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The Matt and Casey Johnson home at 225 E. 11th Ave. used blue, green and red lights to decorate their house for the Christmas season.

Apts for Rent

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

The cardboard/paper
recycling trailer at the school is **Closed**

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By Richard P. Holm M.D.



On Beagles, Giraffes, Wolf pups, and Genetics

When did we first understand what directs the shape of our nose, foot size, personality, and chance of surviving in a tough world? There is an interesting history about how we learned that our ancestral genes and environment are responsible for much of this.

Hippocrates and Aristotle suggested that hereditary material gathers from throughout the parent's bodies and mixes during sexual congress. About the same time, ancient scholars from India added two additional factors: the diet of the mother, and the soul, which enters the baby from some undefined place.

In the mid-1700s Carl Linneaus, a brilliant Swedish botanist/physician, believed that shared parental fluids and environmental factors could influence inheritance. Late in the 1700s, Jean-Baptist Lamarck proposed that animals can acquire characteristics from their environment and pass that on directly. His famous example was the long neck of the giraffe that resulted from several generations of ancestors stretching to reach leaves on high branches, eventually passing this characteristic on to their offspring.

In the mid-1800s, the understanding of genetics and heredity were further advanced by Friar Gregor Mendel, who worked mostly on pea plants. His observations, known as the laws of Mendelian Inheritance, are still taught in biology classes. About the same time as Mendel's discoveries, English naturalist Charles Darwin compiled observations of animals and plants from a five year around-the-world sailing expedition on the HMS Beagle. His revolutionary work came out in 1859, entitled *On the Origin of Species*, and changed everything.

Darwin defined evolution as the result of natural selection acting on random mutations or beneficial traits. Put it another way: each species can evolve through the survival of the fittest of each subsequent offspring. For example, the weakest wolf pups of the litter don't make it, but the strongest are able to reproduce with an equally fit mate and have offspring, passing on the advantageous traits through natural selection. Scientists felt that with Darwin they finally had the answer to the puzzle. But controversy followed Darwin like a pack of wild dogs.

Darwin was opposed by many religious leaders since God seemed removed from the process. Darwin, a very religious man, believed the hand of God worked through natural selection. He believed in the idea of intelligent design; that you could see God's hand by examining creation. That did not and still does not satisfy strict believers, but that's a discussion for another time.

Most recently, we've discovered that environmental factors like starvation, smoking, or stress can activate or suppress genetic codes, and those changes can be passed on, reviving Lamarck's ideas of environmental influence. I don't have to stick out my neck too far to say that there is great cause for excitement in the emerging field of epigenetics.

Illegally Dumped Snow Can Cause Problems

PIERRE, S.D. - The South Dakota Department of Transportation reminds the public and commercial snow removal operators that it is illegal to place or dump excess snow on highway right of way, which includes driving surfaces, shoulders and ditches.

"The recent snowstorm across western and central South Dakota the past few days has deposited a large amount of snow in some areas," said Todd Seaman, Rapid City region engineer. "The space within the right of way needs to be reserved for future snow that may fall on the road. If the department's plow operators do not have a place to put that snow, it severely hampers their ability to clear roadways."

Violation of the anti-dumping law is a Class 1 misdemeanor, with a penalty of up to one year in jail, \$2,000 in fines, or both. It is the policy of the SDDOT to remove snow that has been illegally piled within the highway right of way that may be a safety hazard. In addition, violators will be billed for the costs of removing illegally dumped snow.

"Piling snow in the state highway right of way can be very dangerous," says Seaman. "Snow piles can restrict sight distance, as well as present an extreme hazard if a vehicle leaves the roadway. Snow piles that remain adjacent to the road may cause additional drifting and visibility problems posing more safety hazards to travelers, as well as additional expenses for manpower and equipment to remove the illegally dumped snow."

Property owners and access users are reminded it is their responsibility to remove snow from the ends of driveways and around their own mailboxes.

The department asks landowners and commercial snow-removal operators to keep excess snow on private property or haul it to legal dumping sites.

Help Wanted!

