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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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Saturday, Nov. 26

Sunday, Nov. 27

- 9 a.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Worship (No Sunday School)
- 9 a.m.: St. John's Lutheran Worship
- 10 a.m.: St. John's Lutheran Sunday School
- 10 a.m.: Heaven Bound Ministries worship at Pierpont Church
- 7 p.m.: Snow Queen Contest at GHS Gym

Monday, Nov. 28

- Senior Menu: Meatballs, mashed potatoes and gravy, carrots, fruit cocktail, whole wheat bread.
- School Breakfast: French toast sticks, links, fruit, juice, milk.
- School Lunch: BBQ, sweet potato tots, broccoli and dip, fruit.
- 6:30 a.m.: Emmanuel Lutheran Bible Study

Tuesday, Nov. 29

- Senior Menu: Creamed chicken, buttermilk biscuit, peas, Mandarin Oranges.
- School Breakfast: Egg sandwich, fruit, juice, milk.
- School Lunch: Chicken strips, smiley potatoes, carrots and dip, fruit, muffin.
- 5 p.m.: JH GBB at Clark (7th grade at 5 p.m., 8th grade at 6 p.m.)

Wednesday, Nov. 30

- Senior Menu: French dip sandwich, macaroni salad, seasoned cabbage, Waldorf Salad.
- School Breakfast: Cinnamon roll, yogurt, fruit, juice, milk.
- School Lunch: Taco salad, refried beans, fruit,

JOHNSON AGENCY

Real Estate & Insurance

Jay Johnson, Broker

www.johnsonagencygroton.com

102 N Main St.

Groton, SD 57445

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Home: 605/397-8565



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2017 DOG LICENSES AVAILABLE NOW!!

Licenses due by Dec. 30, 2016

Fines start after Dec. 30, 2016

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

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

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

Hey Kids! Come see Santa!



Saturday, Dec. 10, 9-11 a.m.
Professional Management
Services

Downtown Groton
Cookies & Juice for the kids
Photographer Available

GROTON

Chamber Of Commerce

Made it possible for Santa to come to Groton!

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DOUG SIPPEL BENEFIT

Event sponsored by Friends and Family of Doug Sippel

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER

26

- > Consignment Auction 4:00 p.m.
- > Live Auction to follow
- > Silent Auction 4:00-8:00 p.m.
- > Split Pot
- > Raffles
- > Fresh Lefsa
- > Lunch Served - Free Will Donation

DOUG HAS
ENCOUNTERED
HEALTH
ISSUES AND IS
UNABLE TO
WORK.
PLEASE COME
SHOW YOUR
SUPPORT!

Partial List of Live Auction Items

- >Registered Angus Bull
- >1/4 Beef
- >Muzzle Loader
- >Weber Q Grill
- >Popcorn Popper
- >Piano
- >Computer Desk
- >Little Tikes KitchenSet

Partial List of Consignment Auction Items

- >1993 Dodge Dakota
Pickup
 - >1994 Prowler 5th Wheel
Camper
 - >Wood Chipper
- Benefit receives 10% of sale
price on Consignment -
consignee 90%. Please call
Topper at 397-7337 with
items.

Groton Legion at 4:00 P.M.
Saturday November 26th

Smaller donation items may be dropped off at the city office. For larger items, please call Topper at 397-7337 or Cheri at 380-2197.

Fund set up at First State Bank in Groton in the name of "Doug Sippel Benefit"

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

The Minnesota Vikings ruined yet another holiday, losing to the Detroit Lions 16-13 on Thanksgiving. The only explanation I can think of is that the team had Thanksgiving dinner before the game and didn't have a chance to take a nap before playing. That's the only reason that makes sense as to why the Vikings were so lethargic.

The two teams were evenly split in most of the important categories. The Lions had 308 total yards compared to Minnesota's 306. The Lions had one more first down than the Vikings, and had a very slight edge in time of possession. The biggest difference between the two teams came in turnovers and desire. There was only one turnover in the game, a very poor decision by Sam Bradford with the game tied and less than a minute left on the clock. The interception led to a Detroit field goal as time expired. Even though the game was close, it was apparent Detroit wanted to win the game more than Minnesota.

For the first time all season, the Vikings actually had a productive running game. The team averaged over five yards per carry, with Asiata and McKinnon combining for 14 carries and 58 yards. Cordarrelle Patterson also added a carry that went 22 yards. With Stefon Diggs out due to injury, the Vikings made a concerted effort to get Patterson involved. Besides the carry, Cordarrelle had five catches, third on the team behind Kyle Rudolph and Adam Thielen.

With the Vikings' offense matching the Lions, the game essentially came down to the two team's defenses. Minnesota's defense was unable to come up with a big, game-changing play, and that was ultimately the downfall of the team. When the defensive line got pressure on Matthew Stafford, he was clearly uncomfortable and made poor decisions. That pressure was rare, however, and the team only finished with two sacks.

The player of the game was hard to identify this week. Sam Bradford completed 31 of 37 passes, but had zero touchdowns and the untimely interception. Matt Asiata scored a touchdown and earned 5.4 yards per carry, but he only carried the ball five times. Cordarrelle had the 22-yard carry and five catches, but only 15 receiving yards. Danielle Hunter had a half-sack and two quarterback hits, but he (along with the rest of the defensive line) was unable to get pressure on Stafford when it counted the most. At the end of the day, I have to give the award to the Vikings' offensive line. This unit has lost an incredible number of players to injury, yet they didn't give up a single sack on Thursday. Nobody is going to confuse the Vikings' o-line for the one in Dallas, but they stepped up and played one of their best games of the season.

The player who needs the most improvement is Everson Griffen. When the Vikings needed the defense to step up and put pressure on Stafford, Griffen was nowhere to be found. At the end of the day, he only had one tackle and one quarterback hit. Going against a rookie left tackle, Griffen should have been able to single-handedly take over the game. But instead, he disappeared or got lost in the shuffle. The Vikings are counting on the defense to keep them in games, and it all starts up front with the defensive line. With performances like Griffen's on Thanksgiving, the Vikings won't win many more games this season.

Looking ahead, the Vikings return home and welcome the Dallas Cowboys on Thursday, December 1. The Cowboys are the hottest team in the NFL, having won their last 10 in a row. Tony Romo is finally healthy, but the team appears to belong to rookie Dak Prescott now. Ezekiel Elliott, another rookie, leads the league in rushing yards with 1,199 yards and appears to be the next coming of Adrian Peterson. This will be a difficult game for the Vikings, and will likely end up on the losing end.



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70th Annual Kiwanis Snow Queen Contest Sunday, Nov. 27, 7 p.m., GHS Gym

Sr./Jr. Snow Queens
Prince/Princesses
Junior Talent
Senior Talent
Guess Frosty



Ice Cream
Social will be
held during
the
intermission



GROTON

Chamber Of Commerce

Sign Up for Groton Chamber
Bucks at the Holiday Boxes
Located This week at the
Groton Dairy Queen
and S & S Lumber

Week of Nov. 28: Groton Vet Clinic & Ken's Food Fair



By Richard P. Holm M.D.

The Value of Family Love

I appreciate how the old prayer goes: Bless the food before us, the family beside us, and the love between us.

Our youngest son Preston recently had a break-in at his home and they took his computer with all his pictures, as well as his created songs. They also got away with my old film-dependent camera with a bunch of undeveloped

pictures he had taken. He decried that it wasn't the loss of the computer or the camera, but rather the loss of memories and ideas contained within. He was dismayed that he dreamt he caught them breaking into his house and ended up choking them and hitting them with a baseball bat.

It brought back the memory of some advice one of my patients gave me one day: "If you want to destroy your enemy, make them hate." I know how self-destructive hate can be. In that sense, the thieves got my son twice: once for the robbery, and once for the deep anger they instilled in his heart.

Maybe once a year, I watch a family self-destruct as the children of a dying parent return from afar to criticize the choices that the local family has made, often demanding more aggressive care when the parent is clearly at the end and it is time to let go. I have seen lawyers at the bedside of a borderline-competent patient working a change in their will, giving more land to one child than another, resulting in the blackest of disharmony between kids that had grown up together as family, and who will never speak to each other again. I have seen widows and widowers remarry and find joy once again after the sad death of a spouse, only to have children selfishly scrambling for the spoils of the inheritance, leaving someone in the equation without their fair share. Truly there is nothing more heartbreaking than to see such destructiveness among family members.

