

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 1 of 17

- 1- Dakota Outdoors ad
- 1- Recycling Trailers in Groton
- 1- Today's Information
- 2- Some Kindergarten Students
- 3- Koehler wins holiday lighting contest
- 3- Johnson's home has blue glow
- 3- Groton Prairie Mixed Bowling
- 3- Kiwanis Club
- 4- Rep. Noem's Weekly Column
- 5- Schwan's to give to SD Destination Imagination
- 6 - Today in Weather History
- 6- City Dog License Ad
- 7- Local Weather Forecast
- 8- National Weather Map
- 8- Local Weather
- 9- Daily Devotional
- 10 - News from the Associated Press

Friday, December 25

CHRISTMAS DAY!

No School

Birthdays: Angela Carlson • Scott Fordham
9:00am: St. John's Lutheran Worship

Saturday, December 26

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

Sunday, December 27

Birthdays: Rayne Baker, Raymond Alberts, Jane Johnson, Emily Overacker, Karla Pasteur
9:00am: St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church
Mass
9:00am: St. John's Lutheran Worship
10:00am: Heaven Bound Ministries worship at Pierpont Church
10:15am: Emmanuel Lutheran texts and carols
11:00am: United Methodist Church Worship
1:00pm: James Lowery birthday
3:00pm: Heaven Bound Ministries worship at Golden Living Center

Monday, December 28

No School

Senior Menu: Beef stew, buttermilk biscuit, waldorf salad, sherbet.

Birthdays: Tracey Heidrich, Sharon Tullis, Jaden Dobbins, Meredith Anderson
6:30am: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study

Tuesday, December 29

No School

Senior Menu: Roast pork, baked potato with sour cream, squash, molasses cookie, whole wheat bread.

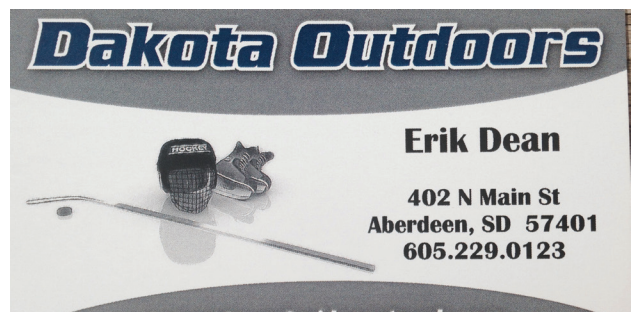
Birthdays: Adam Herman, Barbara Stauch •

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**

© 2015 Groton Daily Independent



Dakota Outdoors

Erik Dean
402 N Main St
Aberdeen, SD 57401
605.229.0123

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 2 of 17

Some Kindergarten Students . . .

What Christmas means to them . . .



Kamryn Bickel, daughter, of Jason and Chelsie Bickel, Andover, it's about Jesus' birthday and giving presents



Arabella Clark, daughter of David and Carla Clark, Bristol, Jesus' birthday comes on Christmas. Jesus' birthday has kings, shepherds and animals.



Zachary Fisher, son of Ryan Fisher, Groton, it is about Jesus, presents and toys.



Raelynn Feist, daughter of Peggy Feist, Groton, Santa is nice to me and gives me presents and I like him.



Ryder Schelle, son of Ryan and Jennifer Schelle, Groton, having fun and getting toys



Meleana Hagenson, daughter of Anthony and Parmalie Hagenson, Aberdeen, Santa comes

Merry Christmas!

S & S Lumber

HARDWARE HANK

201 East Hwy 12 • 605/397-2361

Lucas Bible, son of Brandon and Vanessa Bible, Andover, it is all about presents

Rylie Rose, daughter of Ian and Karen Rose, Groton, it is about Jesus' birthday

Merry Christmas!

Hanlon Brothers
Gravel Hauling

605/395-6531

New & Cleaning of Stockdams with our 60' reach trackhoe

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 3 of 17



The Rick and Sherry Koehler home at 801 N 3rd St. took first place in the holiday lighting contest sponsored by the city. They will receive a \$75 credit next month on their utility bill.



The Matt and Casey Johnson home north of the pool has a nice blue glow in the night.

Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Coyotes 4, Foxes 3, Shih Tzus 3, Jackelopes 1, Chipmunks 1, Pocket Gophers 0-
Men's High Games: Roger Spanier 221, 219, Brad Waage 214, 205, Doug Jorgensen 212, 203, Randy Stanley 205, Rick Carlson 204

Women's High Games: Darci Spanier 176, Vicki Jorgensen 171, Angie Carlson 163

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 608, Roger Spanier 597, Doug Jorgensen 575

Women's High Series: Vicki Jorgensen 469, Sue Stanley 455, Darci Spanier 446

KIWANIS CLUB

Twelve members were present for last week's week'S Kiwanis club meeting.

Larry Wheeting , past president; led the short business session.

The annual pancake bunch will be January 31.

Steve Simon was program leader, and introduced his guest, Brenda Pence, RN , and nursing coordinator for diabetes education, at Avera St. Lukes, Aberdeen.

Brenda presented very informative program, and fielded questions regarding diabetes.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 4 of 17

Learning Something from Yesterday

By Rep. Kristi Noem

It has been an honor to serve you again this year. As we prepare to start 2016, I couldn't help but reflect on what a year it has been.

I started 2015 with an appointment to the historic House Ways and Means Committee, which handles all tax, trade and economic growth policies. As the first South Dakotan to serve on this committee, it's been a tremendous opportunity to make sure our priorities and values are reflected in the nation's largest debates.

Just days into the new year, the House passed the Keystone XL Pipeline Act with bipartisan support. This bill would have allowed work to begin. While Republicans and Democrats in the Senate also agreed to the legislation, the President vetoed it. In doing so, he deprived South Dakota of good jobs, millions of dollars in revenue for cash-strapped counties, and congestion relief for the roads and rails.

This was one of the first of more than 300 bills the House would pass throughout 2015. We also voted on a permanent repeal of the death tax, a bill to hold sanctuary cities accountable, and measures to rein in federal regulators. Although none of these items on our conservative agenda received the President's signature, there were a handful of areas where we found common ground with members from both parties.

