas is 45. Actress Claire Forlani is 44. Pop-rock musician Eddie Fisher (OneRepublic) is 42. Actress Sarah Paulson is 41. Actress Marissa Ribisi is 41. Actor Giovanni Ribisi is 41. Actress Milla Jovovich (YOH'-vuh-vich) is 40. Singer Bree Sharp is 40. Singer-songwriter Ben Goldwasser (MGMT) is 33. Rock singer Mikky Ekko is 32. Actress Shannon Woodward is 31. Actress Emma Bell is 29. Actress Vanessa Zima is 29. Rock musician Taylor York (Paramore) is 26. Actor Graham Rogers is 25. Actor-singer Nat Wolff is 21.

Thought for Today: "A life of leisure and a life of laziness are two things." - "Poor Richard's Almanack."