But this does not always happen. In fact, more often than not, the death bed of a parent brings some great moments of joy. One family I remember in particular surrounded their dying mother with harmonious hymns in her hospital room as they had the family reunion that hadn't occurred in many years. Families most often come together around a dying parent or sibling joyously sharing of family memories, while supporting and loving the one leaving.

Preston found a way to let go of the loss and anger following the robbery and moved on to new equipment and better creativity. It isn't the material stuff in front of us; it is the family beside us, and the love between us.



Lead Now

My grandma gave me one of the best pieces of advice I've ever received, which I'd venture to guess is typical for almost everyone. When I was about to become a new mom, she told me, "As a parent, you're going to have to say no to a lot of things. Say yes as often as you can." So, when my kids wanted to race to the end of the driveway, we did. When they wanted to play in the mud, we did. When they wanted to play basketball outside a little past their bedtimes, we laced up our shoes and hit the pavement. We said yes as often as we could, and 22-plus years later, my grandma's advice has become a deep-rooted philosophy, not just for parenting, but for leadership.

This November, I held my third annual Lead Now Youth Conference. Among the lessons shared with the 220 attendees was the idea that young people ought to say yes as leadership opportunities come their way. It's easy to discount yourself as "too young for the job" or "too inexperienced," but I encouraged them to try anyway. Say yes and see where it goes.

Liz Ferro, founder of the non-profit Girls with Sole, shared a similar message, explaining that despite her tough upbringing she pushed past obstacles, said yes to opportunities, and set her sights on something bigger. The result? Liz has completed over 60 marathons (at least one in every state), finished five Ironman Triathlons, and started an organization aimed at instilling strength, self-confidence, and pride in young women across the country.

As author Steven J. Stowell wrote, however, "Great leaders find ways to connect with their people and help them fulfill their potential." Maybe no one in the business understands this more than SDSU head football coach John Stiegelmeier, who has built strong teams for 20 seasons running. Coach Stig shared his understanding of teamwork and what's needed to produce a winning team – whether on the field or in the classroom.

Representatives from Google and The New Colossus, a Sioux Falls-based group dedicated to preventing human trafficking, were also on hand to give students tangible ways to lead among their peer groups today. After all, it's not your position in life that matters most. It's the choices you make to do what matters that creates true change and happiness. Our final presenter, motivational speaker V.J. Smith, focused in on this lesson. He told the story of a Walmart employee in Brookings named Marty. Marty might not have sat on the top of the corporate ladder, but he was a leader in his own right. Through gratitude, compassion, and positive thinking, Marty inspired those around him and eventually the world. It's an example all of us would benefit from following.

I get excited looking around South Dakota and seeing the boundless potential housed within our young people. As adults, we have a responsibility to empower our kids to step up and be leaders right where they are. After all, those who are seizing opportunities in the classroom today will be more comfortable with their ability to seize opportunities for South Dakota tomorrow. That's something to which we should all say yes.

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Today in Weather History

1888 - A late season hurricane brushed the East Coast with heavy rain and gale force winds. The hurricane passed inside Nantucket and over Cape Cod, then crossed Nova Scotia. (David Ludlum)

1896 - Snow and high winds hit the Northern Plains and the Upper Mississippi Valley, with a Thanksgiving Day blizzard across North Dakota. The storm was followed by a severe cold wave in the Upper Midwest. The temperature at Pokegama Dam MI plunged to 45 degrees below zero. (David Ludlum)








1987 - A Thanksgiving Day storm in the northeastern U.S. produced heavy snow in northern New England and upstate New York. Snowfall totals in Maine ranged up to twenty inches at Flagstaff Lake. Totals in New Hampshire ranged up to 18 inches at Errol. Gales lashed the coast of Maine and New Hampshire. A second storm, over the Southern and Central Rockies, produced nine inches of snow at Kanosh UT, and 13 inches at Divide CO, with five inches reported at Denver CO. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather over the Central Gulf Coast States during the late morning and afternoon hours. Five tornadoes were reported in Mississippi, with the tornadoes causing a million dollars damage at Ruleville, and in Warren County. In Utah, the town of Alta was blanketed with 15 inches of snow overnight, and during the day was buried under another 16.5 inches of snow. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

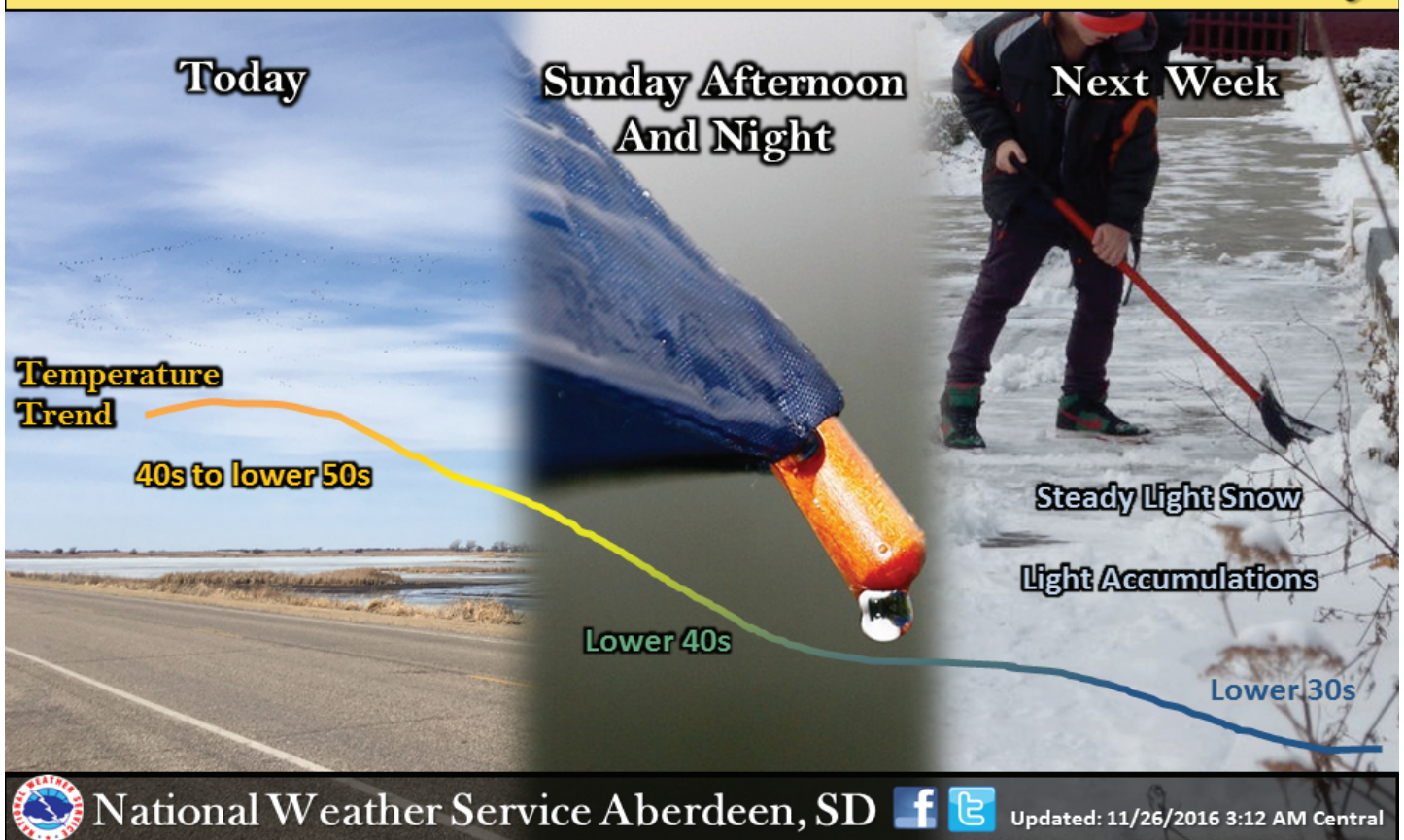
1989 - A massive storm over the western U.S. produced heavy snow in Utah, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. The storm produced more than two feet of snow in the higher elevations of northern and central Utah, bringing more than sixty inches of snow to the Alta Ski Resort in the Wasatch Mountains. Winds in Utah gusted to 60 mph at Bullfrog. The storm brought much needed snow to the ski resorts of Colorado, with 19 inches reported at Beaver Creek. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
						
