

Groton Daily Independent

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Monday, Oct. 17

School Breakfast: Egg wrap, fruit, juice, milk.
School Lunch: Chicken Nuggets, sweet potato tots, romaine salad, fruit.
Senior Menu: Chicken tetrazzine, green beans, honey fruit salad, vanilla pudding, whole wheat bread.
6;30 am: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study
3:30 p.m.: Fifth Grade Band Introduction
6 p.m.: VB hosts Florence Henry with JV at 6 p.m. followed by the varsity match.
7 p.m.: JH Choral Festival in Britton
7 p.m. City Council Meeting
7:30 pm: St. John's Christian Literature Circle

Tuesday, Oct. 18

School Breakfast: Pancake on stick, fruit, juice, milk.
School Lunch: Chili, corn bread, carrots and dip, fruit.
Senior Menu: Beef strofnaoff noodles, mixed vegetables, Angel Food Cake with strawberries, whole wheat bread.
5:15 p.m.L VB at Northwestern (7th and C at 5:15, 8th and JV at 6:30, Varsity to follow)

Wednesday, Oct. 19

School Breakfast: Cheese omelettes, fruit, juice, milk.
School Lunch: Garlic cheese bread, mixed vegetable, broccoli and dip, fruit.
Senior Menu: Baked chicken breast, mashed potatoes and gravy, California Blend Vegetables, lemon tart bar, whole wheat bread.
PSAT at Groton Area
12:30 p.m.: Sixth Grade MathCounts at Warner
3:45 pm: St. John's Lutheran Confirmation
6:30 pm: Emmanuel Lutheran League
7 p.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Confirmation

Thursday, Oct. 20

Apts for Rent

1 bedroom and HUGE 2 bedroom, 2 bath apartments available NOW! All utilities included except A/C, 1 bedroom \$504 and HUGE 2 bedroom 2 bath \$674 Please call or text 239-849-7674

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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Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

This weekend, the Minnesota Vikings got some much deserved rest. Generally, teams prefer their bye week to be later in the season, but the Vikings aren't going to complain about the timing of it this year. While they are the only team in the NFL that hasn't lost a game this season, injuries have been mounting. Hopefully the players will take this time off to heal and be ready for the Philadelphia Eagles.

Since the Vikings aren't playing this week, let's take a look around the rest of the NFC North.

Chicago is sitting in the basement of the division with a record of 1-5. Even though quarterback Jay Cutler has missed some time with a thumb injury, the Bears' offense has been moving the ball well, especially through the air. However, the team has been unable to find the endzone and is averaging less than 17 points per game. Head coach John Fox is in his second season, and has seen improvement on the defensive side of the ball. This team is still in rebuilding mode, and is at least a couple years away from challenging the Vikings atop the NFC North.

The Detroit Lions are third in the division with a 3-3 record. Matthew Stafford is having perhaps the best season of his career, which is surprising considering the retirement of his favorite target Calvin Johnson. The Lions have been up and down all season, handing the Eagles their first loss of the season last week but also giving Chicago their only win of the year. The Lions seem to be lacking an identity this year, and will likely be muddling in the middle of the division until they find one.

Green Bay is sitting at second in the NFC North, a half-game above Detroit with a 3-2 record. The Packers were the trendy preseason pick to win the division, but they have had some early season struggles. The team was actually booed at Lambeau Field on Sunday after getting blown out by the Dallas Cowboys. A large part of Green Bay's struggles can be placed on the shoulders of Aaron Rodgers, who is having the worst year of his career. Currently, Pro Football Focus has given Rodgers a grade of 61.1, which ranks him 24th in the league. Betting against the Packers is usually a bad idea, and the team cannot be counted out this early in the season.

Stephanie in Sioux Falls, SD wrote me on Facebook and asked: "If Sam Bradford continues playing at such a high level, will there be a quarterback controversy next offseason?"

This is a great question and unquestionably the thing I get asked the most. In my opinion, the biggest question will be if Teddy Bridgewater comes back fully healed. If he does, the Vikings will give him every chance to win the starting role back. The Vikings are in a great position, because quarterbacks of Bradford's caliber don't come around very often, and he will be a hot commodity throughout the league next offseason. If Teddy comes back healthy, the Vikings will have a bidding war on their hands, with multiple teams selling the farm to acquire Bradford. Cha-ching!

Jon from Moorhead, MN asks: "Will Jake Long be the Vikings' left tackle? How long until he is starting on the offensive line?"

Great question Jon. Jake Long was brought in by Minnesota because of all the injuries on the offensive line. Long was the first overall pick in the 2008 draft, and was at one point considered one of the best left tackles in the league. Injuries derailed his career, but he is only 31 years old and says he feels better than he has in a long time. If Long can become even a shadow of his former self, he will instantly become the best offensive tackle on the team. If I had to put money on it, Long will be starting at left tackle sooner rather than later. Don't be surprised if he's starting as soon as this weekend!

Thanks to Stephanie and Jon, as well as everyone else who submitted questions!

If you have any questions or comments, reach out to me on Facebook: [Facebook.com/SkolJWright](https://www.facebook.com/SkolJWright) or on Twitter: @SkolJWright



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GROTON LIONS CLUB

The Groton Lions Club met last Thursday, with a supper during the business session, led by Dave Pigors, president. Nancy Larsen, secretary, read minutes of the September monthly meeting.

There was no treasurer's report.

Reports were given by Topper Tastad on the Andover threshing show, served two days, and the city sponsored pumpkin fest, by Topper Tastad.

Justin Olson reported on the Jungle Days parade entry. Lee Schinkel told of Peace Poster contest plans. Written reports were read from Michelle Mullenburg on the Punt, Pass and Kick contest on Jungle Day. Seven youth will go on to the regional contest at Castlewood. The club pays for the trophies.

Michelle also sent her written report on the fall rummage sale. The spring rummage sale is set for May 6. Justin played a recording of the Lions ad for the homecoming football game.

October 27 was the date set to clean ditches again.

A monetary donation was made to the Golden Living Center's annual Halloween trick or treating.

Lori Bahr will be the Lions photographer.

Ron and Kathryn Rehfuss presented a plan for a possible Legacy project for the club in the city park.

Karen Babcock was a guest.

DOLLAR GENERAL IS HIRING!

Dollar General is a national discount retailer with over 13,000 stores employing more than 100,000 people. We offer the challenge and growth opportunities you desire. We are seeking energetic & hands-on team players to fill important roles in our stores!

New Store Opening in Groton, SD.

Need all Candidates to apply right away as the store will open in early December:

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Sales Associates

To apply, go to www.dollargeneral.com/careers

- Click on "Store Careers", then click on "Apply Online"
- Click "Search by Location -> Zip Code" to search for positions in Groton, SD 57445
- Log in to apply

Again thank you for your interest in Dollar General.

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South Dakota newspaper readership remains strong

South Dakota newspapers continue as a primary source for news and information for South Dakotans, according to a statewide survey conducted this fall.

"Results of this survey debunk the faulty notion that newspapers are dying," South Dakota Newspaper Association President Jeremy Waltner said. "South Dakotans turn first to newspapers for local news and information."

The telephone survey of 400 adults showed that two-thirds of South Dakotans read the newspaper, both in print and digitally.

"As publisher of the Freeman Courier, I know that residents in our community rely on our newspaper for local news and advertising information," Waltner said. "These survey results reaffirm it to be true in communities all across South Dakota."

Specifically, the survey showed that 64 percent of South Dakotans have read the newspaper in print or digitally during the past 24 hours. Almost 68 percent of South Dakotans have read the newspaper during the past week. The number jumps to 70 percent during the past 30 days.

The survey showed that South Dakotans are reading the newspaper not only in the traditional printed version, but also through their mobile devices and phones and through social media platforms such as Facebook.

More than 20 percent of South Dakota newspaper readers are in the 18-34 age group, also debunking the notion that young adults don't read newspapers.

Nine out of 10 South Dakotans who read newspapers said in the survey that they plan to vote on Nov. 8.

SDNA regularly conducts statewide surveys to measure the trends involving newspaper readership. This latest survey was conducted by Pulse Research of Portland, Ore. Surveys were done in September with South Dakotans in every county in the state. A random sample of both land-line and mobile phone numbers was used.

Pulse Research is one of the nation's largest publication research firms, having completed more than 3,000 surveys for more than 1,800 clients.

SDNA, founded in 1882 and based in Brookings, represents the state's 127 weekly and daily newspapers with total readership of more than 600,000.

Fire Marshal's Office Receives State Farm Grant For Smoke Alarm Program

PIERRE, S.D. – Once again this year, the South Dakota Fire Marshal's office has received a grant from State Farm to help provide smoke alarms to homes that need them.

The \$5,000 State Farm Good Neighbor Citizenship Company Grant helps support the South Dakota Smoke Alarm Grant Program, a statewide cooperative initiative to help provide smoke alarms for homes with high-risk populations. The Fire Marshal's Office works with local fire services and other interested groups to distribute and install alarms in homes that lack them and to replace non-working smoke alarms in other homes.

"This truly is a cooperative program at all levels," says Fire Marshal Paul Merriman. "Thanks to the State Farm grant, we can purchase the smoke alarms and send them to local fire departments who help place them in homes that need them."

Through the Smoke Alarm Grant Program, participating fire departments will receive an initial number of alarms. Fire department personnel will distribute and, if possible, install the alarms in homes that lack them. Since the program started in October of 2014, more than 5,000 smoke detectors have been awarded to almost 100 South Dakota fire departments for distribution.

"Seconds count if a fire breaks out in a home," Merriman says. "About 2,500 people nationwide die each year in home fires. The National Fire Protection Association says nearly two-thirds of home fire deaths in properties occur without working smoke alarms. This program is designed to ensure that more working smoke alarms are placed into more homes."

Alarms were purchased using a portion of the revenue from the Fire Safe Cigarette Fund. The State Farm grant will help make another 530 smoke detectors available. Other funding sources are being sought to help continue the program.

The smoke alarms are 10-year, sealed lithium-ion battery powered detectors that are designed to be tamper resistant.

Safety tips that firefighters and safety officials emphasize with smoke alarms are:

- Install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside each separate sleeping area and on every level of the home, including the basement.
- Test alarms at least monthly by pressing the test button.
- Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old. Do it sooner if the alarms don't respond properly.

For more information about the smoke alarm program, call the State Fire Marshal's Office at (605)773-3562. The State Fire Marshal's Office is part of the South Dakota Department of Public Safety.

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8th Grade Team Awards

Front row from left. Groton, 1st place, Alexis Hanten, Isaac Smith, Erin Unzen, Grace Wambach. Back row from left: Groton, 2nd place, Trey Gengerke, Tanae Lipp, Sage Mortenson, Samantha Pappas

MathCounts teams take first and second at Groton competition

The Groton Area Invitational MathCounts Competition was held on Wednesday, October 5, 2016 in the high school gym.