The South Dakota Creativity Association board (SD DI) is currently looking for people interested in filling open Affiliate and Regional Challenge Master positions for the upcoming tournament season. These positions involve studying a current Destination Imagination Challenge and being involved in insuring that consistency in appraising is maintained from tournament to tournament throughout our state. Many of these positions are open this year due to retiring long-time dedicated volunteers. This is a volunteer position, but the board helps defray some travel costs. The tournaments run from the end of February to the end of March, but we'd like these positions filled within the next month. Please pass this on to anyone that you think might be interested in a position. If interested yourself, or if you want more details as to what the position entails, please contact the SD Affiliate Director, Dean Fenenga at di.soda.ad@gmail.com. The board and hundreds of students across our state thank you for your support of South Dakota Destination Imagination.

How to Turn Monetary Gifts into Teachable Moments

By Nathaniel Sillin

Children and teenagers who received monetary gifts for the holidays are often excited to choose what to buy. While they should be allowed to spend some of the money or gift cards, as a parent, you could also use these windfall gains as an opportunity to teach and practice important personal finance lessons.

Here are a few ideas to start with, although you can alter the message or subject matter to match your child's experience and ability to understand the topic.

Create money goals together. Planning how your child will save or spend monetary gifts is a valuable skill and practice no matter their age. (If you don't have a personal plan, this is a great opportunity to set an example by developing your financial path as well.)

You can start by drawing three columns – spending, saving and giving – and having them write a few goals for each. Explain the difference and importance of long- and short-term goals, and the value of having an emergency fund (for kids this could help pay for a car repair or bike tire).

Set priorities and discuss the big picture. Have them add up all they received and divide it into each column. Offer guidance to help them determine how much to put into saving and charity, taking the time to explain your reasoning.

They'll likely find that there isn't enough money to make a significant impact on all their goals and they'll need to prioritize based on how important each goal is to them. Share your own experiences and how sometimes it's better to save for a bigger and better purchase later. You could also have them calculate how expected earnings from allowance, working or upcoming holidays or birthdays could help them achieve their unrealized goals.

Decide where to store the savings. If they don't already have one, it might be a good time to open a bank account with your children. Go over the differences between a checking and savings account and how they can store the money they received and earn. Your kids can then decide how to split their funds between checking and savings based on their goals.

Gift cards can pose a challenge, particularly if they're store-specific cards. Children who receive them can't deposit them at the bank, and they should take this into account as they determine which priorities they can meet and which may need to wait.

However, there are online marketplaces where they can buy and sell gift cards. How much they'll pay and receive depends on the marketplace and the store – an example of supply and demand in action.

Comparison shop before making a purchase. No doubt children are going to want to spend some of the money right away. It offers an excellent opportunity to discuss the importance of comparison shopping.

Comparing prices at various retailers can help them find a good deal, and they should also consider several alternative but similar purchases. Being able to figure out what best fits one's needs, wants and budget is an important skill at any age.

Discuss the time value of money and importance of saving wisely. Older children might be ready to learn about the time value of money, the idea that a dollar today is worth more than a dollar in the future.

You could discuss how inflation can decrease the purchasing power of money over time. Older children might be able to think of examples, and you can reinforce the point with images of old advertisements for 5 cent soda or gum.

The next step might be to discuss the importance of saving and investing and how compound interest could potentially offset or supersede the effects of inflation. Perhaps conclude by touching on opportunity costs, the trade-offs that come from every decision.

Bottom line: You can't force behaviors, but you can use teaching moments to explain and practice valuable money management skills. The holidays are a great opportunity as many children receive gift cards or money, and these lessons can continue throughout the year. Try to reflect the skills and practices you're teaching in your day to day life as well. Children can pick up on the non-verbal lessons you demonstrate as much as the explicit lessons you sit down and teach.

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

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Highway 12 Corridor Study Aberdeen to Ipswich Project Update

IPSWICH, S.D. – On June 30, 2016, the South Dakota Department of Transportation held the first of two open house style public meetings to gather input on the U.S. Highway 12 Corridor from Aberdeen to Ipswich.

More than 100 individuals attended the open house held at Ipswich High School. As part of the public comment period, SDDOT and its consultant received a substantial number of written comments that have been integrated into the development of improvement strategies for the Highway 12 corridor.

The summary of public input received as part of the first public input meeting is posted online at www.us12study.com.

As part of the public input process, it was noted that additional traffic analysis reflecting peak conditions along the Highway 12 corridor during the fall harvest would be beneficial for the study. Counts were completed in Oct. 2016, to give SDDOT and its consultant an additional set of data along the Highway 12 corridor that should account for heavier seasonal truck traffic patterns.