Patchy Fog then Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny then Chance Rain	Rain Likely	Rain/Snow Likely	Chance Rain/Snow then Chance Snow	Rain/Snow Likely
High: 46 °F	Low: 24 °F	High: 41 °F	Low: 33 °F	High: 38 °F	Low: 30 °F	High: 36 °F

After a Fall Like Weekend... We'll Transition Back to Winter on Monday



Published on: 11/26/2016 at 3:16AM

Another warm day is in store for today, with highs in the 40s to lower 50s (warmest central). Rain will quickly move into the area late Sunday afternoon and transition to snow from west to east Sunday night into Monday. The light snow will continue through the first half of the work week, with temperatures returning to more normal values.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 42.1

Low Outside Temp: 21.2

High Gust: 13

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 70° in 1914

Record Low: -24° in 1996

Average High: 34°F

Average Low: 14°F

Average Precip in Nov.: 0.66

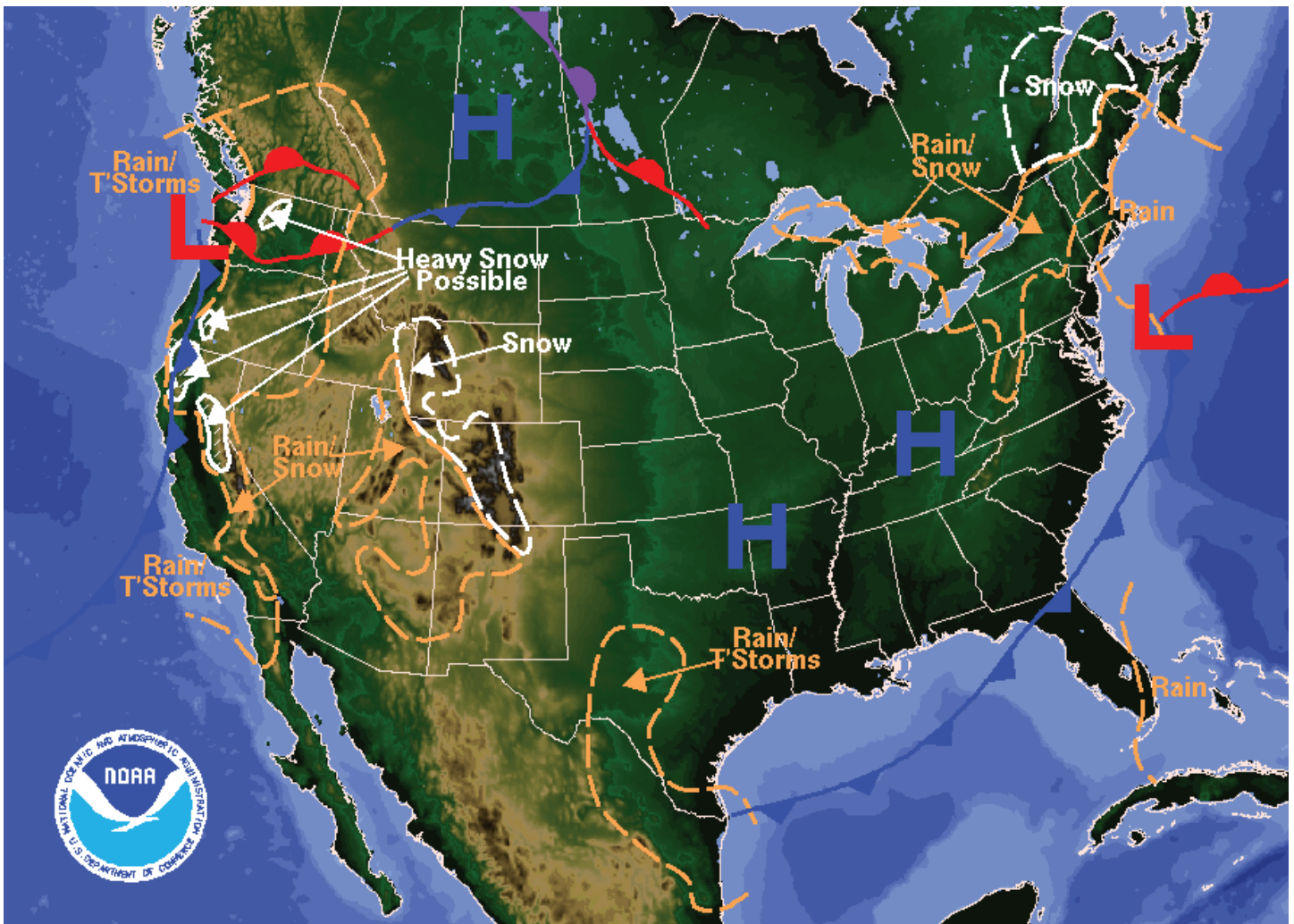
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.20

Average Precip to date: 21.13

Precip Year to Date: 15.20

Sunset Tonight: 4:54 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:49 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Sat, Nov 26, 2016, issued 4:02 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by Tate based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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WHEN WE NEED REST

It only lasted fifteen seconds.

But the 1906 earthquake that leveled most of San Francisco caused 375 deaths and left over 300,000 people homeless. Death, destruction and devastation were everywhere.

Tragedies occur every day – some much more significant and severe than others. But the significance of any tragedy is always personal – What impact does it have on me, my family or friends.

God is so good to us that we rarely prepare for the unwelcomed, unwanted or unanticipated events in our lives. They usually come unannounced or when we least expect them. When we awaken to a beautiful sunrise or go to bed following a glowing sunset, it always brings a contentment with life.

In times of prosperity there are many who want our friendship or our presence. It is good to laugh and be happy. But what happens when life falls apart? What do we do or where can we turn?

For the Christian there is always the Lord.

Jesus said, "Come unto me all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest!" He offers us His unconditional love when we feel abandoned, His strength when we are weak, His peace when we are troubled and His grace when we sin.

Prayer: How marvelous are Your gifts, our Father. To know that we can come to You whenever any need arises is beyond reason but not beyond Your compassion. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."



We now accept



for out patient therapy.

**1106 N 2nd St., Groton
605/397-2365**

News from the Associated Press

Martin leads UC Irvin to 63-52 win over South Dakota State

Jaron Martin had 17 points and Eyassu Worku added 15 as UC Irvine beat South Dakota State 63-52 in the Pentagon Showcase on Friday night. Martin was 4 of 7 from beyond the arc.

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Jaron Martin had 17 points and Eyassu Worku added a career-high 15 points as UC Irvine beat South Dakota State 63-52 in the Pentagon Showcase on Friday night.

Martin was 4 of 7 from beyond the arc. Jonathan Galloway added nine points and grabbed 10 rebounds for UC Irvine (3-2), which also beat South Dakota State 73-58 in the second game of the season.

The Anteaters had a 25-6 run late in the first half to go ahead 30-18 and took a 33-20 lead into the break. They pushed that to 53-37 with 3:41 remaining and coasted to the victory.

UCI limited the Jackrabbits to 14-of-55 (25.5 percent) shooting. The Anteaters converted 15 offensive rebounds into 16 second-chance points.

Mike Daum, who made 11 of 12 free throws, led South Dakota State (1-5) with 23 points and a career-high 18 rebounds. Reed Tellinghuisen added 11 points and A.J. Hess scored 10.

Standing Rock chairman says Army Corps to close camp access

By BLAKE NICHOLSON and AMY FORLITI, Associated Press

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — The chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe said Friday that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to close an area where people have been camping for months to protest the Dakota Access oil pipeline.

Dave Archambault said in a statement that he received a letter from the Corps, dated Friday, which says all lands north of the Cannonball River will be closed Dec. 5.

"The letter states that the lands will be closed to public access for safety concerns," Archambault said.

Representatives from the Army Corps of Engineers didn't immediately return messages Friday seeking comment and verification of the letter.

The letter, provided by the tribe, says: "To be clear, this means that no member of the general public, to include Dakota Access pipeline protesters, can be on these Corps lands."

It says anyone on land north of the river after Dec. 5 will be trespassing and may be prosecuted. It also says anyone who stays on the land does so at his or her own risk.