107 students from eight Aberdeen area schools (Britton-Hecla, Holgate, Northwestern, Roncalli, Selby, Simmons, Warner, and Groton) participated in the event, which was sponsored by 3M of Aberdeen. Groton earned first and second places in the eighth grade team division. Alexis Hanten, Isaac Smith, Erin Unzen, and Grace Wambach were on the first place team. Second place team members were Trey Gengerke, Tanae Lipp, Sage Mortenson, and Samantha Pappas.

Three Groton eighth graders also received recognition in the individual portion of the competition. Isaac Smith placed first, Samantha Pappas placed third, and Trey Gengerke placed fourth.

MathCounts is a nationwide coaching and competition program for middle school students that promotes excellence in mathematics. Area competitions consisting of several types of tests are held monthly.

The next junior high competition will be the Roncalli Invitational MathCounts Competition on Wednesday, November 2.

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Today in Weather History

October 17, 1910: The temperature in Aberdeen warmed to 90 degrees on this day. This reading is the latest day in the calendar year in which the high temperature reached 90 degrees.

October 17, 2011: A strong low-pressure system to the northwest and a strong high-pressure system to the southeast brought stiff southerly winds across central and north central South Dakota from the late morning until the early evening. South winds of 30 to 40 mph with gusts over 60 mph caused spotty damage across the region. The high winds created large waves on Lake Oahe near Pierre which damaged several docks along with some boats at a marina. There were also some tree branches downed across the region along with some damage to a few structures. With the high winds, warm temperatures, and low humidity several grassland fires also broke out across parts of the region. The maximum wind gust of 68 mph occurred in Corson County.

1971: Great balls of fire were observed just ahead of a tornado moving down the main street of Wray, Colorado. However, little other electrical activity accompanied the storm. Nine persons were injured in the storm, all at a trailer court at the edge of town.

1984: A snowstorm struck northern Utah producing a record 18 inches in 24 hours at Salt Lake City, and 40 inches at the nearby Alta Ski Resort. The town of Magna, located ten miles west of Salt Lake City, did not receive any snow at all. The storm was responsible for a fifty-vehicle pile-up along Interstate 15 near Farmington Utah.

1997: Late on October 17, Super Typhoon Ivan attained its peak intensity with winds of 185 mph and an official barometric pressure of 905 mbar. On the same day, while near peak intensity, Typhoon Joan was located about 1300 miles east of Typhoon Ivan.

1998: During the weekend of October 17-18, 1998, torrential rains fell over south and southeast Texas. Up to 22 inches of rain fell which first resulted in deadly flash flooding from San Antonio to Austin followed by record-breaking river floods along several South Texas rivers the following week. Based on

provisional data from the USGS, which is subject to revision, the flood peak for this event was the highest known peak stage at 15 locations. Tragically, a total of 31 people died during the event (26 drownings, two tornado deaths, two heart attacks, and one electrocution/drowning). At least 17 of the drowning victims were in vehicles which were either driven into water or were swept away by rapidly rising water. Preliminary property damage estimates approached three-quarters of a billion dollars.

The Livestream logo features a red and white stylized leaf or flame icon to the left of the word "livestream" in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font.

Upcoming Events

Monday

VB: Florence/Henry

7 p.m.: City Council Meeting

gdilive.com

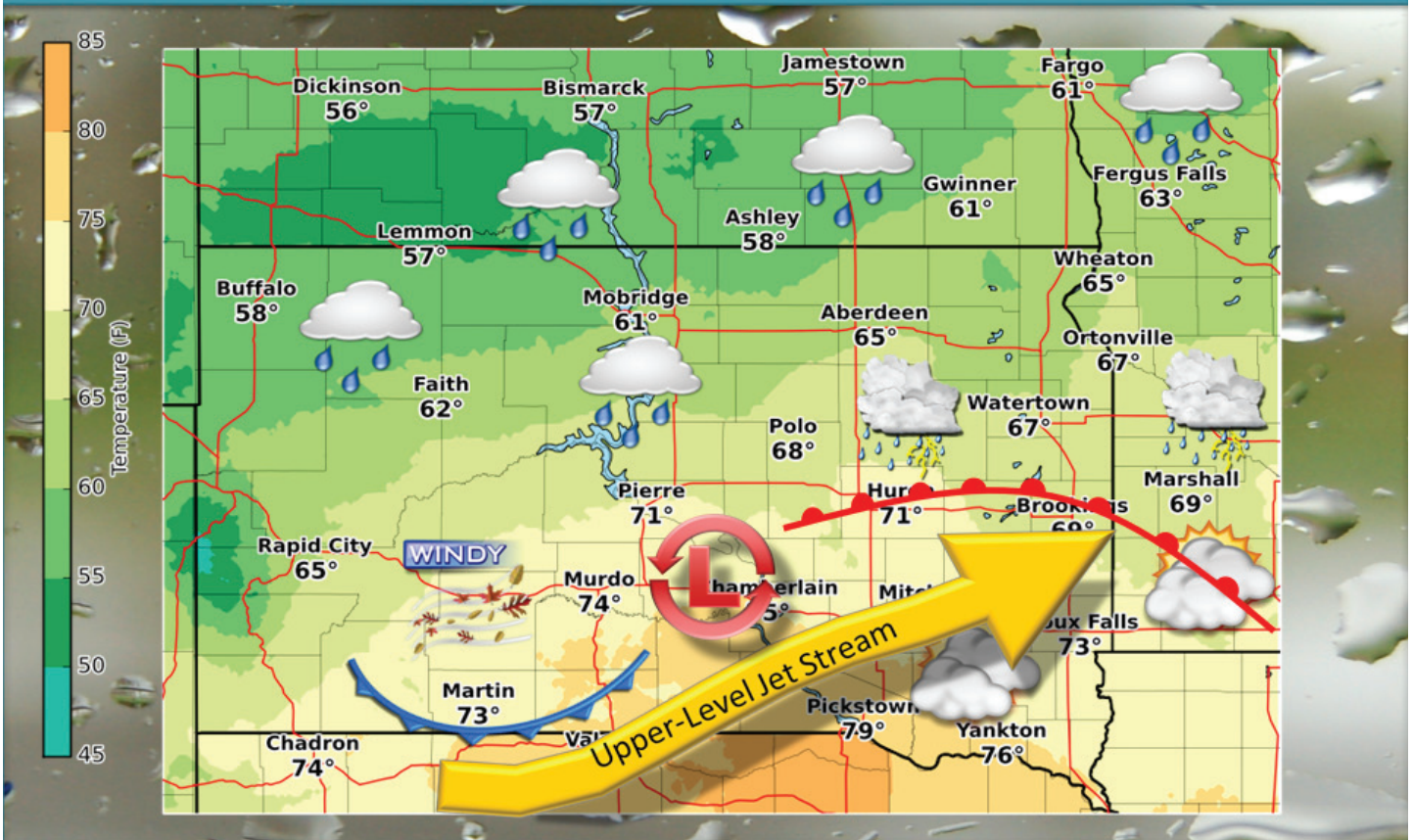
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Today	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
20% → 60%	60%					
Slight Chance Showers then Showers Likely	Showers Likely	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 65 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 62 °F	Low: 35 °F	High: 55 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 55 °F



Cooler Today, Chance of Rain Mainly Over The North



Published on: 10/17/2016 at 5:50AM

A system will move across the region today into this evening. Showers and possibly even a few thunderstorms are expected to develop and move east during the day. The best chance for measurable rain looks to be across the northern half of the state. Gusty winds are also expected to develop on the backside of a surface low this afternoon over southwest and south central South Dakota as it moves east along I-90. Southeast and south central South Dakota may get little to no rain from this system.

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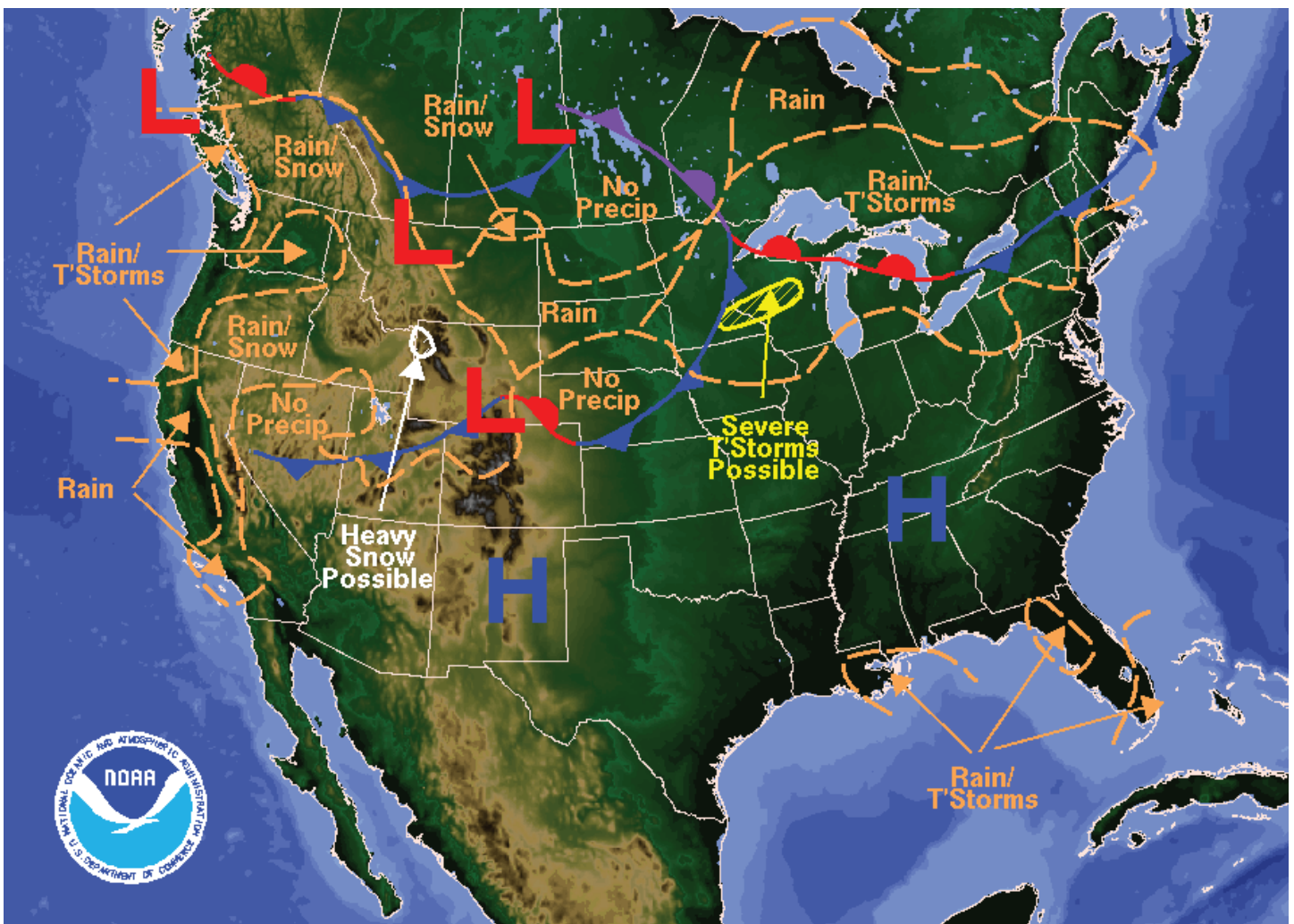
Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 70.1 F at 4:02 PM
Low Outside Temp: 42.2 F at 7:15 AM
High Gust: 40.0 Mph at 1:46 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 90° in 1910
Record Low: 15° in 1976
Average High: 57°F
Average Low: 32°F
Average Precip in Oct.: 1.23
Precip to date in Oct.: 0.63
Average Precip to date: 19.71
Precip Year to Date: 13.83
Sunset Tonight: 6:43 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:54 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Mon, Oct 17, 2016, issued 4:17 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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STANDING OR LYING DOWN?