Over the last few years, I've advocated for legislation to combat human trafficking. On May 29, we earned a major victory when the President signed our bipartisan Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act, which included provisions I wrote with the needs of South Dakota and our children in mind.

We also passed a bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority bill, which put tools in place to hold the Obama administration accountable for meeting the trade objectives set by Congress. This legislation is already making an impact. Because of it, the public has full access to the pending Trans Pacific Partnership before Congress can act on it. That gives everyone time to review it and make sure it's a good deal for America.

After more than 13 years under No Child Left Behind, Congress also overhauled our federal education policy, finally getting us away from the federal government micromanaging local classrooms. In the bill, we gave states more flexibility, empowered parents, modernized the Impact Aid program, and stopped the federal government from pressuring schools into adopting specific academic standards, like Common Core.

Additionally, I helped drive forward the first long-term highway bill in a decade to make sure South Dakota farmers, businesses and families would continue to have access to a safe and reliable infrastructure. With 80,000 miles of roadway, 6,000 bridges, and thousands of miles of railways in South Dakota, it was critical that we give state and local governments more certainty, control and flexibility when addressing infrastructure problems. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act accomplished that.

Finally, we passed legislation to protect hardworking South Dakotans from pending tax hikes. In the package, we made improvements to 529 college savings plans, offered a permanent deduction for certain classroom expenses teachers take on, and permanently extended Section 179, which is important to many farmers and ranchers. The package also included an extension of the biodiesel tax credit through 2016 and stopped Obamacare's medical device tax from taking effect until at least 2017.

Beyond legislative initiatives, I'm proud of the personal impact our office has made in the lives of many South Dakotans. We've assisted more than 600 constituents who faced problems when trying to adopt a child, pay their taxes, receive veterans or Medicare benefits, and more. We've also been able to show more than 130 South Dakota groups around the U.S. Capitol and made more than 170,000 calls to constituents to make sure you knew what I was doing.

There is much more to be done, but as John Wayne said, "Tomorrow hopes we have learned something from yesterday."

Thank you for the opportunity to serve South Dakota. Have a happy New Year!

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 5 of 17

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:

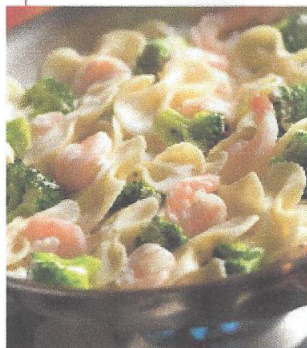
Call 1-855-870-7208 and provide Campaign ID: **25179**

Thank you for your support!

© 2014 Schwan's Home Service, Inc. All rights reserved. 0301



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



Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 6 of 17

Today in Weather History

1966 - A white Christmas was enjoyed by residents from North Carolina to New England in the wake of a major snowstorm. Even coastal Virginia was white. (David Ludlum)

1980 - It was the coldest Christmas Day of modern record in the northeastern U.S. Temperatures as cold as 36 degrees below zero were reported in New York State, and as the sharp cold front swept southeastward the temperature at Boston MA plunged from 34 degrees to seven degrees below zero during the day. (David Ludlum)

1983 - It was the coldest Christmas Day of modern record for the central and eastern U.S. More than 125 cities reported record low temperatures for the date, and thirty-four of those cities reported all-time records for the month of December. The temperature plunged to one degree below zero at Huntsville AL, and dipped to 14 degrees at Galveston TX. Snow covered the ground from the Pacific Northwest through much of the Great Plains Region to the Northern Appalachians. (The National Weather Summary)

1987 - Residents of Tucson, AZ, awoke to a white Christmas for the first time in forty-seven years of records, as a winter storm blanketed the area with up to four inches of snow. While heavy rain inundated Arkansas, freezing rain was reported from northwest Texas to southwestern Missouri, with an inch of ice reported at Harrison AR. Unseasonably mild weather prevailed in the southeastern U.S. Seven cities reported record high temperatures for the date. For the second day in a row McAllen TX was the hot spot in the nation with an afternoon high of 91 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - A massive winter storm made for a very white Christmas in the western U.S. Las Vegas, NV, reported snow on the ground for the first time of record. Periods of snow over a five day period left several feet of new snow on the ground of ski areas in Colorado, with 68 inches reported at Wolf Creek Pass. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - It was a record cold Christmas Day for parts of the southeastern U.S. Morning lows of zero degrees at Wilmington, NC, and five degrees below zero at Jacksonville NC established all-time records for those two locations. Miami Beach FL equalled a December record established the previous morning with a low of 33 degrees. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2003 - Heavy rains affected areas of southern California that were just recently ravaged by wildfires in October. The downpour produced flash flooding that resulted in mudslides, taking the lives of 15 people at area campgrounds in San Bernardino (AFP).

2004 - Snow fell on Christmas Day in Deep South Texas. Snow totaled 4.4 inches in Corpus Christi, making it the second White Christmas ever. Farther north, Victoria had their first white Christmas on record when 12.5 inches of snow fell.

2006 - Severe thunderstorms produced four tornadoes in Florida. Columbia, Pasco, Lake and Volusia counties were hardest-hit, including the Daytona Beach area. A tornado generated considerable damage on the campus of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, delaying the start of the spring semester (Orlando Business Journal).

2010 - Up to 32 inches of snow and blizzard conditions affected parts of the eastern U.S. on December 25th-27th. A state of emergency was declared in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, Massachu-

setts, and Maine. In New York City, up to 24.5 inches of snow fell, effectively shutting down rail lines, major airports, and bus services. Thousands of flights were cancelled and stranded subway riders were forced to spend a night in unheated train cars. One person was reported killed in Maine due to the weather conditions. (NCDC)

2016 DOG LICENSES

AVAILABLE NOW!!