The letter, from Army Corps of Engineers Col. John Henderson, says the closure is necessary to protect the general public from violent confrontations between protesters and authorities and to protect demonstrators from illness, injury or death during North Dakota's harsh winter months. It also says that the area does not have necessary first responder services or facilities to protect people during the winter.

A free speech zone will be set up south of the river.

Archambault said the land to be closed includes the Oceti Sakowin camp, a sprawling encampment on Army Corps land about 50 miles south of Bismarck. For months, opponents of the four-state, \$3.8 billion pipeline have been camping in the area to protest the pipeline.

Some of the protests have resulted in violent confrontations and hundreds of arrests. A clash earlier this week near the main protest camp left a police officer and several protesters injured, including Sophia Wilansky, who suffered a serious arm injury and is in satisfactory condition in a Minneapolis hospital.

The Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Sioux tribes are fighting the Dakota Access project because they fear it will harm drinking water and cultural sites. Pipeline developer Energy Transfer Partners disputes that and says the 1,700-mile pipeline through the Dakotas, Iowa and Illinois will be safe.

The pipeline is nearly complete outside of a stretch beneath a Missouri River reservoir in southern North Dakota, just to the north of the Standing Rock reservation.

"Our Tribe is deeply disappointed in this decision by the United States, but our resolve to protect our water is stronger than ever," he said. He's asking pipeline opponents to continue to fight the pipeline's permitting process.

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Meanwhile, the leader of the Cheyenne River Sioux in South Dakota called for pipeline opponents to boycott businesses in North Dakota's capital, a move Bismarck's city administrator says is uncalled for and disappointing.

The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribal Council voted in September to not spend money in Bismarck and neighboring Mandan, and Chairman Harold Frazier at the time called on all tribal members to join the effort. Earlier this week, he sought to broaden the boycott to make a statement against what he calls "heavy-handed, illegal and violent oppression" of people who have protested against the pipeline for months.

Bismarck City Administrator Keith Hunke said Friday the boycott is disappointing given that the city's businesses aren't involved in the dispute. He said no businesses have reported an impact from boycotts and protest activity in the area is inconvenient, but hasn't cut into business's bottom lines.

"We've had some of our streets blocked for a period of time, but generally after a period of time the protesters disband and business gets back to normal," he said.

More than 560 protesters have been arrested since August in the Bismarck-Mandan area and at the main protest camp, including more than 30 at a Bismarck mall on Friday — one of the busiest days of the year. Police said protesters gathered for a prayer at Kirkwood Mall, and some refused to leave the entrance to a Target store when ordered.

Forliti reported from Minneapolis. Follow her on Twitter at: <http://www.twitter.com/amyforliti>.

Follow Blake Nicholson on Twitter at: <http://twitter.com/NicholsonBlake>

ETSU dominates 2nd half, dumps Milwaukee 86-62

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Hanner Mosquera-Perea scored 15 points and A.J. Merriweather 13 and East Tennessee pulled away in the second half for an 86-62 win over Milwaukee in the Sanford Pentagon Showcase on Friday.

David Burrell added 12 points and Devontavius Payne had 11 for the Buccaneers (3-1), who outscored the Panthers (1-3) 45-24 in the second half.

ETSU led 41-38 at the half and pushed the lead to 14 with 14:25 remaining on a 3-pointer by Payne. After a Panthers' free throw, Payne hit another 3 to make it 58-42 and the Buccaneers stayed comfortably ahead.

ETSU shot 55 percent in both halves, finishing 33 of 58. Milwaukee stayed close by shooting 62.5 percent in the first half (15 of 24) but went 4 of 25 in the second half.

Brock Stull had 16 points and Jeremy Johnson 14 off the bench for Milwaukee.

Shoppers flock to stores to snatch up Black Friday deals

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Shoppers are streaming to stores around South Dakota as the holiday shopping season kicks off.

Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, vies with the Saturday before Christmas as the biggest sales day.

For many shoppers, the season gets underway a little earlier. Many flocked to stores on Thanksgiving night to snatch up deals.

The Empire Mall in Sioux Falls opened its doors at 6 p.m. Thursday, with lines forming well before that. Most people were there to shop, but not everyone. Haden Dicus told KSFY-TV that "I just decided to come out and see the people freak out over stuff."

Fidel Castro, who defied US for 50 years, dies at 90 in Cuba

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN and PETER ORSI, Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — Fidel Castro, who led a rebel army to improbable victory, embraced Soviet-style communism and defied the power of 10 U.S. presidents during his half century rule of Cuba, has died at age 90.

With a shaking voice, President Raul Castro said on state television that his older brother died at 10:29 p.m. Friday. He ended the announcement by shouting the revolutionary slogan: "Toward victory, always!"

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Castro's reign over the island-nation 90 miles (145 kilometers) from Florida was marked by the U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis a year later that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. The bearded revolutionary, who survived a crippling U.S. trade embargo as well as dozens, possibly hundreds, of assassination plots, died 10 years after ill health forced him to hand power over to Raul.

Castro overcame imprisonment at the hands of dictator Fulgencio Batista, exile in Mexico and a disastrous start to his rebellion before triumphantly riding into Havana in January 1959 to become, at age 32, the youngest leader in Latin America. For decades, he served as an inspiration and source of support to revolutionaries from Latin America to Africa.

His commitment to socialism was unwavering, though his power finally began to fade in mid-2006 when a gastrointestinal ailment forced him to hand over the presidency to Raul in 2008, provisionally at first and then permanently. His defiant image lingered long after he gave up his trademark Cohiba cigars for health reasons and his tall frame grew stooped.

"Socialism or death" remained Castro's rallying cry even as Western-style democracy swept the globe and other communist regimes in China and Vietnam embraced capitalism, leaving this island of 11 million people an economically crippled Marxist curiosity.

He survived long enough to see Raul Castro negotiate an opening with U.S. President Barack Obama on Dec. 17, 2014, when Washington and Havana announced they would move to restore diplomatic ties for the first time since they were severed in 1961. He cautiously blessed the historic deal with his lifelong enemy in a letter published after a monthlong silence. Obama made a historic visit to Havana in March 2016.

Carlos Rodriguez, 15, was sitting in Havana's Miramar neighborhood when he heard that Fidel Castro had died.

"Fidel? Fidel?" he said, slapping his head in shock. "That's not what I was expecting. One always thought that he would last forever. It doesn't seem true."

"It's a tragedy," said 22-year-old nurse Dayan Montalvo. "We all grew up with him. I feel really hurt by the news that we just heard."

But the news cheered the community of Cuban exiles in Florida who had fled Castro's government. Thousands gathered in the streets in Miami's Little Havana to cheer and wave Cuban flags.

Fidel Castro Ruz was born Aug. 13, 1926, in eastern Cuba's sugar country, where his Spanish immigrant father worked first recruiting labor for U.S. sugar companies and later built up a prosperous plantation of his own.

Castro attended Jesuit schools, then the University of Havana, where he received law and social science degrees. His life as a rebel began in 1953 with a reckless attack on the Moncada military barracks in the eastern city of Santiago. Most of his comrades were killed and Fidel and his brother Raul went to prison.

Fidel turned his trial defense into a manifesto that he smuggled out of jail, famously declaring, "History will absolve me."

Freed under a pardon, Castro fled to Mexico and organized a rebel band that returned in 1956, sailing across the Gulf of Mexico to Cuba on a yacht named Granma. After losing most of his group in a bungled landing, he rallied support in Cuba's eastern Sierra Maestra mountains.

Three years later, tens of thousands spilled into the streets of Havana to celebrate Batista's downfall and catch a glimpse of Castro as his rebel caravan arrived in the capital on Jan. 8, 1959.

The U.S. was among the first to formally recognize his government, cautiously trusting Castro's early assurances he merely wanted to restore democracy, not install socialism.

Within months, Castro was imposing radical economic reforms. Members of the old government went before summary courts, and at least 582 were shot by firing squads over two years. Independent newspapers were closed and in the early years, homosexuals were herded into camps for "re-education."

In 1964, Castro acknowledged holding 15,000 political prisoners. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans fled, including Castro's daughter Alina Fernandez Revuelta and his younger sister Juana.

Still, the revolution thrilled millions in Cuba and across Latin America who saw it as an example of how the seemingly arrogant Yankees could be defied. And many on the island were happy to see the seizure

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of property of the landed class, the expulsion of American gangsters and the closure of their casinos.