A Red Cross representative was contacting local churches for planning purposes in the event of a disaster. Answering the phone, the pastor said, "Please, Ma'am, How may I help you?"

"I'm calling on behalf of the Red Cross," she said, "and I would like to know how many people might be able to lie down and sleep in your facilities in the event of a disaster."

Thinking for a moment about what might be possible, he responded with a smile, "I don't know how many might be able to lie down and sleep comfortably in the event of a disaster, but I know that about nine hundred sleep sitting upright every Sunday morning."

Sleeping in church is a byproduct for many tired Sunday morning worshipers. Whether it is a sermon that is not mentally challenging or spiritually stimulating or the result of insufficient sleep or rest is not the point. We go to church to worship God and recognize our need to gather together in His name. It is a period of time when we set aside things that concern us and focus on the greatness of our Creator - His holiness, power and grace and our unworthiness, our need for His strength and our dependence upon Him to meet our every need.

Gathering together for worship is our duty and responsibility and must be done in eagerness and excitement.

Prayer: Lord, may we enter into Your presence with praise and thanksgiving, coming together to honor Your goodness, grace and glory with thanksgiving. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 66:4 All the earth bows down to you; they sing praise to you, they sing praise to your name. Psalm 66:4



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Missing, dead livestock cases investigated in Sioux County

CANNON BALL, N.D. (AP) — The North Dakota Stockmen's Association is offering a reward of up to \$14,000 for information that helps crack cases of missing and dead livestock in Sioux County.

The rancher group says in one instance, three dead bison were found. The other case involves a dead saddle horse, four dead cows and more than 30 missing cattle. Both cases happened near Cannon Ball.

The Stockmen's Association is working with law enforcement on the investigation, and advising ranchers in the area to monitor their herds and report any suspicious activity.

Madison volunteers work to restore 116-year-old carousel

By JANE UTECHT, Madison Daily Leader

MADISON, S.D. (AP) — Years ago, carousels were often made to be taken apart and moved from town to town, like amusement park rides of today.

Instead of moving around, the Art B. Thomas Carousel at Prairie Village has been in one place for 50 years.

This week, however, the steam-powered attraction was taken apart by The Carousel Works company and now is on the move to its Mansfield, Ohio, woodworking shop, the Madison Daily Leader reported (<http://bit.ly/2e98LmZ>).

Volunteers have long been working to restore the 116-year-old ride, and Cecelia Wittmayer, a member of the Prairie Pasque Questers, is working on grant funding to help offset the cost of the restoration.

When Carousel Works looked at the carousel in 2011, Wittmayer said, they identified some "must repair and restore" items, including the horses and chariots.

"However, the visual inspection that was completed in 2011 couldn't clearly identify the state of the mechanical components of the carousel," she said. "Prior to the start of restoration work...Carousel Works will conduct structural tests on the horses and chariots and will examine all the mechanical components to identify those that should be repaired, restored or replaced."

Work is likely to begin in late winter or early spring, she added.

Arrangements had been made with Carousel Works to come and get the carousel around the first of the year.

However, the crew was available to drive to Madison this month to pick up the carousel. They also indicated that dismantling and loading is much easier now than in the winter, Wittmayer added.

When the Carousel Works team came to Madison on Monday, Village Manager Faron Wahl was surprised with the efficiency of the crew.

The hand-carved wooden horses were taken down in about an hour. The shell covering the attraction was almost empty by the end of the day Monday.

Dan Jones, co-owner of Carousel Works, said the rides were usually pretty easy to take apart, "like a big erector set."

The more portable ones had 12 sections, he said. They could be set up in half a day and taken down in less than that.

Prairie Village's unit has 16 sections, so he wasn't sure if it was made to be moved.

"This is big for a portable."

But at the turn of the 20th Century, Jones said, each company had different ways of making them.

"This one's unique because of the way it's built," he said, using a cable to turn the carousel and running on steam.

It is also unique because the 1900 carousel is listed as one of the 10 oldest carousels in the country, according to a USA Today article from March 2016. It is under consideration by the State Historical Society to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Carousel Works started in Connecticut in 1986. Jones was then working in the home improvement business, but he was looking to make a change. By chance he met a woodworker, and they started the carousel company. They have made about 15 complete sets over the last 30 years and numerous parts for other carousels.

Information from: The Madison Daily Leader, <http://www.madisondailyleader.com>

Middle school students find their own method of typing

By Megan Raposa, Argus Leader

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The only sound coming from Kasey Kuiken's third grade classroom on an average weekday morning is that of keys clicking as her students practice typing.

Sioux Falls and metro area schools in recent years have shifted formal keyboarding instruction from middle school to elementary. That shift also brought a change in the definition of "formal keyboarding."

Teachers like Kuiken aren't as focused on ensuring students type the "W" with their ring finger and the "P" with their pinky. They want students to be efficient at typing, but, much like holding a pencil, not every student is going to use the same method.

"They need to do what works best for them," Kuiken said.

Learning typing earlier frees up time for middle school students to focus less on hitting the right keys and more on digital literacy and what it means to be a "digital citizen," said Sioux Falls Superintendent Brian Maher.

Students in Sioux Falls learned keyboarding in sixth grade until a switch to third grade in 2012. Area schools including Brandon Valley, Harrisburg and West Central also now start keyboarding in elementary school, some as early as second grade, the Argus Leader reported (<http://argusne.ws/2etG9c6>).

Students, especially third graders, in the past struggled with South Dakota's standardized Smarter Balanced test questions that required a typed response, according to a May 2014 report presented to board members.

School board members revisited keyboarding last week, and they agreed to continue monitoring keyboarding skills as students enter middle school. Sandy Henry, middle school curriculum coordinator, said as long as students can produce content by typing, middle school teachers aren't going to take the time to teach keyboarding.

"We don't have time to do typing," Henry said. "The rote learning, we need to be past that in middle school."

Instead, students spend about 15 to 20 minutes per day working on keyboarding apps in their classrooms, Kuiken said. Her students learn through a website called typingclub.com.

Parent Kara Weber was surprised to learn that students no longer learn keyboarding in middle school.

Weber worries that the method of teaching through apps and the lack of emphasis on hitting the right keys with the right fingers will hurt her son, Ethan Weber, a fourth-grade student who has dyslexia.

Weber plans to teach Ethan, a student at the Robert Frost Challenge Center, keyboarding at home.

"The amount of time they're going to be getting at school is not going to be enough to give him what he's going to need to express himself in the future," Weber said.

District administrators say middle school students are actually getting better at typing. Henry said sixth-graders averaged 23 words-per-minute in a typing test last spring, faster than the 15 words-per-minute in the district's former technology standards. Words-per-minute are no longer included in the standards, Weber said.

"I don't think our kids are being held back by a lack of typing skills," Maher said.

And those typing skills may look different, depending on the student.

"There is so much computer and technology use outside the school day," said Brandon Valley Superintendent Jarod Larson. "That they're naturally finding a way to peck on their own."

Information from: Argus Leader, <http://www.argusleader.com>

The Latest: Erdogan: Turkey can't be barred from Mosul fight

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — The Latest developments in Iraq's operation to retake the northern city of Mosul from the Islamic State group (all times local):

2:20 p.m.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey is determined to be part of the operation to free Mosul from the Islamic State group, as well as in possible talks on the city's future.

Erdogan reiterated Turkey's concerns that the operation, which started early on Monday, could lead to sectarian clashes and maintained that efforts in Iraq to keep Turkey away from the Mosul offensive were linked to Ankara's efforts to prevent any possible demographic change in the region.

Turkey has been warnings about possible sectarian clashes in Mosul if the majority Sunni region were placed under Shiite militia control.

Erdogan says that once Mosul is liberated, Turkey cannot allow "a Sunni-Shiite strife" in the city. He insisted Turkey "will be in the (Mosul) operation and we will be at the table. It is not possible for us to stay outside."

Meanwhile, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus says Foreign Ministry's Undersecretary Umit Yalcin was on his way to Baghdad to discuss the Turkish troops presence at the Bashiqa camp north of Baghdad as well as the Mosul operation.

In other updates, Iraqi officials say the casualty toll from a suicide car bombing a security checkpoint in the town Youssifiyah, just south of Baghdad, has risen to 12 killed and more than 30 wounded.

1:45 p.m.

Turkey's deputy prime minister says some 3,000 Turkish-trained Iraqi fighters are taking part in the operation to wrest the northern Iraqi city of Mosul from the Islamic State group.

Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus also told reporters on Monday that Turkey has no intention of withdrawing its troops from a base in northern Iraq, where they have been training Iraqi forces to fight the IS.

He says that so far, nearly 4,000 Mosul fighters, including Arabs, Turkmens, Kurds, and a number of Yazidis, have been trained in this training camp" in Bashiqa, near Mosul.

Kurtulmus says that "about 3,000 of them have joined the Mosul operation" with the Kurdish Peshmerga forces.

The Turkish troop presence in the region of Bashiqa, northeast of Mosul has stirred tension with Baghdad. Iraq says they are in "blatant violation" of Iraqi sovereignty and had demanded their withdrawal. Turkey says the troops were invited by Iraqi forces and has ignored the calls.

12:15 p.m.

Iraqi officials say a suicide bombing has targeted security forces outside Baghdad, killing at least nine people.

A police officer says the attacker drove his explosive-laden car into an Iraqi army checkpoint in the town Youssifiyah, located 20 kilometers (12 miles) south of the Iraqi capital.

He says five civilians and four troops were killed in Monday's explosion and up to 35 people were wounded. A medical official confirmed the casualty figures. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity as they are not authorized to release information.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but it has all the hallmarks of the Islamic State group, which has staged similar attacks in the past. The attack came just hours after the government announced the start of the long-awaited military operation to drive IS militants from the northern city of Mosul.

—Sinan Salaheddin in Baghdad.

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11:35 a.m.

Turkey's state-run news agency says the Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga forces have taken control of seven villages east of the city of Mosul and that they control the main road linking the city with the Iraqi Kurdish regional capital, Irbil, further to the east.