Licenses due by Dec. 31, 2015

Fines start after Dec. 31, 2015

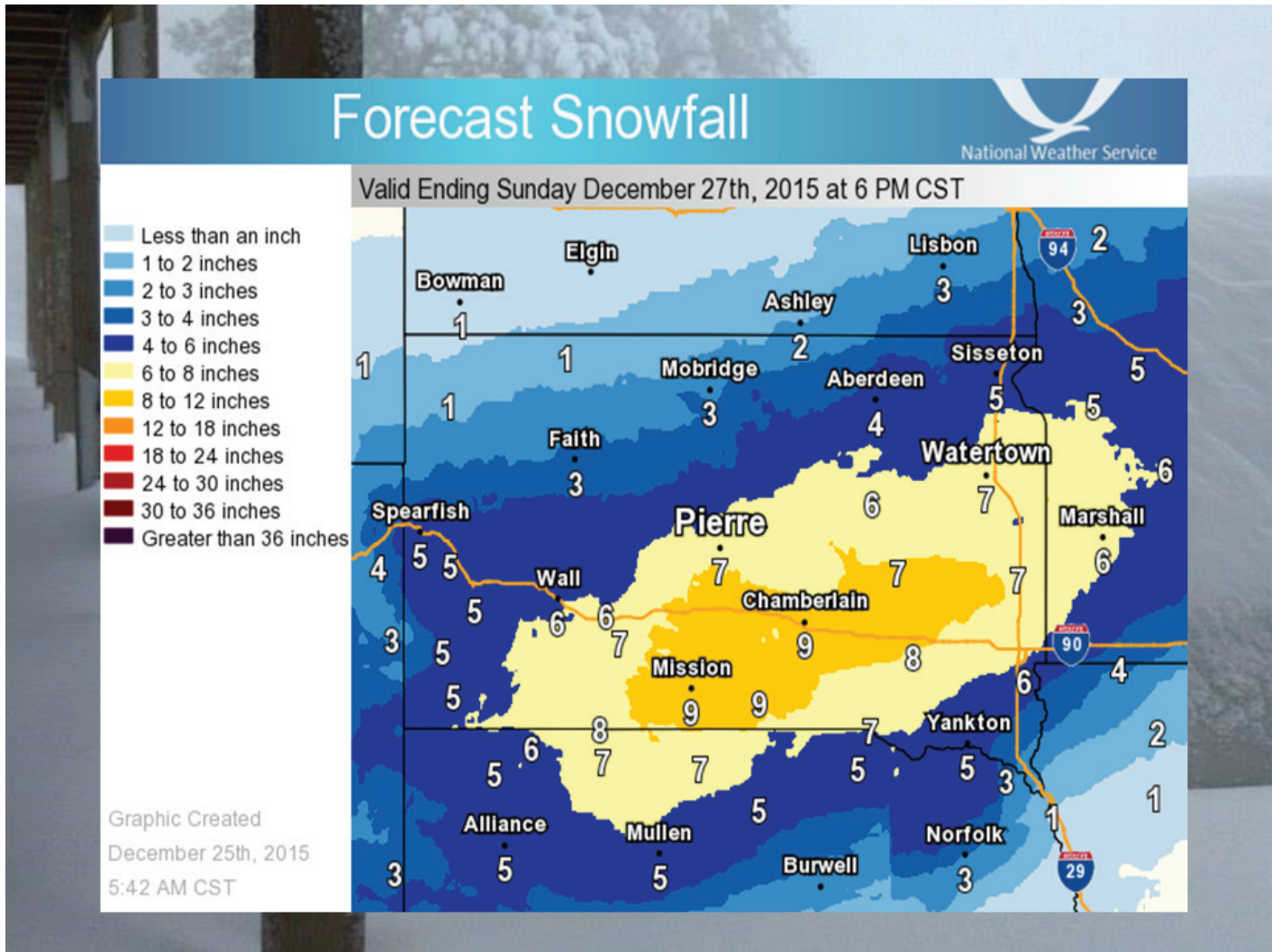
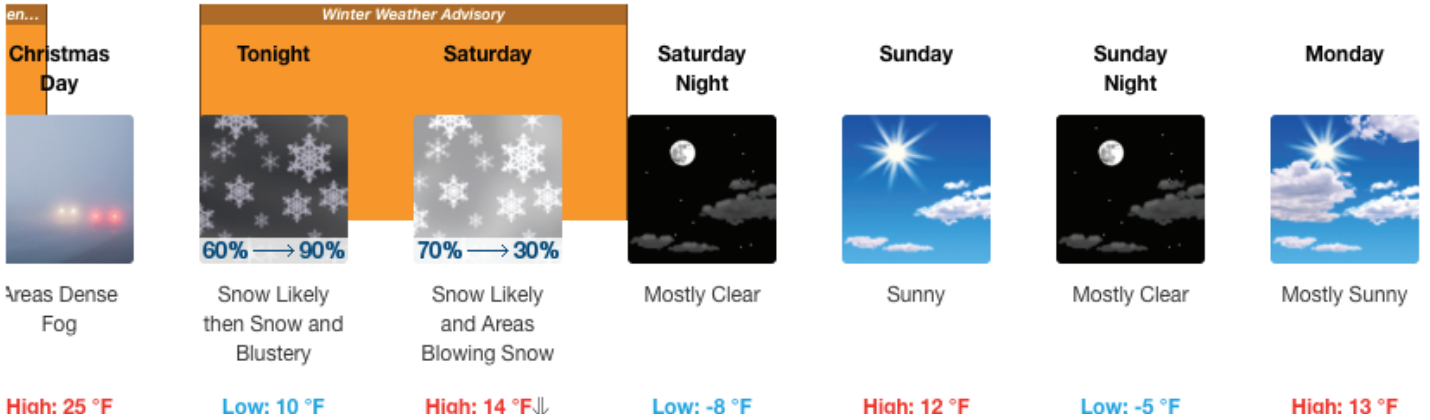
Dogs CAN NOT be licensed without providing updated rabies shot information, please bring records for each dog to City Hall

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

Broton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 7 of 17



Published on: 12/25/2015 at 5:53AM

A winter storm will be moving across the region late this afternoon through Saturday afternoon. Snowfall amounts of 3 to 9 inches are expected. Areas of blowing snow will occur later tonight and Saturday as north winds increase to 20 to 30 mph.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 8 of 17

Yesterday's Weather

High: 23.3 at 7:08 PM

Low: 17.4 at 3:23 AM

High Gust: 18 at 3:14 AM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 51° in 1999