Castro's speeches, lasting up to six hours, became the soundtrack of Cuban life and his 269-minute speech to the U.N. General Assembly in 1960 set the world body's record for length that still stood more than five decades later.

As Castro moved into the Soviet bloc, Washington began working to oust him, cutting U.S. purchases of sugar, the island's economic mainstay. Castro, in turn, confiscated \$1 billion in U.S. assets.

The American government imposed a trade embargo, banning virtually all U.S. exports to the island except for food and medicine, and it severed diplomatic ties on Jan. 3, 1961.

On April 16 of that year, Castro declared his revolution to be socialist, and the next day, about 1,400 Cuban exiles stormed the beach at the Bay of Pigs on Cuba's south coast. But the CIA-backed invasion failed.

The debacle forced the U.S. to give up on the idea of invading Cuba, but that didn't stop Washington and Castro's exiled enemies from trying to do him in. By Cuban count, he was the target of more than 630 assassination plots by militant Cuban exiles or the U.S. government.

The biggest crisis of the Cold War between Washington and Moscow exploded on Oct. 22, 1962, when President John F. Kennedy announced there were Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba and imposed a naval blockade of the island. Humankind held its breath, and after a tense week of diplomacy, Soviet leader Nikita Krushchev removed them. Never had the world felt so close to nuclear war.

Castro cobbled revolutionary groups together into the new Cuban Communist Party, with him as first secretary. Labor unions lost the right to strike. The Catholic Church and other religious institutions were harassed. Neighborhood "revolutionary defense committees" kept an eye on everyone.

Castro exported revolution to Latin American countries in the 1960s, and dispatched Cuban troops to Africa to fight Western-backed regimes in the 1970s. Over the decades, he sent Cuban doctors abroad to tend to the poor, and gave sanctuary to fugitive Black Panther leaders from the U.S.

But the collapse of the Soviet bloc ended billions in preferential trade and subsidies for Cuba, sending its economy into a tailspin. Castro briefly experimented with an opening to foreign capitalists and limited private enterprise.

As the end of the Cold War eased global tensions, many Latin American and European countries re-established relations with Cuba. In January 1998, Pope John Paul II visited a nation that had been officially atheist until the early 1990s.

Aided by a tourism boom, the economy slowly recovered and Castro steadily reasserted government control, stifling much of the limited free enterprise tolerated during harder times.

As flamboyant as he was in public, Castro tried to lead a discreet private life. He and his first wife, Mirta Diaz Balart, had one son before divorcing in 1956. Then, for more than four decades, Castro had a relationship with Dalia Soto del Valle. They had five sons together and were said to have married quietly in 1980.

By the time Castro resigned 49 years after his triumphant arrival in Havana, he was the world's longest ruling head of government, aside from monarchs.

In retirement, Castro voiced unwavering support as Raul slowly but deliberately enacted sweeping changes to the Marxist system he had built.

His longevity allowed the younger brother to consolidate control, perhaps lengthening the revolution well past both men's lives. In February 2013, Raul announced that he would retire as president in 2018 and named newly minted Vice President Miguel Diaz-Canel as his successor.

"I'll be 90 years old soon," Castro said at an April 2016 Communist Party congress where he made his most extensive public appearance in years. "Soon I'll be like all the others. The time will come for all of us, but the ideas of the Cuban Communists will remain as proof that on this planet, if one works with fervor and dignity, they can produce the material and cultural goods that human beings need and that need to be fought for without ever giving up."

Cuba's government announced that Castro's ashes would be interred on Dec. 4 in the eastern city of Santiago that was a birthplace of his revolution. That will follow more than a week of honors, including a nearly nationwide caravan retracing, in reverse, his tour from Santiago to Havana with the triumph of the revolution in 1959.

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Associated Press writer Anita Snow in Mexico City and AP news researcher Rhonda Shafner in New York contributed to this report.

Michael Weissenstein on Twitter: www.twitter.com/mweissenstein

Peter Orsi on Twitter: at www.twitter.com/Peter_Orsi

A look at Cuba, its people, government, economy

By The Associated Press

Key information about Cuba:

LAND — Largest island in Caribbean, covers 44,344 square miles (110,922 square kilometers), about size of Pennsylvania or Bulgaria. Rugged Sierra Maestra mountains at eastern end, but mostly flat or slightly rolling countryside.

PEOPLE — Population more than 11 million. About half mixed-race, 35 percent white, 15 percent black, with scattering of people descended from Chinese and other non-European immigrants. Parts of population have traces of original Indian peoples, but indigenous cultures died out long ago. Life expectancy of nearly 78 years and infant mortality of about 4.5 deaths per 1,000 live births, lowest in Latin America.

GOVERNMENT — Head of government and state is president of the Council of State and president of Council of Ministers, positions Fidel Castro held until he resigned in February 2008. Castro's younger brother Raul elected by National Assembly to replace him on Feb. 24, 2008.

ECONOMY — Still recovering from economic crisis that began in 1990 after losing Soviet aid and trade. Cuba posted steady growth since late 1990s that slowed dangerously by 2014. Cuba blames economic problems on U.S. trade embargo; detractors blame inefficient centralized planning. After modest economic reforms in mid-1990s, the government reasserted more centralized control beginning in 2004. In 2010, Raul Castro began reopening economy to limited free-market reforms and planned to lay off many state workers. Important sources of income include health services exported to Venezuela, tourism, sugar, nickel, tobacco, citrus, coffee, pharmaceuticals. Detente with U.S. announced in late December, 2014, raised hopes of faster growth.

Ignoring recount questions, Trump team focuses on new hires

By STEVE PEOPLES and TODD RICHMOND, Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. (AP) — President-elect Donald Trump's transition team is ignoring questions about efforts to recount votes in key battleground states, focusing instead on the latest additions to his administration.

Trump chose Fox News analyst Kathleen Troia "KT" McFarland to serve as deputy national security adviser and campaign attorney Donald McGahn as White House counsel. In a statement Friday, Trump cited McFarland's "tremendous experience and innate talent" and said McGahn "has a brilliant legal mind, excellent character and a deep understanding of constitutional law."

Having faced criticism about the inexperience of his initial picks, Trump found in McFarland someone who had worked under three presidents, although none since Ronald Reagan. McGahn, a veteran Republican election lawyer, served as Trump's attorney during the campaign. Neither requires Senate confirmation.

Trump was spending the long Thanksgiving holiday weekend with family at his Palm Beach estate, Mar-a-Lago, and was expected to return to New York on Sunday. He was scheduled to meet Monday with eight prospective administration hires, including several business leaders, Pennsylvania Rep. Lou Barletta and Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, Sheriff David Clarke, an aggressive opponent of the Black Lives Matter movement who is himself African-American.

Trump has been considering both former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and 2012 Republican presidential

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nominee Mitt Romney for secretary of state. In an unusual public airing of discord, Trump spokeswoman Kellyanne Conway tweeted this week that she had been "receiving a deluge of social media & private concerns re: Romney Some Trump loyalists warn against Romney as sec of state."

In Wisconsin, state elections officials said they would move forward with the first presidential recount in state history. Green Party candidate Jill Stein, who drew 1 percent of the vote nationally, had requested the recount in Wisconsin and vowed to seek recounts in Michigan and Pennsylvania.

While there is no evidence of election tampering in the states, Green Party spokesman George Martin insisted "the American public needs to have it investigated to make sure our votes count."

Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton leads the national popular vote by close to 2 million votes. Trump scored narrow victories in key battleground states, however, giving him the necessary 270 electoral votes to assume the presidency.

While Trump won in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, he holds a slim lead in Michigan, where a Republican presidential candidate hadn't won since 1988. The Associated Press still hasn't officially called that race, but Trump's 10,704-vote lead was expected to be certified by the state elections board Monday. The deadline to ask for a recount is Wednesday.

Trump leads by little more than 22,000 votes in Wisconsin. State administrator Michael Haas cited recount requests by Stein and independent candidate Rocky De La Fuente when he announced Friday that the recount was expected to be completed by the Dec. 13 federal deadline.

Associated Press writer David Eggert in Lansing, Michigan, contributed to this report.

13 detained in China over deadly construction collapse

By GERRY SHIH, Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — Chinese authorities detained 13 people over the collapse of scaffolding at a power plant construction site that killed 74 workers, as a preliminary investigation zeroed in on how the building company had rushed the job.