The Anadolu Agency report is quoting Helgurt Hikmet, a press officer in Irbil, as saying the seven villages that were taken from Islamic State control are: Tercele, Basahra, Little Bedene, Great Bedene, Kebervi, Baskelan and Sheikh Emir.

The agency also says two would-be Islamic State suicide bombers were "neutralized" during the operations on Monday morning but did not provide details.

A very small number of Turkish troops deployed for over a year in Iraqi territory at a base north of Mosul have caused a recent spike in tensions between Iraq and Turkey. Baghdad says they are violating Iraq's sovereignty and has demanded they leave the country, a call Ankara has ignored.

It's still unclear what role, if any, the Turkish troops will take in the Mosul operation, which began on Monday morning. So far, the Turkish forces have been training anti-IS fighters there.

10:20 a.m.

Iraq's special forces say the Iraqi Kurdish troops, known as the peshmerga, are leading the first push on Mosul's eastern front toward the city held by the Islamic State group.

Lt. Col. Ali Hussein says his men are also anxious to move out to the front line as soon as possible but that he expects they will wait near the town of Khazer for another day or two. He spoke just hours after the long-awaited battle for Mosul began on Monday morning.

According to Hussein, an earlier political deal between the country's Kurdish region and the central government in Baghdad has agreed that Kurdish forces would advance first and bring a cluster of villages — the home of Christian, Shabak and other minority groups — under their regional control.

Saud Masoud, also with the special forces, says that after the Kurdish troops "take the area that they want," the special forces will then move to the new front and continue the push into Mosul.

9:50 a.m.

A senior U.N. official says he's "extremely concerned" for the safety of civilians in Mosul in the fight to retake the Iraqi city from Islamic State fighters.

Stephen O'Brien, the under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said in a statement that "depending on the intensity and scope of the fighting, as many as 1 million people may be forced to flee their homes in a worst-case scenario."

He says that families are at "extreme risk" of being caught in crossfire, tens of thousands may end up besieged or held as human shields and thousands could be forcibly expelled.

O'Brien urged all sides "to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law to protect civilians and ensure they have access to the assistance they are entitled to and deserve."

9:15 a.m.

Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend, commander of Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve, says the U.S.-led coalition is providing wide support for the Iraqi and Kurdish forces in the battle for Mosul.

But he stressed, "to be clear, the thousands of ground combat forces who will liberate Mosul are all Iraqis."

Townsend's statement came shortly after Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced the start of operations on Monday to liberate the northern city of Mosul from Islamic State militants.

The U.S. commander pledged the coalition will continue to use "precision to accurately attack the enemy and to minimize any impact on innocent civilians."

He says: "This may prove to be a long and tough battle, but the Iraqis have prepared for it and we will stand by them."

8:20 a.m.

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Iraq's military and the country's Kurdish forces are on the move to the south and east of the Islamic State group-held city of Mosul.

The early Monday morning development follows Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi's announcement that the long-awaited fight to retake Mosul has begun.

Convoys of Iraqi, Kurdish and U.S. forces could be seen moving east of Mosul into the early hours of Monday. Along the front line, U.S.-led coalition airstrikes sent plumes of smokes into the air and heavy artillery rounds could be heard.

Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, has been under IS rule for more than two years and still home to more than a million civilians according to estimates from the United Nations. The fight is expected to be the most complex yet for Iraq's military.

2 a.m.

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has announced the start of operations to liberate the northern city of Mosul from Islamic State militants.

State TV showed a brief written statement in the early hours on Monday announcing the start of the widely anticipated military offensive to drive IS out of Iraq's second largest city.

The push to retake Mosul will be the biggest military operation in Iraq since American troops left in 2011 and, if successful, the strongest blow yet to the Islamic State group, known also by its Arabic language acronym, Daesh.

Broadcasts showed the prime minister, dressed in the uniform of the elite counterterrorism forces, speaking while flanked by senior military officers.

Al-Abadi addressed the people of Mosul, saying that "these forces that are liberating you today, they have one goal in Mosul, which is to get rid of Daesh and to secure your dignity. They are there for your sake."

Emails show Clinton's response to LGBT backlash

By **JOSH LEDERMAN** and **KEN THOMAS**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hacked emails released in daily dispatches over the weekend by the WikiLeaks group showed Hillary Clinton's campaign staff worried about a response to the gay community's backlash over a comment concerning former first lady Nancy Reagan and AIDS. Also among the documents are transcripts of Clinton speeches and question-and-answer sessions that Goldman Sachs hosted in 2013, appearances for which she received hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The documents were among thousands of emails hacked from the accounts of Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta.

U.S. intelligence officials have blamed the Russian government for a series of breaches intended to influence the presidential election. The Russians deny involvement.

Among the revelations from Podesta's hacked emails:

RESPONSE TO BACKLASH FOR PRAISING NANCY REAGAN ON AIDS

Hillary Clinton's aides fretted over how to respond to backlash from the LGBT community after Clinton lauded Nancy Reagan for starting a "national conversation" about AIDS in the 1980s, emails released Sunday show.

Activists blame President Ronald Reagan for what they view as a devastatingly slow response to the AIDS crisis.

Clinton immediately tweeted an apology after her initial remarks last March. But her aides felt the LGBT community was unsatisfied and agreed to release a more detailed response.

"I don't want this to fester," wrote Clinton's campaign's LGBT outreach director, Dominic Lowell.

An initial draft of Clinton's statement began by stating: "I made a mistake." The line was changed to "I said something inaccurate" with the phrase "I made a mistake, plain and simple" added later.

WALL STREET SPEECHES

Hillary Clinton generally avoided direct criticism of Wall Street as she examined the causes and responses

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to the financial meltdown during a series of paid speeches to Goldman Sachs, according to transcripts disclosed by WikiLeaks.

Three transcripts released Saturday did not contain any new bombshells showing she was unduly influenced by contributions from the banking industry, as her primary rival Bernie Sanders had suggested. Still, her soft-handed approach in the speeches was likely to act as a reminder to liberals in the party of their concerns that the Democratic presidential nominee is too close to Wall Street to be an effective check on its excesses if elected.

Clinton's campaign neither confirmed nor denied that the speech transcripts and leaked Podesta emails are authentic, but there have been no indications that they were doctored before being released.

APOLYGY TOUR

Clinton told the "Builders and Innovators Summit" she'd had to go on "The Clinton Apology Tour" after WikiLeaks in 2010 published diplomatic cables leaked by Chelsea Manning, formerly known as Bradley Manning. Clinton noted that the cables showed U.S. officials characterizing some foreign leaders as "vain, egotistical, power hungry, corrupt. And we knew they were. This was not fiction."

"I had grown men cry," Clinton recalled. "I mean, literally. 'I am a friend of America, and you say these things about me?'"

SYRIA

Clinton, a few months after departing the State Department in 2013, told a Goldman Sachs conference in South Carolina that she would have liked to see the U.S. intervene in Syria "as covertly as is possible for Americans to intervene."

She added, "We used to be much better at this than we are now. Now, you know, everybody can't help themselves. They have to go out and tell their friendly reporters and somebody else: Look what we're doing and I want credit for it."

FILIBUSTER

Clinton appears to call for eliminating the filibuster rules in the Senate that make a 60-vote threshold necessary to pass most items rather than a 50-vote majority. Clinton says "we need to change the rules in the Senate" and says presidential nominees as well as "policies" deserve "an up-or-down vote."

Republicans are already incensed that Senate Democrats recently changed the rules to eliminate the filibuster for most nominations, an extraordinary step known as the nuclear option.

CHINA

In the June 2013 speech, Clinton said Chinese President Xi Jinping, who had taken over as the country's leader the previous fall, was "a more sophisticated, more effective public leader" than his predecessor, Hu Jintao. Clinton said she had watched Xi "work a room," adding, "you can have him make small talk with you, which he has done with me." She said Xi's experience of visiting Iowa in the 1980s "was a very important part of his own development."

Associated Press writer Jack Gillum contributed to this report. Thomas reported from White Plains, New York.

High school graduation rate reaches new high

By KEVIN FREKING, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — High school graduation rates have reached a record high of 83.2 percent, continuing a steady increase that shows improvement across all ethnic groups, the White House said Monday.

President Barack Obama planned to talk about the gains when he visits a Washington, D.C. high school on Monday morning.

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Increases in the graduation rate for the 2014-2015 school year were seen for all ethnic groups, as well as for disabled students and students from low-income families.

Still, there were significant differences among groups. Asian Americans had a 90.2 percent graduation rate, while whites were at 87.6 percent, followed by Hispanics at 77.8 percent, African-Americans at 74.6 percent and Native Americans at 71.6 percent.

The growth in graduation rates has been steady since states adopted a uniform way of tracking students. In 2008, the Bush administration ordered states to begin using a formula that is considered a more accurate count of how many actually finish school.

The White House said that the graduation rate has increased by about 4 percent points since the 2010-2011 school year. Obama frequently cites the increase when he talks to groups about progress made during his presidency.

The White House said that money invested through a grant program called Race to the Top has helped improve some of the nation's lowest-performing schools. The administration also said millions of students have gained access to high-speed broadband in their classrooms and that the states and federal government have helped hundreds of thousands more children gain access to preschool education programs.

The White House said that the District of Columbia made the most progress in 2014-2015 compared to the previous year. The District improved its graduation rate by 7 percentage points.

10 Things to Know for Today

By The Associated Press

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

1. IRAQI FORCES LAUNCH MILITARY PUSH IN MOSUL

The offensive to retake Iraq's second largest city from Islamic State militants, backed by the U.S.-led coalition, is the toughest battle since American troops left nearly five years ago.

2. 'THERE'S A CLOUD OVER MAR-A-LAGO'

Charity consultants and event fundraisers say they expect the Palm Beach, Florida, venue owned by Trump will be a harder sell to charities in future years, AP finds.

3. GRIEF AFTER MONARCH'S DEATH SPILLS INTO ANGER

A Thai woman accused of insulting King Bhumibol Adulyadej is forced to kneel before his portrait as several hundred people demand an apology.

4. ETAN PATZ CASE TO BE RETRIED

The disappearance of the first-grader in New York City 37 years ago reshaped American parenting and the pursuit of missing children.

5. SENATE CONFIRMATION OF OBAMA'S NOMINEES SLOW

More than 90 vacancies in the federal courts make it difficult for Americans to seek legal recourse, and legal experts warn of judicial emergencies.

6. WHAT MAY BE A BOON TO MYANMAR'S ECONOMY

The end of most U.S. sanctions is raising hopes western businesses will invest in a country that up to now has been dominated by Asian countries.

7. CHINA LAUNCHES MISSION TO EXPERIMENTAL SPACE STATION

Two astronauts will remain aboard for a month in preparation for the start of operations by a full-bore facility six years from now.

8. HOW TO GET BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF PYONGYANG

For about \$150, you can take a 25-minute, mile-high flight aboard an ultralight aircraft to see what was only available by a 492-foot tower a few months ago.