Record Low: -25° in 1996

Average High: 23°F

Average Low: 3°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.41

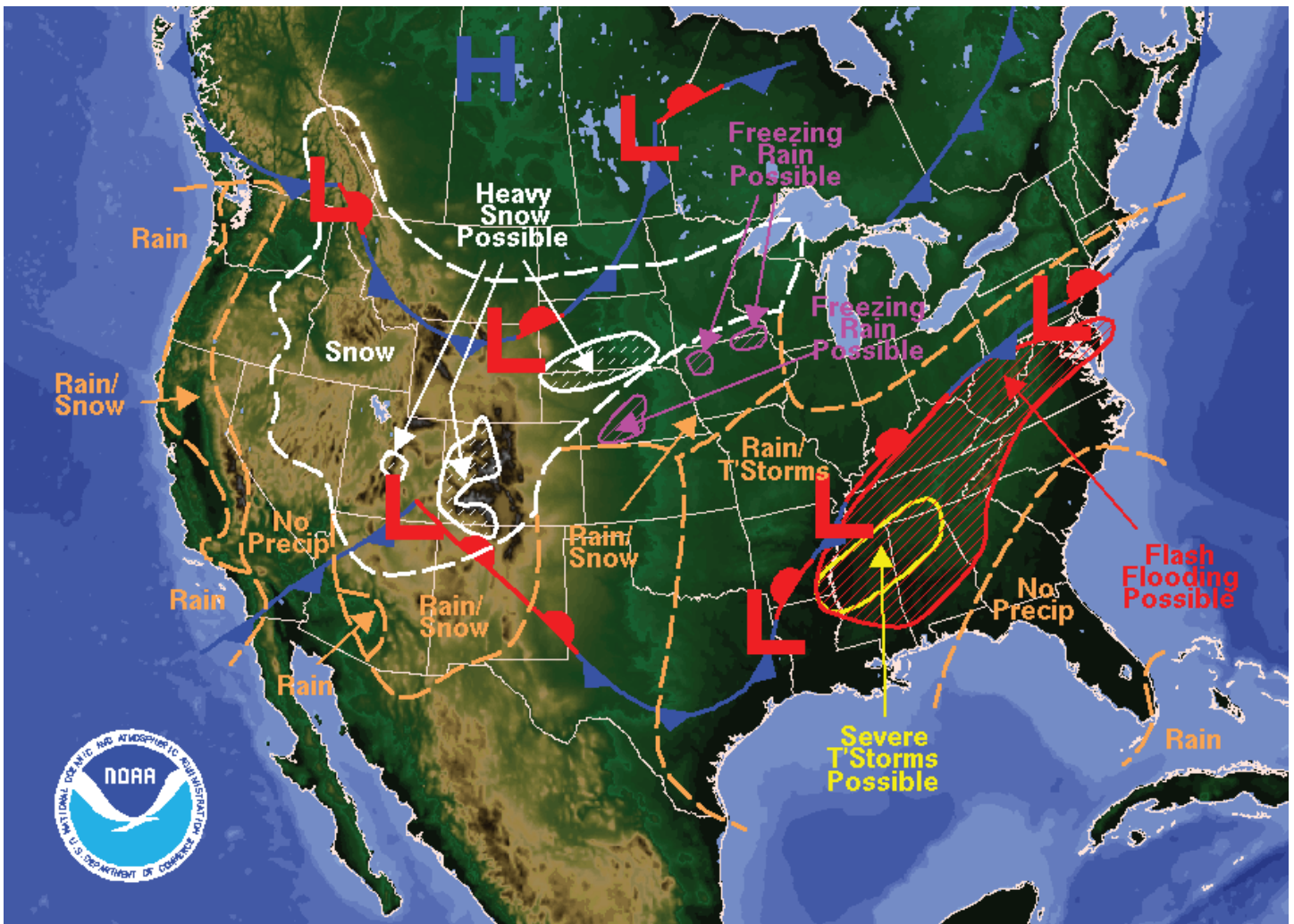
Precip to date in Dec.: 0.55

Average Precip to date: 21.61

Precip Year to Date: 20.37

Sunset Tonight: 4:55 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:12 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Fri, Dec 25, 2015, issued 4:59 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts



THE SOUND OF THE TRUMPETS

An old Jewish legend claims that each day in heaven begins with the ringing sound that comes from a trumpet.

After Lucifer, once the son of the morning, had fallen from heaven, he was asked, "What do you miss most?" After a moment's thought he said, "The trumpets that sounds in the morning." The legend continues that the reason the trumpet sounded was to call people together to thank God for His love and mercy, grace and goodness.

Sadly, the "trumpet of thanksgiving" is absent from the lives of far too many Christians. The sounds of glory and gratitude have been replaced with groans of gloom and grief, greed and godless living.

But we are urged in Psalm 150: to "Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet." Trumpets were used in Jewish ceremonies to remind worshipers of the greatness, glory and goodness of God and to praise and thank Him.

Perhaps it would be a good idea if each church had a trumpet player to begin each worship service. Perhaps the sound of a well-played trumpet might remind us to "bow down" before our Creator and give Him thanks for His many blessings - the ones we are aware of and those who fall on us unannounced and unrecognized.

Giving thanks is an important part of life - especially in the life of a Christian. All that we have or will have, all that we are or will become, is not accidental. Everything in our lives comes from the grace of God. And not to thank Him is, actually, to insult Him. In ourselves, we have no worth. We only have worth in, through and by God's grace.

Prayer: God, give us grateful hearts - hearts filled with gratitude for Your love, grace, mercy, salvation and hope! In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 150:1 Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

News from the Associated Press

Missing Yankton minimum-security inmate back in custody

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — A minimum-security state prison inmate who walked away from a correctional facility in Yankton shortly before midnight Christmas Eve is back in custody.

The South Dakota Department of Corrections says 26-year-old Dustin Emery was arrested by the Yankton Police Department on Friday, hours after he left the Yankton Community Work Center.

Emery is serving concurrent sentences for grand theft and possession of a controlled substance out of Yankton County.

News year: Platte tragedy, Delmont tornado and Obama visit

DIRK LAMMERS, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A hard-hitting tornado in Delmont and an aborted attempt to launch a marijuana resort were big news in South Dakota in 2015, but the year's top story may have been a tragedy in Platte.