Most of the dead had been working on the interior concrete wall of a massive circular cooling tower 70 meters (230 feet) up when the scaffolding collapsed Thursday morning, resulting in one of China's most serious industrial accidents in years.

In a statement issued Saturday, the committee of the State Council, or China's cabinet, said early findings suggested that a shortened timeframe for the power plant project, hasty construction and mismanagement played a role in the disaster, without giving details.

Although authorities did not disclose details about the 13 detentions, the focus of the investigation has turned to the power plant's operator, Jiangxi Ganneng, and a major engineering firm, Hebei Yineng, which has taken on multiple high-profile power plant projects and has a history of workplace fatalities.

Yineng has won contracts to build plants in more than a dozen provinces and in Turkey and Malaysia, according to previous interviews given by executives. In 2012, seven Yineng builders in a cooling tower in Yunnan province tumbled to their deaths after scaffolding collapsed. Three years before that, two workers died after a vehicle accidentally backed into a scaffolding support beam at a Yineng-built cooling tower in Guangdong province.

Several of the company's publicly listed telephone lines and a mobile phone number for the company's legal representative rang unanswered on Friday. The company's websites could not be opened.

State media reports said the accident occurred during a change of work shifts, possibly accounting for the high death toll. Workers had also been toiling around-the-clock in three shifts to make progress on the project ahead of the arrival of bitter winter weather, according to local media interviews with surviving employees.

The 1,000-megawatt coal-fired plant had been designated a priority project by the province, likely adding to the pressure on workers.

The deadly accident has taken on added political significance in recent days after Chinese President Xi

Jinping urged local governments to hold those responsible accountable and the State Council established a special committee to investigate.

China has suffered several major work-safety accidents in recent years blamed on weak regulatory oversight, systemic corruption and pressure to boost production amid a slowing economy.

Counting 1 million crowds at anti-president rally in Seoul

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and YOUKYUNG LEE, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea is seeing its biggest wave of street demonstrations in decades but nobody is sure how many people are taking to the streets each week.

For the fifth-straight weekend, masses of protesters are expected to occupy major avenues in downtown Seoul on Saturday demanding the ouster of President Park Geun-hye. She is suspected of helping in the criminal activities of a secretive confidante who is accused of manipulating government affairs and extorting companies to build an illicit fortune.

The rally is certain to renew what has become a weekly back-and-forth between police and protest organizers, whose crowd estimates have differed widely in the previous four Saturdays.

There are many challenges for counting the number of protesters. The rallies stretch from midday to late night — some people stay for several hours, others just several minutes. The demonstrators not only gather in open space but also small alleys and between buildings. Some of them are constantly moving.

Here's a look at how police and protest organizers size the crowds at protests, and also how South Korean scientists and a technology company are exploring new ways to more accurately measure the number of protesters:

POLICE: MEASURING CROWD AT ITS PEAK

While the protest in Seoul on Nov. 12 might have been the largest since South Korea freed itself from dictatorship three decades ago, it's unclear how big it actually was. Police saw the crowd at 260,000, while organizers say 1 million turned out.

For the police, the aim is to measure the maximum crowd occupying a certain space at any given time so that they could determine the size of police personnel and resources to deploy, according to an official from the Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency, who didn't want to be named, citing office rules.

Police presume that, when sitting, six people would fill a space of 3.3 square meters (35.52 sq. feet), or 1 "pyeong," the aerial unit commonly used in South Korea. The same area would hold nine or 10 people when standing, police said.

Based on this, police consider the 32,100-square-meter (345,525-sq. feet) boulevard in front of the Gwanghwamun palace gate, which has been the center of the protests, as accommodating close to 600,000 people when fully packed.

Critics say the police model understates the actual number of demonstrators because it fails to track people moving in and out of the area during the duration of the protest, and is ill-equipped to measure protesters in non-open space, such as sidewalks and alleys between buildings.

ORGANIZERS: TRACKING EVERYONE WHO CAME AND WENT

Han Seon-beom, one of the protest organizers, admits outright that their measurements aren't scientific, but still argues they are more reliable than police numbers.

Organizers seek to track the entire flow of people from the protest's start to its finish. They collect estimates given by counters deployed at different locations to size up the crowds in each area and update the numbers throughout the duration of the protest.

They try to account for the people on the sidewalks, spaces between buildings and also those moving in and out of nearby subway stations and restaurants, Han said.

The numbers of participants reported by organized groups, such as labor unions, are also put into account.

"What you try to do is to count the first 1,000, like the first 20 rows of 50 people, and that gives you an

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idea of how many people you are seeing," said Han.

COMPANY: COUNTING NUMBER OF SIGNALS FROM SMARTPHONES

One South Korean retail analytics company measured the number of protesters by counting the number of smartphone signals.

Zoyi Corp. deployed about 60 people, each carrying a backpack with the company's Wi-Fi signal-detecting sensor, to the rally on Nov. 19.

They collected Wi-Fi and Bluetooth signals from smartphones for about seven hours from 2 p.m. at 53 spots and found about 369,372 smartphones that had their wireless signals on during the rally.

The company presumed that about half of smartphone users usually leave their Wi-Fi feature on and the other half switch it off, based on a separate survey on smartphone usage. It also assumed that about 20 percent of the smartphone signals were repetition from the same device. Based on this, Zoyi concluded that about 738,700 people joined the rally.

"The limitation of our method is that it can measure only those who kept their phones' Wi-Fi signals on," said An Nahyun, the company's chief operating officer.

SCIENTISTS LOOK AT PARTICLE PHYSICS AND MORE

Some scientists strived to improve accuracy by drawing methods from their own field. In general, they conclude that the protests must be larger than the police estimates.

Park Inkyu, a particle physicist, counted the number of people by applying a method that scientists use to measure particles in high energy physics, writing a code that counted the number of candle lights based on pictures from the rally.

Based on his own observation at the past rallies, Park assumed that at least half of the demonstrators did not bring a candle. He added the number of candles in the photo to the possible number of people without a candle and drew a conclusion that about four people were occupying 1 square meter (11 sq. feet) at the rally.

That means that the number of people occupying avenues, streets and alleys near the presidential office could range from 500,000 to 700,000 when the areas are packed, he said. The limitation of Park's estimate is that it cannot count the candles hidden behind other people or objects.

Another scientist suggested a way of measuring the crowds' movement.

Assuming that about 10 percent of the area at the rally is used as passageways for people who are moving, and also assuming that each person moves every 0.3 second, the number of people who came and left the Nov. 12 protest would have been three times larger than the police estimate, according to Won Byung Mook, a science and engineering professor at Sungkyunkwan University.

Won said scientists need more data to make their estimates more precise.

"There are many limitations in this method because it is based on assumption, not on vetted data," he said.

Follow Kim Tong-hyung at <https://twitter.com/KimTongHyung> and Youkyung Lee at <https://twitter.com/YKLeeAP>

Students complained about erratic driving before bus wreck

By **ERIK SCHELZIG**, Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Students and administrators raised concerns about a Tennessee school bus driver's behavior behind the wheel in the weeks before a crash that killed six children.

Police have charged driver Johnthony Walker with vehicular homicide after the Chattanooga crash. Federal authorities said Walker was driving off the designated bus route when he wrecked on a curvy road while carrying 37 children on their way home from Woodmore Elementary School.

Records released by the school district Friday include two written statements by students complaining about Walker's driving.

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"The bus driver drives fast," one student wrote earlier this month. "It feels like the bus is going to flip over... When someone is in the aisle he stops the bus and he makes people hit their heads."

Another student wrote: "The bus driver was doing sharp turns and he made me fly over to the next seat. We need seat belts."

On Nov. 2, a school official boarded the bus after the driver complained that students were not listening to him. One student had complained about the heat on the bus and cursed about it to the bus driver.

"The driver was now visibly upset and continued on by saying that he had another job and driving this bus was just a part-time job for him," wrote Carlis Shackelford, a behavioral specialist at the school. "Driver stated that he could just leave him at the school. He then stated 'or I can just leave the student on the bus and I will get off the bus and leave the school.'"

"Driver stated that he did not care about the students and proceeded to tell the students he did not care about them," Shackelford wrote.

The school district's transportation supervisor, Benjamin Coulter, responded that "we are addressing the issue with the driver."