9. A HALLOWEEN TREAT

Dracula's castle will have overnight guests on the spooky holiday, marking the first time since 1948 that anyone has slept in the Transylvanian fortress.

10. DODGERS EVEN NLCS WITH CUBS

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Clayton Kershaw pitches seven sparkling innings, Adrian Gonzalez homers and Los Angeles beat Chicago 1-0.

Grief after Thai king's death spills into anger

By **STEPHEN WRIGHT** and **NATNICA CHUWIRUCH**, Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A Thai woman accused of insulting the country's late king was forced to kneel before his portrait at a police station on the tourist island of Samui as several hundred people bayed for an apology.

The woman's arrest and public shaming on Sunday was the latest of several such incidents since King Bhumibol Adulyadej died last week after a reign of 70 years, plunging Thailand into intense mourning.

Two police officers led 43-year-old Umaporn Sarasat to a picture of Bhumibol in front of Bophut police station, where she knelt and prayed, both on the way into the station and the way out.

The crowd, some of whom held aloft portraits of the revered monarch, jeered when she first appeared. A line of police officers linked arms to keep them from surging forward.

It is likely that Sarasat, a small business owner who is alleged to have posted disrespectful comments online, will face charges of insulting the monarchy.

"We are going to proceed with the case as best we can," district police chief Thewes Pleumsud told the crowd. "I understand your feelings. You came here out of loyalty to his majesty. Don't worry, I give you my word."

Authorities are also urging calm as social media throbs with criticism of people who aren't wearing black and white clothing to mourn the revered monarch and some arch-royalists take to reprimanding people in public.

A government spokesman said some Thais can't afford mourning clothes and stressed the need for tolerance. High-profile figures such as Bhumibol's eldest child, Princess Ubolratana, and a daughter of Thaksin Shinawatra, a former prime minister who lives in exile after being ousted in a 2006 coup, used social media to urge Thais not to rush to judgment.

There have been reports of price gouging as demand for such clothing has surged since Bhumibol's death on Thursday.

Tens of thousands of Thais have descended on the Grand Palace in Bangkok where Bhumibol's body is being kept, and a year of mourning has been declared by the government.

Several foreign governments have warned citizens traveling in Thailand to avoid behavior that could be interpreted as festive, disrespectful or disorderly.

On Friday, police and soldiers on the Thai resort island of Phuket dispersed a mob of several hundred people seeking a confrontation with a man they believed insulted the king.

A video showed the crowd blocking the road outside a soy milk shop and waving placards with slurs such as "buffalo," a slang word for stupidity. Some shouted for the man to come out.

Thailand has a draconian lese majeste law that imposes stiff prison sentences for actions or writings regarded as derogatory toward the monarch or his family.

The operator of Thailand's main cable TV network has blocked foreign news broadcasts deemed insensitive to the monarchy since Bhumibol's death.

Separately, Bhumibol's second daughter, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, appeared Monday at her first public event since the king's death. She was named a special ambassador for "Zero Hunger" for the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization to mark World Food Day. Although all official events have been canceled, the fact that Sirindhorn attended showed the importance she attached to the cause.

Sirindhorn's acceptance of the role "will greatly improve awareness of both policymakers and the public of what, collectively, we must do to achieve a world without hunger," said Kundhavi Kadiresan, the FAO's regional representative for Asia and the Pacific.

FAO estimates there are nearly 800 million undernourished people in the world. The Asia-Pacific region is home to most, with 490 million not receiving enough calories to live healthy lives.

Trump controversies cast shadow on Mar-a-Lago charity galas

By **JEFF HORWITZ, BERNARD CONDON and MAE ANDERSON, Associated Press**

WASHINGTON (AP) — A staple of Palm Beach's high-end philanthropy circuit, the Mar-a-Lago Club boasts rich history, an 800-seat ballroom and ocean views. But some major charities and fundraisers are now concerned with a different feature: the property's owner, Donald Trump.

Following the leak of Trump boasting about grabbing women by their genitals and allegations that he inappropriately touched women — in two instances at Mar-a-Lago — the Susan G. Komen Foundation is leaning toward finding a new location for its January 14 Perfect Pink Party, a million-dollar breast cancer fundraiser it booked a year ago.

The charity has no position on Trump, the GOP presidential nominee, but wants to keep its event separate from "controversies unrelated to our mission," said Andrea Rader, a spokeswoman for the organization. The group won't make a final decision about whether to abandon its deposit until after October, which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

But, Rader said, "those are things that have to be discussed."

Event planners who spoke with the AP forecast trouble ahead for the high-end party space.

"There's a cloud over Mar-a-Lago," said Lynne Goldberg of Boca Entertainment Inc., a party planner who has overseen numerous weddings and fundraisers at the venue, including a 2014 gala for the March of Dimes. She stressed her opinion had nothing to do with politics.

"The sad part is that the venue is so beautiful -- it's considered the ultimate to hold an event in. What we want to do as event planners is to make everyone happy. The last thing you want is for someone to say, oh my God, how could she hold an event there?" she said.

Margaret Holman, who runs the fundraising consulting firm Holman Consulting, said charities would have to focus on the fact that they had already signed contracts with Mar-a-Lago and put down deposits. But behind the scenes, she said: "People are going to take this to the full board and let them air their full concerns. Charities who have already engaged are between a rock and a hard place."

Those large, nonrefundable deposits may minimize any rush for the exits this year.

The Palm Beach Habilitation Center, which serves the disabled community, said it won't break its contract for a February 20 fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago — but president Tina Philips said the party's organizers would be mindful of Trump's controversies going forward.

"I can assure you that will be a big consideration when we discuss it next year," Philips said.

The Cleveland Clinic and the Dana Farber Cancer Institute also said they are committed to this year's events.

The Palm Beach Zoo and Conservation Society has held its annual gala for about 500 people at the Mar-a-Lago for several years now, and it's holding its next one there in January.

"All this was set in stone for quite some time," said zoo spokeswoman Naki Carter, adding about the impending party, "It's crunch time."

Longer term, Holman said, charities that continue renting out Mar-a-Lago could rub donors the wrong way.

"I can understand Susan G. Komen wanting to switch out," said Tracey Wiseman, a nonprofit management and fundraising consultant. "If I were the president or CEO, I'd be considering another location where I'd have neutrality. And there is not neutrality in Mar-a-Lago."

Since the beginning of the campaign, what effect Trump's bombastic political style will have on his brand-heavy business interests has been unclear. Macy's, Nascar and NBC cut ties with Trump early after his comments disparaging Mexican immigrants, but Trump has said his brand is hotter than ever.

The Trump Organization referred calls on the subject of Mar-a-Lago events bookings to an outside public relations agency, which declined to comment. Nonprofit skittishness poses a risk to Donald Trump's business interests: a single fundraiser can bring the club more than \$300,000. For large, high-end events in Palm Beach, there isn't much choice. Aside from the Trump resort, only the luxury hotel The Breakers can hold more than 500 people.

Not everyone who spoke to AP was concerned.

"This will be our 17th annual Women of Grace luncheon," said Lisa Kronhaus, spokeswoman for the nonprofit Bethesda Health Inc., which operates hospitals in Florida. She said she had heard no concerns from members to date, and said the controversies around Trump would probably not affect her organization's choice of Mar-a-Lago in the future.

'We hope it will be over': Retrial to open in 1979 Patz case

By JENNIFER PELTZ, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — It took nearly four decades to find and try a suspect in the haunting disappearance of first-grader Etan Patz. The trial itself spanned three months of testimony and 18 days of deliberations before a jury finally deadlocked.

Now it's about to unfold all over again.

Opening statements are expected this week in the retrial of a case that reshaped American parenting and the pursuit of missing children.

Etan, who vanished while heading to his New York City school bus stop in 1979, was among the first missing children whose face was put on milk cartons, and his case prompted many parents to stop letting their children roam their neighborhoods alone.

Prosecutors will have to reassemble a murder case that was already complicated by faded memories, the deaths of witnesses and the fact that no trace of Etan has ever been found. The defense goes in knowing the last jury voted 11-1 to convict.

And Etan's parents face revisiting their 6-year-old's disappearance and suspect Pedro Hernandez's account of choking him, given in recorded confessions that defense lawyers say were false. Still, Etan's father has said the first trial succeeded in providing long-sought answers for the Patzes, if not in resolving the case.

Now, finally, "we hope it will be over soon," Stanley Patz said by email last month, declining to elaborate ahead of the retrial.

Etan disappeared May 25, 1979, the first day he was allowed to walk the two blocks to his bus stop alone.

Hernandez was then a teenage stock clerk at a nearby corner store. But he wasn't a suspect until 2012, when his brother-in-law told police that Hernandez had told a summer 1979 prayer group he had killed a child in New York. His ex-wife and a neighbor later said he'd also made similar statements to them.

Detectives then got a confession from Hernandez himself.

"I wanted to let go, but I just couldn't let go. I felt like something just took over me," Hernandez said on video, describing how he choked the boy after luring him to the convenience store basement with the promise of a soda. Prosecutors suggest the motive was sexual.

Hernandez's defense says the Maple Shade, New Jersey, man has mental problems that made him imagine he attacked Etan. A defense psychiatrist diagnosed Hernandez, 55, with schizotypal personality disorder; symptoms can include delusions, which Hernandez's family says he has had.

"Pedro Hernandez is the only witness against himself," defense lawyer Harvey Fishbein told jurors last year. "Yet he is inconsistent and unreliable."

The defense also argued that a different, longtime suspect was the more likely killer.

After the first trial, many jurors said they felt Hernandez's confession was compellingly detailed and supported by his earlier admissions. Some jurors attributed his mental problems to a guilty conscience. But the lone holdout said he felt that Hernandez's mental health history was a big factor and that there wasn't enough non-circumstantial evidence to convict him.

Prosecutors' and defense lawyers' central arguments and evidence haven't changed, but both sides are approaching the retrial mindful of the deadlock and the growing passage of time.

During jury selection this month, Fishbein asked prospective members to vouch that if they ended up becoming a lone holdout for or against conviction, they wouldn't change their minds just because no one else agreed. And Illuzzi asked whether any potential jurors felt the 37-year-old case was "enough already" and shouldn't be pursued further. None said yes.

About 5 percent of felony trials end in hung juries, and roughly one-third of them are retried, rather than plea-bargained or dismissed, researchers have found.

Officials and court groups don't have statistics on the outcomes of those retrials. But anecdotally, most end in convictions, as do most trials in general, said James A. Cohen, a Fordham University School of Law professor who specializes in criminal defense.

Reach Jennifer Peltz on Twitter @ jennpeltz.

North Carolina GOP office burned, graffiti sprayed nearby

By JONATHAN DREW, Associated Press

HILLSBOROUGH, N.C. (AP) — A local Republican Party office in North Carolina was torched by a flammable device and someone spray-painted an anti-GOP slogan referring to "Nazi Republicans" on a nearby wall, authorities said Sunday.

A bottle filled with flammable liquid was thrown through the window of the Orange County Republican Party headquarters overnight, according to a news release from the town of Hillsborough. The substance ignited and damaged the interior before burning out. No one was injured.