Six members of the Westerhuis family were found dead in the ashes of the family home in September, but authorities said it was no accident. Their investigation found that Scott Westerhuis had shot his wife and four children, then set the family home ablaze before killing himself in an act that may have been motivated by financial issues.

Westerhuis, the business manager of Mid-Central Educational Cooperative, had just learned that the co-op was losing a \$4.3 million federal contract for a program that seeks to improve Native Americans' college readiness. Financial problems and accounting failures were cited as the reasons.

An investigation into the deaths continues.

Other notable stories in the state:

DELMONT TORNADO: A tornado ripped through the southeastern South Dakota town of Delmont in May, wiping out four blocks and damaging or destroying 84 structures in the area. No one was killed, but nine people suffered injuries and the tornado leveled the town's new fire hall and a 100-year-old church. The National Weather Service rated the twister an EF-2, with a peak wind speed of 130 mph. About 200 people lived in Delmont before the tornado, and about 75 residents left the town for good after their homes were destroyed.

SCHOOL SHOOTING IN HARRISBURG: Authorities arrested a 16-year-old Harrisburg High School student in late September, saying he entered the office of Principal Kevin Lein and shot him in the right arm. Two other school officials tackled Buhl and held him down until sheriff's deputies arrived. Lein was back on the job the next day. Buhl is awaiting trial on charges of attempted murder and the commission of a felony while armed with a firearm.

PRESIDENTIAL VISIT: President Barack Obama addressed the graduating class of Watertown's Lake Area Technical Institute in May, completing his quest to visit all 50 states during his presidency. Obama is only the fourth president to reach every state, joining Richard Nixon, George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton. He told the graduates he was "saving the best for last." He used the speech to promote his proposal for free community college.

BOSWORTH CONVICTED: A South Dakota jury convicted Annette Bosworth in May of election law violations related to her failed run for one of South Dakota's U.S. Senate seats. Bosworth was convicted of perjury and filing false documents in connection with her petitions of candidacy, but avoided prison time when a judge handed down a suspended sentence. A state board voted in September to revoke Bosworth's medical license, but she appealed. A Minnehaha County judge is allowing her to continue to practice medicine while the case is reviewed.

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 11 of 17

FLANDREAU MARIJUANA RESORT: The Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe, which earlier announced it was building the nation's first marijuana resort, burned its crop in November after federal officials had warned of a possible raid. The tribe had said the project could generate up to \$2 million a month in profit, but state officials and many residents of Flandreau opposed the project.

ROAD AND BRIDGE FUNDING: State lawmakers in March approved legislation that raised road and bridge funding through increases in fuel taxes, fees and other assessments. The law signed by Gov. Dennis Daugaard is raising more than \$80 million in its first year.

PINE RIDGE SUICIDES: A federal agency in November denied the Oglala Sioux Tribe's application for a \$3.6 million grant that would pay to continue the only suicide prevention outreach program on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. At least 20 people killed themselves on the reservation in 2015, yet the program is due to end in December due to lack of funding. Nearly 1,000 suicide attempts were recorded on Pine Ridge between 2004 and 2013.

HOCKEY GAME INCIDENT: A Philip man accused of using racial slurs and spilling beer on American Indian students during a January game in Rapid City was cleared in September of a disorderly conduct charge. Native American groups said the incident highlighted racial issues in the city, but a magistrate judge ruled the spill was unintentional and the city never proved Trace O'Connell said any racially charged words near the students.

ATHLETICS TRANSGENDER POLICY: South Dakota's high school activities association in December finalized changes to its policy on transgender student participation in athletics, saying an independent hearing officer will decide on a student's request to play on the team of their choice. Some lawmakers had expressed concern over the standards, and the policy may face another challenge in 2016 from Republican lawmakers who tried and failed to block it last session.

Secretary of State approves redistricting ballot initiative

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — Secretary of State Shantel Krebs says an initiated amendment to the South Dakota Constitution that seeks to put legislative redistricting in the hands of a commission has been validated and certified to appear on the November 2016 general election ballot.

A Constitutional amendment initiative requires a minimum of 27,741 signatures from South Dakota registered voters.

Krebs says the measure's sponsor turned in 43,198 signatures to the Secretary of State's office. A random sampling of 5 percent of the signatures determined that 70.2 percent, or 30,335 of the 43,198 signatures — were in good standing.

Accomplice in 1990s killings released from state prison

DIRK LAMMERS, Associated Press

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A 46-year-old man imprisoned for 15 years for kidnapping and being an accomplice to murder in the killings of two women in the 1990s was released from state prison Thursday, the Department of Corrections said.

Glen Walker was sentenced in 2000 to two concurrent 25-year sentences for kidnapping and a consecutive 5-year sentence for helping Robert Leroy Anderson kidnap one of the two women that Anderson eventually killed. Anderson was found hanged in his cell in March 2003.

Michael Winder, a spokesman for the South Dakota Department of Corrections, confirmed that Walker was released from the state prison in Springfield.

Corrections Secretary Denny Kaemingk sent out a public notice about Walker's pending release last week. Kaemingk said Walker is entitled under state law to receive a reduction of his sentence for good

conduct because the crime occurred prior to July 1, 1996. He will not be under supervision, such as parole or probation, he said.

Kaemingk said Walker has indicated to corrections officials that he plans to leave South Dakota and live in another state.

Anderson was found guilty of kidnapping and killing Larisa Dumansky, 29, of Sioux Falls, and raping, kidnapping and killing Piper Streyle, 28, of Canistota. He was given the death penalty in 1999 for both murders, but committed suicide at the state penitentiary in 2003.

Walker, Anderson's lifelong friend, led law enforcement officers to a shallow grave at Lake Vermillion that held shell casings and bone fragments. DNA testing showed the bones genetically matched Dumansky.

Because Walker's crimes were committed before July 1996, when the law that determines when prisoners are released changed, his case came up for parole every eight months. The requests were repeatedly denied, but Walker's sentence under the old law expired on Dec. 24.

Accomplice in 1994 killings released from state prison

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A 46-year-old man imprisoned since 2000 for being an accomplice in the 1994 killing of two women was released from state prison on Thursday.