National Transportation Safety Board Chairman Christopher A. Hart said in a news conference earlier this week that Walker had taken on a second job at an Amazon fulfillment center, and part of the agency's investigation will look at whether fatigue played a role in the wreck.

The bus driver had also complained to administrators that students would not listen to him when he told them not to stand in the bus or sit with their backs facing the front. The driver submitted 10 names of students he said were misbehaving. The transportation supervisor responded that the driver may have had some legitimate safety concerns but that the driver shouldn't report so many students.

"I don't want the driver to become discouraged, but he can't be turning 10 referrals in a day to you, either," Coulter wrote.

Woodmore Principal Brenda Adamson-Cothran asked for video of the bus leaving campus, noting that a few days earlier "the driver, in my opinion, was driving way too fast when he pulled out of our school."

It's unclear what the video showed; hyperlinks to it are redacted in the records.

On Nov. 16, Adamson-Cothran wrote to Coulter to tell him six students had reported that the driver "was swerving and purposely trying to cause them to fall today."

Walker was in custody at the Hamilton County Correctional Facility on Friday and had a court hearing scheduled for Tuesday. Jail records do not indicate whether he has an attorney.

The complaints about Walker appear to have begun in September when a parent wrote a letter to complain that the driver had cursed her kids and slammed on the brakes, causing them to hit their heads and fall out of their seats.

The parent wrote that if it happened again, she would take it upon herself "to beat his (expletive) my damn self."

In the days immediately after the crash, school officials repeatedly declined to comment on whether anyone had complained or how they responded. The correspondence about the driver was released after public records requests by The Associated Press and other media outlets.

Hamilton County schools spokeswoman Amy Katcher noted that Walker was employed by outside contractor Durham School Services, so the district may not have access to all the complaints about him.

The bus company has not responded to questions about its safety record or Walker's employment history. Durham CEO David A. Duke released a video this week statement expressing condolences to the families and pledging to work with investigators.

Coulter, the school district's transportation supervisor, said in a Nov. 2 email to Durham manager Domenic D'Amico that the Woodmore principal had to intervene several times when Walker was arguing with students.

"This may be a situation where he needs to be coached on how to deal with the students," Coulter wrote.

Wave of Mexico violence reveals hidden graves, severed heads

By JOSE ANTONIO RIVERA, Associated Press

ACAPULCO, Mexico (AP) — Soldiers and police fanned out Friday across the southern Mexican state of Guerrero, chasing a wounded gang leader and trying to quell a wave of violence that included the discovery of hidden graves holding dozens of bodies and a camp where gunmen stored the severed heads of nine rivals in a cooler.

The clashes between drug gangs were complicated by the fact that townspeople fed up with the violence had formed “community police” vigilante squads in many places. The squads often prevent police and soldiers from moving freely and sometimes act on behalf of the gangs.

Gov. Hector Astudillo announced that federal authorities would return to patrol areas where dozens of often-dismembered bodies have been dumped on roadsides in recent weeks.

The state has been riven, not just by the killings, but by the kidnapping of about a dozen people in the town of Ajuchitlan. Residents there announced they would create a vigilante force to look for the kidnap victims, an idea that threatened to create yet another armed group.

The Ajuchitlan residents were apparently kidnapped last week by a fugitive gang leader known as “El Tequilero,” who was believed to be wounded and hiding out with his kidnap victims in the mountains.

The state attorney general headed up a massive manhunt using helicopters and ground troops to look for him. But Astudillo warned that the vigilantes would have to withdraw to allow police and soldiers to do their jobs.

“The army, the state police, they can’t be there with armed groups,” Astudillo said. “Withdraw, and we will enter immediately. But for the two to be there at the same time, that is not possible.”

The governor also announced the creation of mixed army-police patrols in parts of the state torn apart by cartel turf battles. One such area is the municipality of Zitlala, where a drug gang had set up a rural camp where it held kidnap victims and disposed of bodies.

When one of the joint military-police patrols happened upon the camp earlier this week, it found a kidnapped man and what appeared to be clandestine burial pits. Investigators initially reported finding a dozen bodies. After days of digging, they discovered 32 bodies in 17 pits.

The camp is near the area where nine decapitated bodies were found dumped on a roadside last week. The nine heads found in coolers at the camp may belong to those bodies, investigators said. The bodies and heads were taken to forensic labs in a bid to identify them.

The area has been the scene of turf battles between two rival drug gangs — the Rojos and the Arillos — who engage in extortion, kidnappings and killings. That rivalry has resulted in hundreds of deaths and disappearances in recent years.

But in recent weeks the violence has spread to other areas, apparently as a result of turf battles between two or three other gangs, including the La Familia and the Tequileros gangs.

Astudillo condemned what he has called the wave of “barbarism and savagery,” and his office called the situation “a public disturbance caused by organized crime.”

Soldiers were combing the area to see if there are any more graves. Investigators were working to identify the bodies and the killers, said Roberto Alvarez Heredia, spokesman for the Guerrero Coordinating Group.

And in Tierra Colorada, nearer to the resort of Acapulco, rival vigilante groups have been engaged in a series of battles for control of the town, leading to fears the “community police” may be taking sides in the gang wars.

“The truth is, they are not really community forces, nor are they police,” Astudillo said. “They are armed groups that unfortunately carry out acts ... that generate more violence and confrontation, rather than help.”

The largely rural, impoverished state had 1,832 reported homicides in the first 10 months of 2016. If that rate continues unabated, Guerrero would be on track to have a homicide rate of about 60 per 100,000. That would rival the recent peak year of violence in the state, in 2012, when there were about 68 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants.

Judge: Roof competent to stand trial in church shooting

By JEFFREY COLLINS, Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — The white man charged in the shooting deaths of nine black parishioners at a South Carolina church last year is competent to stand trial, a federal judge ruled Friday.

U.S. District Judge Richard Gergel's decision clears the way for jury selection to restart Monday in the hate-crimes trial of 22-year-old Dylann Roof.

The judge had delayed the process of narrowing the final jury pool on Nov. 7 when Roof's lawyers suggested their client either didn't understand the charges against him or couldn't properly help them with his defense. The lawyers did not say what led them to question Roof's fitness for trial.

Roof is charged in federal court with hate crimes, obstruction of religion and other counts in connection with the June 17, 2015 attack at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston. He could face the death penalty if convicted.

The decision came after Gergel wrapped up a hastily called two-day hearing to determine if Roof is mentally fit to stand trial.

The judge said he took the rare step of keeping the hearing closed to the public and media because Roof made statements to a psychologist that might not be legal to use at his trial and could taint potential jurors.

The judge said Friday that he refrained from releasing a transcript of the hearing for the same reason, reversing an earlier pledge to release a redacted transcript. Family members of the victims have complained about the secrecy surrounding the proceedings, but Gergel maintains that the steps he has taken are to ensure that Roof receives a fair trial and that pre-trial exposure doesn't provide grounds for an appeal.

At Roof's competency hearing, Gergel heard testimony from psychologist James Ballenger and four other unnamed witnesses and reviewed sworn statements from three others, the judge wrote in his order.

Roof also has already been found competent in state court, where prosecutors plan a second death penalty trial on nine counts of murder.

According to police, Roof sat through nearly an hour of prayer and Bible study at the church with its pastor and 11 others before pulling a gun from his fanny pack near the end of the class and firing dozens of shots.

Roof hurled racial insults at the six women and three men he is charged with of killing and the three people left alive, authorities said. He said he left the three unharmed so they could tell the world the shootings were because he hated black people.

Follow Jeffrey Collins on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/JSCollinsAP>. His work can be found at <http://bigstory.ap.org/content/jeffrey-collins>

Stores try to cater to savvier customers on Black Friday

By ANNE D'INNOCENZIO, AP Retail Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Even people who said they'd already done their shopping online came out for Black Friday to spend time with family members or just for the fun of looking.

But it's those very shoppers retailers are trying to keep as loyal customers, working to improve their own online sites and letting people pick up purchases in the store as the retailers try to fend off the Amazon juggernaut. Even as retailers kick off the shopping season earlier each year, the day after Thanksgiving is still one of the busiest sales days of the year. It's also becoming an American export to other countries.

Shoppers were on the hunt for deals and were at the stores for entertainment Friday. Store executives say they see customers doing more research online before they go shop. That can mean more browsers turn into buyers, but also that they are visiting fewer stores in person.