On Sunday afternoon, the walls of the multi-room office were covered in black char, and a couch against one wall had been burned down to its springs. Shattered glass covered the floor, and melted campaign yard signs showed warped lettering.

The news release from authorities said an adjacent building was spray-painted with the words: "Nazi Republicans leave town or else." The graffiti had been covered in paint by late afternoon.

Another business owner discovered the damage Sunday morning. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives is working with local investigators.

State GOP executive director Dallas Woodhouse said people sometimes work after-hours, and he felt lucky that no one was there at the time. He said the bottle appeared to have landed on or near the couch where volunteers sometimes take naps.

"They are working around the clock. It is a miracle that nobody was killed," he said in an interview, calling the fire "political terrorism."

He said Republican offices around the state were re-examining their security.

The violent act in the key battleground state was condemned by public figures across the political spectrum.

Hillary Clinton, the Democratic nominee for president said on Twitter that the attack "is horrific and unacceptable. Very grateful that everyone is safe."

Republican nominee Donald Trump blamed the act on Democrats in a Tweet and also he encouraged local Republicans, saying: "With you all the way, will never forget. Now we have to win. Proud of you all!"

At a news conference, Woodhouse urged Republicans to respond peacefully by turning out to vote in November. He said he'd received messages of support from Democrats.

Orange County GOP chairman Daniel Ashley told reporters that no one had previously made violent threats against the office several miles from the town's historic square. The GOP office is several doors down from a shuttered ice rink in what was once a frontier-themed amusement park that is now a retail complex known as The Shops at Daniel Boone.

Tom Stevens, mayor of the town about 40 miles northwest of Raleigh, said that it was fortunate the fire didn't burn the office and other adjacent buildings that are decades old to the ground.

Stevens, a Democrat, said the act doesn't represent the character of Orange County, which also includes much of Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina campus. Registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by a 3-1 margin in the county that picked President Barack Obama by a lopsided margin in the 2012 election.

"I'd like to believe we aspire to respect hearing differing views," Stevens said in an interview. "This is very troubling."

Stevens said he wasn't aware of any leads on suspects.

Iraqi PM signals start of operations to drive IS from Mosul

By ADAM SCHRECK, Associated Press

IRBIL, Iraq (AP) — Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced the start of military operations to liberate the northern city of Mosul from Islamic State militants on Monday, launching the country on its toughest battle since American troops left nearly five years ago.

State TV aired a brief statement in the early hours Monday announcing the start of the widely anticipated military offensive to drive IS out of Iraq's second-largest city.

Broadcasts showed the prime minister, dressed in the uniform of the elite counterterrorism forces, speaking while flanked by senior military officers.

"These forces that are liberating you today, they have one goal in Mosul which is to get rid of Daesh and to secure your dignity. They are there for your sake," he told the city's residents, using an alternate name for the militant group. "God willing, we shall win."

The thuds of sporadic artillery shelling rumbled across the rolling Nineveh plains in the direction of Mosul, witnesses said. State TV broadcast patriotic music within minutes of the announcement.

The push to retake Mosul will be the biggest military operation in Iraq since American troops left in 2011 and, if successful, the strongest blow yet to the Islamic State. A statement on Al-Abadi's website pledged the fight for the city marked a new phase that would lead to the liberation of all Iraqi territory from the militants this year.

In Washington, Defense Secretary Ash Carter called the start of Iraqi operations to liberate Mosul "a decisive moment in the campaign" to deliver a lasting defeat to the Islamic State group.

Carter said the United States and other members of the international coalition "stand ready to support the Iraqi Security Forces, Peshmerga fighters and the people of Iraq in the difficult fight ahead."

Iraqi forces have been massing around the city in recent days. They include members of the elite special forces, who are expected to lead the charge into the city itself.

Mosul is home to more than a million civilians. The city fell to IS fighters during a lightning charge in June 2014 that left nearly a third of Iraq in militants' hands and plunged the country into its most severe crisis since the U.S.-led invasion in 2003.

After seizing Mosul, IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi visited the city to declare an Islamic caliphate that at one point covered nearly a third of Iraq and Syria.

But since late last year, the militants have suffered battlefield losses in Iraq and their power in the country has largely shrunk to Mosul and small towns in the country's north and west. Mosul is about 360 kilometers (225 miles) northwest of the capital, Baghdad.

The operation to retake Mosul is expected to be the most complex yet for Iraq's military, which has been rebuilding from its humiliating 2014 defeat.

Iraqi forces began moving into Nineveh province to surround Mosul in July, when ground troops led by the country's elite special forces retook Qayara air base south of the city. Thousands of Iraqi troops were deployed there ahead of the planned operation along with large numbers of tanks, armored personnel carriers and heavy artillery.

The base is ringed by a series of trenches, sand berms and other fortifications.

Iraqi troops were also positioned east of Mosul in the Khazer area, along with Kurdish Peshmerga forces, and to the north of the city near the Mosul Dam and Bashiqa areas.

Before the prime minister's announcement, Brig. Gen Haider Fadhil told The Associated Press in an interview that more than 25,000 troops, including paramilitary forces made up of Sunni tribal fighters and Shiite militias, will take part in the offensive that will be launched from five directions around the city.

In addition to carrying out airstrikes, the U.S.-led international coalition will also offer artillery fire, he added. American troops are providing logistical support to the operation.

Brett McGurk, the U.S. envoy to the coalition against IS, said Abadi's order called for "major operations"

to free the city.

"Godspeed to the heroic Iraqi forces, Kurdish #Peshmerga, and #Ninewa volunteers. We are proud to stand with you in this historic operation," he tweeted.

The role of the Shiite militias has been particularly sensitive, as Nineveh is a majority Sunni province and Shiite militia forces have been accused of carrying out abuses against civilians in other operations in majority Sunni parts of Iraq.

According to U.N. estimates, up to 1 million people could be displaced from Mosul during the operation, exacerbating the humanitarian situation in the country. The conflict in Iraq has forced 3.3 million people to flee their homes, with most of them living in camps or informal settlements.

Fadhil voiced concern about potential action from Turkish troops based in the region of Bashiqa, north-east of Mosul. Turkey sent troops to the area late last year to train anti-IS fighters there.

But Baghdad has seen the Turkish presence as a "blatant violation" of Iraqi sovereignty and has demanded the Turkish troops withdraw, a call Ankara has ignored.

Associated Press journalists Ahmed Sami in Baghdad, Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Khazer, Iraq, and Vivian Salama in Washington contributed reporting.

Follow Adam Schreck on Twitter at www.twitter.com/adamschreck

Randy Travis stuns crowd, sings at Hall of Fame induction

By KRISTIN M. HALL, Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Country singer Randy Travis found his distinctive voice three years after a life-threatening stroke and sang "Amazing Grace" during his induction Sunday into the Country Music Hall of Fame.

The Grammy-winning baritone singer battled back from the stroke in 2013 to sing again during the medallion ceremony in Nashville, Tennessee. He was inducted along with fiddler Charlie Daniels and record producer Fred Foster.

Fellow artists including Kris Kristofferson, Dolly Parton, Alan Jackson, Brad Paisley, Garth Brooks and more honored the three inductees with musical tributes.

But it was Travis' singing that brought a stunned silence and tears to the crowd after years of rehabilitation and therapy to regain his voice.

Mary Davis-Travis, his wife, spoke about the numerous procedures and surgeries to save his life and a six-month stay in the hospital after a viral infection caused his stroke.

"Randy stared death in the face, but death blinked," Davis-Travis said. "Today God's proof of a miracle stands before you."

The 57-year-old singer was honored for being the first country artist whose debut album "Storms of Life" went platinum in its first year and he ushered in a wave of neo-traditional singers like Alan Jackson, Clint Black and Brooks in the 1990s.

Jackson, who performed "On the Other Hand," talked about going out on tour with Travis in the early '90s and compared him to Elvis.

"When he sang, the women were screaming and fainting and it was crazy," Jackson said. "I loved it. Someone singing real country music and having that effect and selling all those records, it just made me so happy."

Daniels, the fiddler player behind the hit song "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," was honored for his multi-genre style blending Southern rock, bluegrass, gospel and country music.

"A plaque on this wall is not just another award or accolade," Daniels said. "It's a page in a history book. An unending history book."

Jamey Johnson performed his song, "Long Haired Country Boy," while Trace Adkins performed "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," with fiddler Andrea Zonn.

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Foster ran the influential Monument Records, which helped launch the careers of Roy Orbison and Willie Nelson as well as Parton and Kristofferson. Kristofferson sang his iconic song "Me and Bobby McGee," which Foster helped co-write and produce, while Parton sang "Dumb Blonde," from her debut album produced by Foster.

She praised Foster for giving her a shot and still being a gentleman when Porter Wagoner stole her away to be on his television show.

Vince Gill presented Foster with the medallion and noted Foster was a lover of great songs and a champion of unique singers.

"But everyone of us needs a champion," Gill said. "And you look like at a man like Fred Foster and there's a man that has been a champion for all these years."

The 85-year-old producer is still currently working and most recently produced a tribute album to Ray Price by Nelson.

China launches manned mission to experimental space station

BEIJING (AP) — China launched a pair of astronauts into space Monday on a mission to dock with an experimental space station and remain aboard for 30 days in preparation for the start of operations by a full-bore facility six years from now.

The Shenzhou 11 mission took off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on the edge of the Gobi Desert in northern China at 7:30 a.m. (2330 GMT) aboard a Long March-2F carrier rocket.

It will dock with the Tiangong 2 space station precursor facility within two days, conduct experiments in medicine and various space-related technologies, and test systems and processes in preparation for the launching of the station's core module in 2018.

Space program commander-in-chief Gen. Zhang Youxia declared the launch a success at 7:46 a.m. (2346 GMT). Defense Minister Fan Changlong then read a congratulatory message from President Xi Jinping calling for China's astronauts to explore space "more deeply and more broadly."

Premier Li Keqiang and propaganda chief Liu Yunshan visited the Beijing control center to congratulate staff. It is the sixth time China has launched astronauts into space and the duration will be the longest by far.

Following the attachment of two experiment modules, the completed station is set to begin full operations in 2022 and will run for at least a decade.

An earlier Tiangong 1 experimental space station launched in 2011 went out of service in March after docking with three visiting spacecraft and extending its mission for two years. The Tiangong, or "Heavenly Palace," stations are considered stepping stones to a mission to Mars by the end of the decade.

The Shenzhou 11 astronauts are Jing Haipeng, who is flying his third mission, and 37-year-old Chen Dong. "It is any astronaut's dream and pursuit to be able to perform many space missions," Jing, who turns 50 during his time in space, told a briefing Sunday.

China conducted its first crewed space mission in 2003, becoming only the third country after Russia and the U.S. to do so, and has since staged a spacewalk and landed its Yutu rover on the moon. Administrators suggest a crewed landing on the moon may also be in the program's future.