Glen Walker was sentenced to two concurrent 25-year sentences for kidnapping and a consecutive 5-year sentence being for helping Robert Leroy Anderson kidnap one of the two women that Anderson killed. Anderson was found hanged in his cell in March 2003.

Corrections spokesman Michael Winder confirmed Walker was released Thursday.

Corrections Secretary Denny Kaemingk (KAY'-mink) sent out a public notice about Walker's pending release last week. Kaemingk says Walker is entitled to receive a reduction of his sentence for good conduct because the crime occurred prior to July 1996.

Walker will not be on parole or probation. He has indicated he plans to leave South Dakota.

Let's Play 2: Vikings, Packers on course to go back to back

GENARO C. ARMAS, AP Sports Writers

DAVE CAMPBELL, AP Sports Writers

NFL players wear week-to-week blinders. They like to say they're strictly focused on the next game.

But this late in the regular season, it's hard not to take a least a peek at what might lie ahead for playoff contenders.

In the case of the Minnesota Vikings and Green Bay Packers, it's quite possible they will meet in a wild-card game just a week after facing off in the season finale. For a lot more than border-state bragging rights.

The Vikings (9-5) are set to visit the Packers (10-4) on Jan. 3 to decide the NFC North, unless the Vikings lose to the Giants and the Packers win at Arizona on Sunday. Even if the Packers clinch the division this weekend, the Vikings are still in good shape for a wild-card spot.

"We're in the playoffs now, everybody understands what we need to do to first is win the division, and then hopefully get the highest seed," Packers coach Mike McCarthy said.

With the NFC East winner guaranteed the No. 4 seed and a first-round home game against the best wild-card team — currently Seattle (9-5) based on a tiebreaker over Minnesota — the Vikings and Packers are on a collision course for the weekend of Jan. 9-10.

There's a scenario that wouldn't line up the two rivals on the opening weekend of the playoffs: The Vikings win their last two games to take the NFC North title, putting the Packers in a wild-card spot. With their tiebreaker edge over the Seahawks, who the Packers beat, they would then get the No. 5 seed by either beating the Cardinals on Sunday or having the Seahawks lose one of their last two games.

So get ready for a Vikings-Packers rematch, the game so nice they just might play it twice. Or, in the case of these division rivals, three times; Green Bay won at Minnesota 30-13 in November.

Some other notes and notable back-to-back games by teams in the last week of the season and the first round of the playoffs:

RUNNING FOR THE RECORD: The list has to start with the Packers and Vikings, of course, given their

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 13 of 17

memorable two-game set in 2012-13. It was the last time teams met in consecutive weeks.

The Vikings won four straight games to finish that season, including a 37-34 thriller over the Packers on Dec. 30 to take their spot in the playoffs at 10-6. The Packers went 11-5, so they had the NFC North wrapped up entering the final weekend. But they were still playing for a first-round bye.

Then there was the matter of the NFL's single-season rushing record, with Adrian Peterson in hot pursuit. Peterson ran for 199 yards that afternoon at the Metrodome, finishing 9 yards short of breaking Eric Dickerson's record.

That forced the rematch in Green Bay.

"It was more difficult because it was a division opponent, so they know you a little bit better," recalled Packers defensive tackle B.J. Raji. "It was definitely a grind-it-out game."

Vikings quarterback Christian Ponder hurt his elbow in that finale, so backup Joe Webb was thrust onto the stage at Lambeau Field six days later.

Peterson rushed for a relatively quiet 99 yards, Webb went a woeful 11 for 30 in the air, and the Packers cruised to a 24-10 victory.

FUMBLE IN OT: The Packers have had to hit replay twice in the last seven seasons. They wrapped up 2009 with back-to-back road games against Arizona, winning 33-7 to finish the regular season before losing 51-45 in overtime in the wild-card round — the highest-scoring postseason game.

Aaron Rodgers threw for four touchdowns, while Arizona's Kurt Warner had five.

But the Cardinals won it on defense when Karlos Dansby returned a fumble 17 yards for a score after Rodgers lost the ball on Michael Adams' sack.

PEYTON'S PLACES: When Peyton Manning played for the Indianapolis Colts, he picked apart the Broncos — his future team — in a 49-24 win in the first round of the 2004 playoffs. Manning had 458 yards passing and four scores, including two to Reggie Wayne.

A week earlier, Manning played just one series against the Broncos in Week 17 with the Colts having wrapped up the third seed in the playoffs. The win gave Denver the AFC's final wild-card spot.

The Broncos were eliminated a week later by their future quarterback.

BY THE NUMBERS:

—18: Number of times teams met in the last game of the regular season and first game of postseason, according to STATS.

—1943: Year of first such a meeting. The Giants beat the Redskins 31-7 before Washington beat New York 28-0 in the playoff rematch.

—3: Number of back-to-back meetings in the 2009 season. While Arizona split with Green Bay, the Dallas Cowboys won both matchups with the Philadelphia Eagles, and the New York Jets won both games against Cincinnati.

Court: Top Iowa insurer must pay claims for life-saving drug

BY RYAN J. FOLEY, Associated Press

IOWA CITY, Iowa (AP) — Iowa's largest health insurer improperly refused to reimburse a pharmacist for expensive life-saving drugs he dispensed to patients with a rare blood disease, an appeals court says.

Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield searched for any proper justification to deny claims for drugs used to treat hemophilia, an inherited condition in which patients suffer excessive bleeding, the Iowa Court of Appeals ruled Tuesday. When that failed, Wellmark breached its contract with Iowa City pharmacist Michael Stein by refusing to reimburse him for 114 valid claims for drugs dispensed to 24 patients, mostly children, around the country, the court ruled.

The medicine at issue, so-called factor drugs, is injected by patients at home so they don't bleed to death. They can cost more than \$1 million per patient annually.

Des Moines-based Wellmark, which insures more than 2 million people in Iowa and South Dakota, said it disagreed with the ruling and would ask the Iowa Supreme Court for review. The high court has discretion on whether to grant the appeal.

If the ruling stands, a judge will calculate how much in damages Wellmark owes Stein; court records suggest the amount could be around \$9 million, including interest.

Stein's long-running dispute with Wellmark nearly landed him in prison and put his pharmacy out of business. He said the ruling is "a victory for pharmacy and a victory for patient advocacy."