"If I've seen it on the internet and I find a better deal than I saw on the internet, I'll buy it," said Dianna Ramirez, who was looking for a television at the Crossgates Mall in suburban Albany, New York.

Shamika Malloy of Albany was also there shopping for her four teenage children. Her must-have item a

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laptop for a daughter in college. Malloy said she hadn't yet shopped online but usually does so.

"It's better than coming in the store. If you do it online, you save and you can get it delivered right to the house for free. Can't beat that." But she said she wouldn't shop at as many places as last year. "Whoever's got the best deals, that's where I go."

This weekend is crucial to set the tone for the holiday season. Around 137 million people plan to or are considering doing their shopping during the Thanksgiving weekend, according to a survey conducted for the National Retail Federation trade group. That includes online and store shopping.

The Black Friday mentality and marketing approach has even crossed the Atlantic and is shaping shopping habits in much of Britain. Many big box stores opened early Friday morning while others focused on cutting online prices or combining the two. Some Swiss stores that have started offering American-style "Black Friday" discounts online have seen their sites freeze, slow down or crash under a surge in traffic.

With the competition for customers so intense, many stores were open Thursday evening in what they hope will be a new holiday tradition. Retailers have also been spreading deals out more throughout the week which may have diluted the shopping.

"It was a really good start. But I have never seen Black Friday morning so calm," said Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst at NPD Group, a market research firm, who visited malls on Long Island on Friday. He believes the weekend's sales will likely rise from last year because shoppers did lots of buying, including pricey flat-screen TVs.

The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, expects holiday sales to rise 3.6 percent to \$655.8 billion for November and December, better than the 3 percent growth seen for those months last year. That excludes car sales, gas and restaurant receipts, but includes online spending and other non-store sales such as catalog spending. Online sales are expected to be up 7 percent to 10 percent to as much as \$117 billion, compared to a 9 percent growth rate last year. That means that online sales could account for 18 percent of overall holiday sales.

While many major retailers reported strong online sales for Thursday and Friday, they acknowledge they also are working harder to lure shoppers to stores.

Macy's has been offering exclusive deals for its app users. Target will be pushing its Cyber Monday deals on Sunday and spreading them to the stores as well as online, and CEO Brian Cornell thinks those days could be the busiest of the year. Saks Fifth Avenue has started offering concierge help on its website.

J. C. Penney, a laggard in the online arena, is quickly catching up under CEO Marvin Ellison. After Penney resumed selling major appliances this year in time for the holidays, Ellison, a former executive at Home Depot, says shoppers come into the stores very informed about the products. He also said a focus on toys for the holidays has also helped fuel traffic in stores and online.

Penney also started its Black Friday online sales on Wednesday instead of Thursday to compete better with online-only companies.

Kohl's, too, has also been heavily investing in sprucing up its shopping app and pulling forward some online deals. Chief Executive Kevin Mansell says online sales broke records for Thanksgiving, but store visits showed solid growth as well. And Toys R Us, which saw strong traffic at stores and online, will be doing more online flash sales.

Both kinds of customers were at the Mall of America in Minnesota — which was closed on Thanksgiving this year — on Friday morning. Jennifer Cleveland was hoping to tackle a shopping list of gifts for in-laws and some winter gear. It's her second Black Friday shopping trip, and she came back to score some big deals.

"I came last year and discovered sales are better than online," she said.

But Julie Singewald, 44, said she was there merely as the vehicle — "and sometimes the credit card" — as her daughters shopped. Singewald is doing more of her own shopping online.

"I'm a point-and-click person," she said. "If it were up to me, I would be in my pajamas and on my computer at home."

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Associated Press writers Kyle Potter in Bloomington, Minnesota, Ben Finley in Norfolk, Virginia, John Kekis in Albany, New York and Matt O'Brien in Cranston, Rhode Island, contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 26, the 331st day of 2016. There are 35 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 26, 1941, U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull delivered a note to Japan's ambassador to the United States, Kichisaburo Nomura (kee-chee-sah-boor-oh noh-moo-rah), setting forth U.S. demands for "lasting and extensive peace throughout the Pacific area." The same day, a Japanese naval task force consisting of six aircraft carriers, left the Kuril Islands, headed toward Hawaii.

On this date:

In 1789, Americans observed a day of thanksgiving set aside by President George Washington to mark the adoption of the Constitution of the United States.

In 1864, English mathematician and writer Charles Dodgson presented a handwritten and illustrated manuscript, "Alice's Adventures Under Ground," to his 12-year-old friend Alice Pleasance Liddell; the book was later turned into "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland."

In 1933, a judge in New York ruled the James Joyce book "Ulysses" was not obscene and could be published in the United States.

In 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered nationwide gasoline rationing, beginning Dec. 1. The Warner Bros. motion picture "Casablanca," starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman, had its world premiere at the Hollywood Theater in New York.

In 1944, a month and a day following her Carnegie Hall recital, New York socialite and self-styled soprano Florence Foster Jenkins died at age 76.

In 1950, China entered the Korean War, launching a counteroffensive against soldiers from the United Nations, the U.S. and South Korea.

In 1965, France launched its first satellite, the 92-pound Asterix, into orbit.

In 1973, President Richard Nixon's personal secretary, Rose Mary Woods, told a federal court that she'd accidentally caused part of the 18-1/2-minute gap in a key Watergate tape.

In 1976, the Sex Pistols' debut single, "Anarchy in the U.K.," was released by EMI.

In 1986, President Ronald Reagan appointed a commission headed by former Senator John Tower to investigate his National Security Council staff in the wake of the Iran-Contra affair.

In 1990, Japanese business giant Matsushita (mat-soosh-tah) Electric Industrial Co. agreed to acquire MCA Corp., owner of Universal Studios, for \$6.6 billion.

In 1991, the Stars and Stripes were lowered for the last time at Clark Air Base in the Philippines as the United States abandoned one of its oldest and largest overseas installations, which was damaged by a volcano.

Ten years ago: In New York City, an angry crowd demanded to know why police officers killed Sean Bell, an unarmed man, on the day of his wedding by firing dozens of shots that also wounded two of Bell's friends. In Turkey, tens of thousands of protesters denounced Pope Benedict XVI as an enemy of Islam two days before the pontiff's scheduled visit. Rafael Correa won Ecuador's presidential runoff.

Five years ago: In a friendly-fire incident that further strained relations between the United States and Pakistan, U.S. forces launched airstrikes that mistakenly killed 24 Pakistani troops at two posts along the Afghan border. NASA's Curiosity rover blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center on an 8½-month, 354 million-mile journey to Mars (it arrived in Aug. 2012). NBA players and owners reached a tentative agreement to end a 149-day lockout.

One year ago: French President Francois Hollande (frahn-SWAH' oh-LAWND') and Russian President Vladimir Putin (POO'-tih) agreed to tighten cooperation in the fight against the Islamic State group. Pope

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Francis celebrated his first Mass in Africa; later that day in Nairobi, Kenya, the pope met with several hundred priests and nuns, urging them to serve others and not be served. The White House underwent a Thanksgiving Day lockdown after a man draped in an American flag jumped the fence.

Today's Birthdays: Impressionist Rich Little is 78. Singer Tina Turner is 77. Singer Jean Terrell is 72. Pop musician John McVie is 71. Actress Marianne Muellerleile is 68. Actor Scott Jacoby is 60. Actress Jamie Rose is 57. Country singer Linda Davis is 54. Actor Scott Adsit is 51. Blues singer-musician Bernard Allison is 51. Country singer-musician Steve Grisaffe is 51. Actress Kristin Bauer is 43. Actor Peter Facinelli is 43. Actress Tammy Lynn Michaels Etheridge is 42. DJ/record label executive DJ Khaled (KAL'-ehd) is 41. Actress Maia (MY'-ah) Campbell is 40. Country singer Joe Nichols is 40. Contemporary Christian musicians Randy and Anthony Armstrong (Red) are 38. Actress Jessica Bowman is 36. Pop singer Natasha Bedingfield is 35. Country singer-musician Mike Gossin (Gloriana Rock) is 32. Rock musician Ben Wysocki (The Fray) is 32. Singer Lil Fizz is 31. Singer Aubrey Collins is 29.

Thought for Today: "Better to trust the man who is frequently in error than the one who is never in doubt." — Eric Sevareid, broadcast journalist (born this date in 1912, died 1992).