China was prevented from participating in the International Space Station, mainly due to U.S. concerns over the Chinese space program's strongly military character. Chinese officials are now looking to internationalize their own program by offering to help finance other countries' missions to Tiangong 2.

China's space program also opened its massive fourth spacecraft launch site at Wenchang on China's southernmost island province of Hainan in June. It was inaugurated with the launch of the newly developed Long March 7 rocket that was hailed as a breakthrough in the use of safer, more environmentally friendly fuels.

China is currently developing the Long March 5 heavy-lift rocket needed to launch the Tiangong 2's additional components and other massive payloads.

China also plans to land a rover on Mars by 2020, attempting to recreate the success of the U.S. Viking 1 mission that landed a rover on the planet four decades ago.

A source of enormous national pride, China's space program plans a total of 20 missions this year at a time when the U.S. and other countries' programs are seeking new roles.

Kaepernick tunes out fans in loss to Buffalo

By JOHN WAWROW, AP Sports Writer

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Colin Kaepernick didn't feel extra nerves, hear the boos or concern himself with the disparaging T-shirts being sold outside the stadium while making his season debut as the 49ers starting quarterback on Sunday.

After kneeling during the national anthem to continue his protest against racial oppression and police brutality, Kaepernick said he focused his attention solely on beating Buffalo.

"I really wasn't listening to what was going on in the stands," Kaepernick said. "It felt good to be out there and give my team the opportunity to win."

In the end, he and the 49ers (1-5) didn't come close following a 45-16 loss to the Bills (4-2).

The offense looked better at times under Kaepernick, but still could not finish drives. That was the same problem the 49ers had with Blaine Gabbert, who was benched this week.

Kaepernick went 13 of 29 for 187 yards and a 53-yard touchdown pass to Torrey Smith. But the 49ers settled for three field goals, twice gave up the ball on downs and punted once on six drives that crossed midfield.

"I thought he was OK," coach Chip Kelly said in assessing Kaepernick's outing.

And Kelly wasn't in a position to commit to who will start next weekend when San Francisco hosts Tampa Bay.

"Yeah, we'll see," he said.

Kaepernick wasn't ready to say whether he's earned that opportunity either.

"That's not for me to say," he said after making his first start in nearly a year. "I went out there and played as hard as I could and gave this team everything I had. I will continue to do that every week they let me."

What's not going to change is Kaepernick continuing being the focus of national attention because of the protest he during the preseason.

On Sunday, he took his familiar spot in kneeling along the sideline at the 50-yard line, alongside safety Eric Reid and linebacker Eli Harold. Not far to his left were cornerback Rashard Robinson and safety Antoine Bethea, who stood with their right arms raised.

Anticipating the protest, fans began chanting "USA! USA! USA!"

Kaepernick said he didn't hear them, but also wondered why his stance was regarded as unpatriotic.

"I don't understand what is un-American about fighting for liberty and justice for everybody," he said.

And he was unfazed upon learning of two T-shirts featuring his image being sold outside New Era Field.

One read: "Wanted: Notorious Disgrace to America," and featured a picture of Kaepernick throwing a pass and a bullseye aimed at his chest. Another featured a drawing of a kneeling Kaepernick with the words, "Shut Up and Stand Up!" printed.

"Like I've said from the beginning, I knew the consequences of what could come from this and I was prepared for that," said Kaepernick, who arrived at the stadium wearing a T-shirt with Muhammad Ali on it.

Kaepernick was heartened to learn a group of about 25 Bills fans held a rally outside the stadium in his support.

Protests and performance aside, the 49ers' troubles go beyond who's playing quarterback after they dropped their fifth consecutive game.

San Francisco's porous defense allowed Buffalo's LeSean McCoy-led ground attack 312 yards rushing — the second-worst total in 49ers history, and 12 short of the franchise-low set against the Los Angeles Rams on Nov. 9, 1958.

"That is embarrassing," linebacker Michael Wilhoite said.

San Francisco's run defense has now allowed a combined 981 yards and nine touchdowns in its past four games.

"I think it's an every-person issue," Kelly said.

AP NFL website: www.pro32.ap.org and http://twitter.com/AP_NFL

Agent: Daughter of Olympic sprinter Tyson Gay fatally shot

By GARY B. GRAVES, AP Sports Writer

LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP) — The 15-year-old daughter of Olympic sprinter Tyson Gay was fatally shot in the neck, authorities and the athlete's agent said Sunday, and police have arrested a man in connection with the shooting.

Trinity Gay died at the University of Kentucky Medical Center, the coroner's office for Fayette County said in a statement. The athlete's agent, Mark Wetmore, confirmed in a text message to The Associated Press that Gay's daughter had died.

Police on Sunday evening announced that Dvonta Middlebrooks, 21, was arrested and charged with wanton endangerment and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. A statement said investigators determined that Middlebrooks was in the parking lot and fired multiple shots at the time of the incident.

Another man questioned by police has not been charged.

Lexington police said in a statement that officers went to the parking lot of a restaurant near the University of Kentucky campus in Lexington about 4 a.m. Sunday after witnesses reported an exchange of gunfire between two vehicles. Officers located one of the vehicles and stopped two people for questioning, the statement added.

Police spokeswoman Brenna Angel said police don't believe Trinity Gay was in either of the vehicles involved.

Tyson Gay competed in the last three Summer Olympics. He was part of a team that won a silver medal in the 4x100-meter relay at the 2012 London Games though that medal was ultimately stripped after Gay tested positive for steroids in 2013.

Last summer's Games in Rio featured another stinging disappointment for Gay, 33, who has battled injuries. He was a member of the American men's 4x100-meter relay team that finished third in the final before being disqualified for an illegal baton exchange between Mike Rodgers and Justin Gatlin. The team's appeal was denied, giving Canada the bronze medal.

Trinity Gay was a sprinter at Lafayette High in Lexington and finished fourth in the 100 meters and fifth in the 200 meters at the state Class 3A high school track meet in May, records show. She also ran on a 4x200 relay team that finished fourth. Her father, who ran years earlier at Lafayette, still holds the state record in the 100 set in 2001.

Fayette County Public Schools Superintendent Manny Caulk said in a statement that "Our hearts are broken this morning over the loss of Trinity to this tragic and senseless act of violence. Please join us in keeping the Gay family close in thought and prayer and supporting the students, staff, and families at Lafayette High during this unspeakably difficult time."

Grief counselors will be at Lafayette High School on Monday for students and staff, Fayette school spokeswoman Lisa Deffendall added in an email.

The police statement didn't identify Trinity Gay by name, saying a juvenile who was struck at the scene was taken by private vehicle to the UK Hospital and later pronounced dead. Police were still searching for the second vehicle, police said, adding they are continuing to investigate.

A tweet from Kentucky High School Athletic Association Commissioner Julian Tackett tweeted that he was stunned: "Shocked to hear of death of Trinity Gay. A life of such potential cut so tragically short. Sympathies to Tyson and entire family."

USA Track and Field also tweeted, "Sending our thoughts & prayers to @TysonLGay & his loved ones as they mourn the tragic & senseless loss of his daughter, Trinity."

And NBA veteran Vince Carter of the Memphis Grizzlies tweeted his sympathy as well: "Many prayers up to @TysonLGay and his family"

Associated Press writer John Raby in Charleston, West Virginia, and AP Sports Writers Pat Graham and Teresa M. Walker contributed to this story.

Turkish-backed Syrian opposition captures Dabiq from IS

By PHILIP ISSA, Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Turkish-backed Syrian opposition forces captured the symbolically-significant town of Dabiq from the Islamic State group on Sunday as government forces reversed recent rebel advances in the center of the country.

Though only a small town of marginal strategic importance in northern Syria, Dabiq has figured centrally in IS propaganda. Citing Islamic lore, the extremist group claims it will be the stage for an apocalyptic battle between Crusaders and an army of the Muslim caliphate that will herald doomsday.

Meanwhile, southwest of Dabiq, Syrian government forces pounded rebel-held districts in the contested city of Aleppo, culminating in a devastating airstrike on a residential building in the Qaterji neighborhood late in the evening that killed at least 25 people, according to the Civil Defense search-and-rescue outfit. Spokesman Ibrahim Alhaj said some families remain trapped under the rubble.

The Qaterji attack brought the death toll to 49 from strikes on opposition-run eastern Aleppo on Sunday, according to Al Haj.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights group, which monitors the conflict through local contacts, put the toll from the Qaterji attack at no less than 15 civilian fatalities, and Sunday's tally for the eastern portion of the city at 31 civilians.

Russian jets are also known to fly sorties over east Aleppo. Russia is a key backer of embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad in the country's raging war.

In Dabiq, Islamic State fighters put up "minimal" resistance in defending the town, according to a commander of the Syrian opposition Hamza Brigade, before they withdrew south to al-Bab, which remains under IS control.

Saif Abu Bakr said some 2,000 opposition fighters pushed into Dabiq with tank and artillery support from the Turkish army. The commander said IS left the town heavily mined.

Both Turkish and international coalition warplanes conducted airstrikes on Dabiq and nearby Arshak, the Turkish state-run Anadolu news agency reported.

The U.S. envoy to the coalition against IS, Brett McGurk, tweeted Sunday that the extremist group had promised a "final victory" in Dabiq, but that its fighters had instead "fled in defeat at the hands of Syrians supported by our @coalition."

Government forces meanwhile sustained their push against rebels in the central Hama province after an ambitious month-long campaign spearheaded by al-Qaida-linked insurgents ground to a halt amid factional infighting.

The rebels were within a few miles of the country's fourth-largest city, also called Hama, when deadly clashes broke out among ultraconservative factions within the coalition.

The Syrian Army has capitalized on the fracture, retaking over a third of the territory it had lost over five weeks. On Sunday it announced it had retaken the strategic town of Maardes.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors the conflict through a network of contacts inside Syria, described the government's control over the town as still tenuous, as fierce clashes between the two sides stretched into the evening.

The advance on Dabiq comes as Iraqi troops and allied, Iranian-backed militias prepare for a push on IS's largest population center, the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. That operation is being coordinated closely with the U.S.

Turkey is also determined to define its interests in northern Iraq, and has sent some 500 of its own troops to train local militias in the region. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Friday his country was determined to participate in the battle for Mosul.

The Turkish deployment has angered the government in Baghdad, which has close ties to Turkey's rival,

Iran.

The Islamic State group has lost a quarter of its territory in Syria and Iraq since January 2015, according to a report by the IHS Conflict Monitor group, but still holds the Syrian cities of Raqqa and Deir el-Zour, as well as Mosul.

The Islamic State group seized Dabiq in August 2014, when its population was about 3,000 people. The extremist group named its English-language online magazine after the town. That same year, IS also announced that it was the burial site for American captive Peter Kassig, who took the first name Abdul-Rahman after converting to Islam during captivity.

The Britain-based Observatory said IS had sent over 1,000 fighters to defend Dabiq last week before withdrawing hurriedly.