"This is a case of an insurance company trying to force its will on anyone in its path," he said. "It's shocking what they will do."

One of his attorneys, Anthony Paduano, called the ruling "one of the most significant decisions in the pharmacy law context issued by any court in the country."

Stein said most of the damages, if awarded, would go to pay off debts to a defunct Florida-based wholesaler that provided his pharmacy with the drugs. That company, FHM, went out of business after Wellmark and other insurers started denying claims.

Stein's pharmacy sued Wellmark in 2009 after the insurer refused to pay claims worth \$7 million. As an Iowa judge was preparing to rule on the case in 2013, federal prosecutors in Des Moines — with Wellmark's backing — indicted Stein for health care fraud over the same claims.

Prosecutors and Wellmark argued Stein's pharmacy did little work in dispensing those drugs and was a "pass-through entity" for FHM, which wanted access to customers covered through Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Stein's attorneys argued the case was a contract dispute and that the prosecution was unjustly driven by Wellmark. Jurors quickly acquitted Stein.

The appeals court ruled 3-0 that Stein dispensed drugs that should have been covered under his Wellmark contract.

It noted Wellmark officials came up with a "strategy" to deny Stein's claims for lack of documentation, then searched for other reasons when proper records were provided. In one case, a Wellmark investigator met with the parents of one patient and pressured them to switch to a less-expensive pharmacy, Caremark. Wellmark's pharmacy director had emailed the investigator, writing, "if you can get them to move to Caremark willingly I would definitely owe you lunch!!"

Survivors of Southern storms thankful to see Christmas

PHILLIP LUCAS, Associated Press

ERIK SCHELZIG, Associated Press

FALKNER, Miss. (AP) — Barbara Perkins and her husband were hunkered down inside a closet when violent winds peeled the roof off their Mississippi home. The storm sucked the central air conditioning unit beside the couple straight up from the floor and into the howling sky.

As the couple surveyed the damage Thursday, broken glass and mud covered most of their home's interior. Many of their belongings had been thrown hundreds of feet away into the woods. A visiting insurance agent told them the house was a total loss.

Newly homeless, Perkins said she was happy just to be alive — especially after learning two of her neighbors had died in the storm.

"You kind of stop and realize what Christmas is all about," Perkins said.

The unseasonably violent weather that spawned deadly tornadoes Wednesday in the Southeast forced families to spend Christmas Eve taking stock of their losses. At least 14 people were confirmed dead — seven of them in Mississippi, including a 7-year-old boy who perished while riding in a car that was swept up and tossed by storm winds.

Six people were killed in Tennessee and one in Arkansas. Dozens of homes were damaged or destroyed.

Unseasonably warm weather Wednesday helped spawn twisters from Arkansas to Michigan. The line of springlike storms continued marching east Thursday, dumping torrential rain that flooded roads in Alabama and caused a mudslide in the mountains of Georgia.

In Linden, Tennessee, Tony Goodwin ducked into a storm shelter with seven others as the storm passed. He emerged to find his house had been knocked off its foundation and down the hill.

He managed to climb inside and fetch some Christmas gifts that had been under his tree. Goodwin's

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 15 of 17

neighbors weren't so fortunate. Two people in one home were killed.

"It makes you thankful to be alive with your family," he said.

Dozens of people were injured in the storms, some seriously, said Greg Flynn, spokesman for the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency.

Search teams combed damaged homes and businesses for people still missing, a hunt made complicated because so many had left for the holidays.

"Until they know for sure where those folks are, they're going to keep looking, because we've had in some cases houses leveled, and they're just not there anymore," Flynn said.

In Benton County, Mississippi, relatives helped Daisy and Charles Johnson clean up after the storm flattened their house. They carried some of the couple's belongings past a Santa Clause figure on a table.

Daisy Johnson, 68, said she and her husband rushed along with other relatives to their storm shelter across the street after they heard a tornado was headed their way.

"We looked straight west of us, and there it was. It was yellow and it was roaring, lightning just continually, and it was making a terrible noise," she said. "I never want to hear that again for as long as I live."

Mona Ables, 43, was driving home when the storm hit. She abandoned her car, ran to a house and banged on a window, seeking shelter.

The startled man inside couldn't open the door, which appeared to be blocked, Ables said. She huddled next to the house as another stranger pulled up, also looking for shelter.

"He and I just huddled together and saw trees fly past us, and a shipping container flip over," Ables said. "And as the debris started hitting us, he just covered me, and within a minute it was all over and there was destruction all around us and we were fine."

Peak tornado season in the South is in the spring, but such storms can happen at any time. Exactly a year ago, tornadoes hit Mississippi, killing five people and injuring dozens.

Glenda Hunt, 69, was cooking chicken and making dressing Wednesday night at her Benton County home, where Christmas Eve lunch is a family tradition, when her daughter called to warn her of the approaching storm.

Hunt and her husband ducked into their storm shelter and wrestled the door shut against the wind's powerful suction. She started praying when she heard sheet metal hitting trees.

On Thursday, heavy farm equipment and corn were strewn across the couple's property. Their house sustained heavy structural damage but was still standing.

"We're OK and that's all that matters," Hunt said. "But the Lord did save my furniture."

Schelzig reported from Linden, Tennessee. Associated Press writers Josh Replogle in Miami; Jeff Martin in Atlanta; Claudia Lauer in Little Rock, Arkansas; and Jay Reeves in Birmingham, Alabama, contributed to this report.

Israeli-Palestinian violence clouds Christmas in Bethlehem

DANIELLA CHESLOW, Associated Press

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AP) — Christian faithful from around the world on Thursday descended on the biblical city of Bethlehem for Christmas Eve celebrations at the traditional birthplace of Jesus, trying to lift spirits on a holiday dampened by months of Israeli-Palestinian violence.

The fighting cast a pall over the celebrations. Crowds were thin and hotel rooms were empty. While the annual festivities in Bethlehem's Manger Square went on, other celebrations in the city were canceled or toned down.

"There's lights, there's carols, but there's an underlying sense of tension," said Paul Haines of Cornwall, England, who arrived in Bethlehem following a four-month trek from Rome.

Bethlehem has been a focal point for clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinian protesters during a three-month wave of violence that has gripped the region.

The city was quiet on Thursday, although violence raged elsewhere in the West Bank. Israeli authorities

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 16 of 17

said three Palestinian assailants were killed as they carried out or tried to carry out stabbing or car-ramming attacks against Israeli security personnel, and a fourth Palestinian was killed in clashes with Israeli troops, a Palestinian hospital official said. Two Israeli security guards and a soldier were wounded.

Lisette Rossman, a 22-year-old student from Albuquerque, New Mexico, said the violence made her think twice about visiting a friend studying in Jerusalem. She said she was glad she made the trip because "it was one of my dreams to come here."

Since mid-September, Palestinian attacks, mostly stabbings and shootings, have killed 20 Israelis, while Israeli fire has killed 124 Palestinians, among them 85 said by Israel to be attackers. The rest were killed in clashes with Israeli forces. Israel accuses Palestinian leaders of inciting the violence. The Palestinians say it is the result of nearly 50 years of military occupation.

In Manger Square, local activists placed an olive tree they said was uprooted by the Israeli army in a nearby village, and surrounded it with barbed wire and decorated it with spent tear gas canisters fired by Israeli troops and photographs of Palestinians killed or arrested in recent violence.

"We're in Bethlehem celebrating Christmas, celebrating the birthday of our lord Jesus Christ. This is the birthplace of the king of peace, so what we want is peace," said Rula Maayah, the Palestinian tourism minister.

In the evening, several thousand people crowded into Manger Square, admiring the town's glittering Christmas tree and listening to holiday music played by marching bands and scout troops. Palestinian vendors hawked coffee, tea and Santa hats. Young children sold sticks of gum.

But at 9 p.m., traditionally a bustling time of the evening, there were few tourists to drink local wine sold on the square or to eat freshly fried falafel.

As the festivities got underway, Miral Siriani, a 35-year-old publicist from Jerusalem, said she was relieved to get a break from three months of tension that has included numerous attacks in her city.

"I feel safe in Bethlehem," she said.

In recent years, Bethlehem had enjoyed a relative calm and thousands of revelers and pilgrims poured into Manger Square each Christmas. But vendors and hotel owners complained of sagging business this Christmas season.

Xavier Abu Eid, a Palestinian official, said hotel bookings were down 25 percent from last year, which itself was weak following a war between Israel and Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip several months earlier.

Some Palestinians hoped holiday cheer would replace the gloom. Said Nustas, dressed in a Santa Claus suit, rang a Christmas bell on a narrow asphalt street as he prepared to deliver gifts from a toy store to children nearby.

"The situation is what it is, a war and intifada," Nustas said. "But God willing, we'll overcome it and celebrate."

Latin Patriarch Fouad Twal led a procession from his Jerusalem headquarters into Bethlehem, passing through a military checkpoint and past Israel's concrete separation barrier, which surrounds much of the town.

Israel built the barrier a decade ago to stop a wave of suicide bombings. Palestinians say the structure has stifled Bethlehem's economy.

In Bethlehem, Twal wished "peace and love" for all.

Twal led worshippers in a Midnight Mass at the Church of the Nativity, built atop the spot where Christians believe Jesus was born.

In his homily, Twal expressed sympathy for the plight of Palestinians, Syrian refugees and "victims of all forms of terrorism everywhere," according to a transcript issued by his office. He wished "all inhabitants of the Holy Land" a happy and healthy new year.

"We pray to change the face of the world, that our world be a safe dwelling place and refuge, where justice prevails over rivalry and conflict, mercy over vengeance, charity over hatred," he said.

Lunch lady who says free meal led to firing offered job back

POCATELLO, Idaho (AP) — A southeastern Idaho cafeteria worker said she was fired for giving a student

Groton Daily Independent

Friday, Dec. 25, 2015 ♦ Vol. 20 - No. 154 ♦ 17 of 17

a free meal costing \$1.70, but the school district offered her the job back after a national outcry.

Dalene Bowden received a termination letter from the Pocatello School District last week after she gave a tray of food to a 12-year-old student who said she didn't have money for the meal.

The letter cited theft as the reason for her dismissal. Bowden says a supervisor placed her on leave after witnessing what she had done.

"I truly loved my job, and I can't say that I wouldn't do it again," Bowden told news station KPVI-TV in Pocatello (<http://bit.ly/1YEBefw>).

The district said in a statement Wednesday night that it doesn't fire workers for single events but offered Bowden her job back in the spirit of the holidays. It's not clear if she will return.

The district said it works with various programs to help children who are hungry, need medical care or who are homeless. It noted that the schools could lose federal money if accounting irregularities show up with missing meals.

"The District jeopardizes its funding for the Federal Food Service Program if its employees do not follow the proper procedures and requirements," the statement said.

Superintendent Doug Howell has been in contact with Bowden and offered her the chance to return to work, the district's statement said.

Bowden, who did not return multiple attempts for comment from The Associated Press, said she has worked for the school for three years.

In 2013, Bowden was convicted of two theft charges after police found surveillance footage showing her taking money from her employer's cash register and putting it into her tip jar at a Pocatello golf course.

Bowden was ordered to pay \$370 in restitution, according to court documents.

Meanwhile, the city of Pocatello has received so many messages of outrage that it released a statement Wednesday noting that the city and school district are separate entities and no elected officials were involved in the district's decisions about Bowden.

"Mayor (Brian) Blad and the City feel this is an extremely unfortunate situation," the statement said.

No holiday signs at intersection in little town of Bethlehem

BETHLEHEM, N.Y. (AP) — Holiday signs have been banned at an intersection in the little town of Bethlehem, New York.

Officials in the suburban town just south of Albany prohibited a sign saying "Merry Christmas" from being placed at the busy intersection. They had a "Happy Hanukkah" sign removed from the same corner.

The Times Union of Albany reports (<http://bit.ly/1Se4oHI>) the town allowed a public display of a Christmas tree and a Menorah, but officials banned religious holiday signs so they wouldn't violate any laws or distract drivers.

About 10 people holding "Merry Christmas" and "Little Town of Bethlehem" signs turned out Wednesday night at the intersection to protest the town board's decision.

The upstate town named after the birthplace of Jesus Christ has a population of about 33,000.