The Turkish military intervened in the Syrian war in August this year under orders from Ankara to clear the border area of IS fighters and U.S.-backed Syrian Kurdish forces linked to Turkey's own outlawed Kurdish insurgency. The Turkish government considers both to be terrorist groups.

Syrian opposition fighters backed by Turkish ground and air forces have since expelled IS militants from their last positions along the Syrian-Turkish frontier and are closing in on al-Bab, one of their last remaining strongholds in Syria's contested Aleppo province.

Turkey sent thousands of opposition fighters from other regions in northern Syria to the front as part of Operation Euphrates Shield. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Sunday that after taking Dabiq the Turkish-backed groups are determined to advance on al-Bab.

Turkey's Erdogan has suggested that some of the nearly 3 million Syrian refugees in Turkey could return to the newly-liberated areas of their country.

"They can go to their own lands, we can let them live there safely," he said. "That's the step we will take. We have given our proposal to coalition powers and we are moving together."

Associated Press writers Albert Aji in Damascus, Syria, and Zeynep Bilginsoy in Istanbul contributed to this report.

Nigerian parents reunite with 21 girls freed by Boko Haram

By OYEKANMI OLALEKAN, Associated Press

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — Joy, jubilation and dancing erupted Sunday when a group of Nigerian parents were reunited with 21 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram 2 ½ years ago and freed in the first negotiated release organized by the government and the Islamic extremist group.

The girls were hugged and embraced by their parents when they were presented by the government, according to video obtained by The Associated Press.

"I never expected I will see my daughter again and I pray that those girls still left behind, that God will bring them out safely the way our own daughter came out alive," said a mother of one of the released girls, Raha Emmanuel, in the Hausa language.

The girls were released Thursday and flown to Abuja, Nigeria's capital, but it's taken days for the parents to arrive. Most arrived Sunday after driving hours over potholed roads slowed by military checkpoints and the danger of attack by the insurgents, said community leader Tsambido Hosea Abana.

The parents came from the remote northeastern town of Chibok, where nearly 300 girls were kidnapped on April 2014 in a mass abduction that shocked the world. Dozens of schoolgirls escaped in the first few hours but after last week's release, 197 remain captive. The government says negotiations are continuing to win their freedom.

Muta Abana, the father of one of the released girls, has been living in Nasarawa state neighboring Abuja, expressed anxiety as many of the girls reportedly have been forced to marry Boko Haram fighters.

"Some of them came back with babies, but think about it, are we going to kill the children?" Abana said to The Associated Press, speaking in Hausa. "We won't be able to kill the children because it would be as if we don't want the girls to come back. God knows why it happened. It's God's will."

He also said the girls' abduction has been politicized, complaining that, "People's children aren't money, people's children are not clothes you wear to campaign, people's children are their pride."

The girls are getting medical attention and trauma counselling in a hospital, said Tsambido Abana, the Chibok community leader in Abuja. Some are "emaciated" from hunger, he said.

There are conflicting reports about how the girls were freed, with two military officers telling the AP they were exchanged for four detained Boko Haram commanders, and a Nigerian who negotiated previous failed attempts saying a large ransom was paid by the Swiss government on behalf of Nigerian authorities. The officers and the negotiator, who did not take part in the latest talks, spoke on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to discuss the matter with the press.

Associated Press writer Michelle Faul contributed to this report from Johannesburg

US, UK say support is weak for military action against Syria

By BRADLEY KLAPPER, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The United States and Britain on Sunday acknowledged the Western world's weak support for any military action against Syria's government as they sought ways to pressure President Bashar Assad and his chief backer, Russia, to halt a deadly offensive in Aleppo. They tried to present it as a possibility, nevertheless.

After a meeting of 11 governments opposing Assad's rule, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson each insisted all options were on the table. But their stark explanations about the danger of resorting to military force appeared to rule out such a move.

The result was a somewhat schizophrenic threat that was unlikely to scare Assad's government or Russia as they move to crush the last rebel-held areas of Aleppo, Syria's largest city.

"When a great power is involved in a fight like this, as Russia has chosen to be by going there and then putting its missiles in place in order to threaten people against military action, it raises the stakes of confrontation," Kerry said after the meeting in London.

He said no one should be "lighting a fire" under a larger sectarian war in the Middle East or one drawing in superpowers against one another.

Johnson said Britain wanted to "ratchet up" pressure on Assad, Russia and Iran.

"No option is, in principle, off the table," he told reporters.

Quickly expanding his answer, he added: "Be in no doubt that these so-called military options are extremely difficult and there is, to put it mildly, a lack of political appetite in most European capitals and certainly in the West for that kind of solution at present."

"So we've got to work with the tools we have," he said. "The tools we have are diplomatic."

The gathering in London came amid mounting international frustration with the 5½ year conflict, which has killed as many as a half-million people, sparked Europe's worst refugee crisis since World War II and enabled Islamic State militants to emerge as a global terror threat.

Kerry on Saturday launched a new diplomatic process with what he described as the major international players in the war — the U.S., Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, Qatar, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. The renewed effort replaces last month's U.S.-Russian cease-fire, which collapsed within days, and Washington's now-abandoned talks with Moscow on a military partnership against the Islamic State group and al-Qaida militants.

Sunday's gathering included America's Arab allies from the meeting a day earlier along with European countries that were left out. Not everyone sounded convinced about Kerry's effort.

"There is no step forward for a cease-fire," French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said.

Even the U.S. has expressed skepticism about the chances for a diplomatic agreement with Assad's military supporters, Russia and Iran.

But President Barack Obama doesn't seem likely to approve an American military intervention before leaving office. He has consistently rejected such action against Assad, including three years ago when the Syrian leader crossed Obama's "red line" by using chemical weapons.

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Kerry tried to keep the threat alive Sunday.

"Let me make it clear," he said. "President Obama has not taken any options off the table at this point in time. So we'll see where we are in the next few days in the context of the discussions we're having."

Just a moment earlier, however, Kerry implied the opposite.

He emphasized that the U.S. and its partners must exhaust diplomatic possibilities, even if the situation in Syria becomes more dire. "Now, some people ask what happens to Aleppo if it were to fall," Kerry said. "Well, the Russians should understand, and Assad needs to understand, that that does not end the war. This war cannot end without a political solution.

"So even if Aleppo were to fall, even if they have utterly destroyed it, which they are doing, that will not change the fundamental equation in this war because other countries will continue to support opposition, and they will continue to create more terrorists and Syria will be the victim in the end, as well as the region."

Kerry said the U.S. and its partners were "discussing using every mechanism available to us" to stop the fighting.

"But I haven't seen a big appetite in Europe of people to go to war," he said, echoing Johnson. "I don't see the parliaments of European countries ready to declare war. I don't see a lot of countries deciding that that's the better solution here."

"It's easy to say, 'Where's the action?' But what is the action?" he asked. "I have a lot of people who have a lot of trouble defining that."

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, Oct. 17, the 291st day of 2016. There are 75 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Oct. 17, 1777, British forces under Gen. John Burgoyne surrendered to American troops in Saratoga, New York, in a turning point of the Revolutionary War.

On this date:

In 1610, French King Louis XIII, age nine, was crowned at Reims, five months after the assassination of his father, Henry IV.

In 1807, Britain declared it would continue to reclaim British-born sailors from American ships and ports regardless of whether they held U.S. citizenship.

In 1919, Radio Corp. of America was chartered.

In 1931, mobster Al Capone was convicted of income tax evasion. (Sentenced to 11 years in prison, Capone was released in 1939.)

In 1933, Albert Einstein arrived in the United States as a refugee from Nazi Germany.

In 1941, the U.S. destroyer Kearny was damaged by a German torpedo off the coast of Iceland; 11 people died.

In 1945, Col. Juan Peron, the future president of Argentina, was released from prison after protests by trade unionists.

In 1956, the all-star movie "Around the World in 80 Days," produced by Michael Todd, had its world premiere in New York.

In 1966, 12 New York City firefighters were killed while battling a blaze in lower Manhattan. The TV game show "The Hollywood Squares" premiered on NBC.

In 1979, Mother Teresa of India was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1989, an earthquake measuring a surface-wave magnitude of 7.1 struck northern California, killing 63 people and causing \$6 billion worth of damage.

In 1991, entertainer Tennessee Ernie Ford died in Reston, Virginia, at age 72.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush signed legislation authorizing tough interrogation of terror

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suspects and smoothing the way for trials before military commissions. America's official population passed the 300 million mark, fueled by a growing number of immigrants and their children. Megan Meier, the 13-year-old victim of a cyberbullying hoax, died a day after hanging herself at home in Dardenne Prairie, Missouri. CBS News correspondent Christopher Glenn died in Norwalk, Connecticut, at age 68.

Five years ago: Rolling through small Southern towns in a campaign-style bus, President Barack Obama pressed lawmakers back in Washington to start taking up pieces of his rejected jobs bill and mocked the Republicans who had shot it down. Financier Carl Lindner Jr., who used his experience running the family dairy store to build a business empire whose reach included baseball, banks and bananas, died at age 92.

One year ago: Thousands of migrants seeking a better life in Western Europe surged into Slovenia using a new route after Hungary sealed its border with Croatia. The final US Airways flight landed in Philadelphia, completing the last leg of its roundtrip journey. (The US Airways brand disappeared as the result of a merger with American Airlines.) The Kansas City Royals rolled to a 6-3 victory over the Toronto Blue Jays for a 2-0 lead in the AL Championship Series. The New York Mets beat the Chicago Cubs 4-2 in their NL Championship Series opener.

Today's Birthdays: Actress Marsha Hunt is 99. Actress Julie Adams is 90. Newspaper columnist Jimmy Breslin is 86. Country singer Earl Thomas Conley is 75. Singer Jim Seals (Seals & Crofts) is 74. Singer Gary Puckett is 74. Actor Michael McKean is 69. Actress Margot Kidder is 68. Actor George Wendt is 68. Actor-singer Bill Hudson is 67. Astronaut Mae Jemison is 60. Country singer Alan Jackson is 58. Movie critic Richard Roeper is 57. Movie director Rob Marshall is 56. Actor Grant Shaud is 56. Animator Mike Judge is 54. Rock singer-musician Fred LeBlanc (Cowboy Mouth) is 53. Actor-comedian Norm Macdonald is 53. Singer Rene' D'Amore is 49. Reggae singer Ziggy Marley is 48. Actor Wood Harris is 47. Singer Wyclef Jean (zhahn) is 47. World Golf Hall of Famer Ernie Els is 47. Singer Chris Kirkpatrick ('N Sync) is 45. Rapper Eminem is 44. Actress Sharon Leal is 44. Actor Matthew Macfadyen is 42. Rock musician Sergio Andrade (an-DRAY'-day) is 39. Actress Felicity Jones is 33. Actor Chris Lowell is 32. Actor Dee Jay Daniels is 28.

Thought for Today: "The thinking of a genius does not proceed logically. It leaps with great ellipses. It pulls knowledge from God knows where." — Dorothy Thompson, American journalist (1894-1961).