In the time since the first public input meeting, SDDOT and its consultant have been working to incorporate the new data and public input into the development of both intersection and corridor level improvements to both safety and mobility along Highway 12.

A second public meeting to present the newly compiled information and updated schedule is planned to be held on Jan. 30, at the Ipswich High School Theater.

4-H Leader Training To Be Held Jan. 17, 2017 Across South Dakota

BROOKINGS, S.D. - SDSU Extension and the State 4-H Office invite 4-H leaders and volunteers to attend a Quarterly Leader Training January 17, 2017.

The training will be held from 7 to 9 pm CST (6 to 8 MT) at West River Ag Center and the seven SDSU Extension Regional Centers in Brookings, Pierre, Winner, Lemmon, Aberdeen, Mitchell, Watertown and Sioux Falls.

"This session will give you lots of resources and talking points to take back to your clubs and leaders' associations," said Audrey Rider, SDSU Extension 4-H Volunteer Field Specialist.

What to expect

This quarterly leader training will provide information on the following:

Getting older members excited and active in the club setting;
Hear the Voices of Your Club - Group Decision Making Processes;
Dealing with Disappointment - presented by Dr. Amber Letcher;
4-H Online club leader navigation; and
iGrow demonstration/navigation.

The trainings are open to all 4-H members, leaders, volunteers and parents. The trainings will focus on a variety of training topics and keep everyone informed throughout the 4-H year.

No RSVP is required to attend this free training.

Upcoming training dates include: April 18, 2017 and July (TBD), which will focus on event preparation.

Location details:

Aberdeen SDSU Regional Extension Center (13 Second Ave. SE, Aberdeen, SD 57401; 605.626.2870)

Brookings SDSU Regional Extension Center (on the campus of SDSU, Pugsley 2nd floor 1057 8th Street Brookings SD)

Lemmon SDSU Regional Extension Center (408 Eighth St. W., Lemmon, SD 57638; 605.374.4177)

Mitchell SDSU Regional Extension Center (1800 E. Spruce St., Mitchell, SD 57301; 605.995.7378)

Pierre SDSU Regional Extension Center (412 W. Missouri Ave., Pierre, SD 57501; 605.773.8120)

Rapid City West River Ag Center (1905 Plaza Blvd., Rapid City, SD 57702; 605.394.2236)

Sioux Falls SDSU Regional Extension Center (2001 E. Eighth St., Sioux Falls, SD 57103; 605.782.3290)

Watertown SDSU Regional Extension Center (1910 W. Kemp Ave., Watertown, SD 57201; 605.882.5140)

Winner SDSU Regional Extension Center (325 S. Monroe St., P.O. Box 270, Winner, SD 57580; 605.842.1267)

To learn more about 4-H, contact your local SDSU Extension 4-H Youth Program Advisor, a complete listing can be found at www.iGrow.org.

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70,000 BTU Heater- \$249.00

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Today in Weather History

December 27, 1959: Precipitation began as freezing rain on the morning of the 27th throughout the eastern half of South Dakota, changing to snow mixed with occasional sleet late on the 27th, then continued as mostly snow through the late afternoon of the 28th. Glaze caused extensive breakage of tree limbs and power and telephone lines in southeast sections of the state and in scattered communities in the northeast counties. More than 40 communities were without telephone service for more than 24 hours. Highway travel was very dangerous; one man was killed when a tractor skidded on an icy highway and overturned on him in Kingsbury County. Strong winds averaging 20 to 25 mph both dates increased breakage of ice-laded utility wires and caused drifting and blocking of highways by the 3 to 6 inch snowfall. Damage and repair costs to utility lines were estimated at \$400,000.

December 27, 1987: A winter storm gave some freezing rain and snow to southern and eastern South Dakota and southwest and west central Minnesota on the 27th and 28th. In Minnesota, freezing rain began Sunday morning the 27th before changing to heavy snow, which extended into the 28th. The heaviest snowfall was across the high terrain of southwest Minnesota. In southern and eastern South Dakota, six to twelve inches of snow fell. Strong northwest winds of 20-40 mph hampered travel and snow removal. Snow drifts up to 6 feet deep were common. Across many areas of southern Minnesota, visibilities were reduced to zero due to blowing snow. Snowfall amounts in South Dakota included 12 inches in DeSmet; 10 inches in Wessington Springs and Madison; 9 inches in Huron; 8 inches in Pierre, Brookings, Mission and McCook County; 7 inches in Sioux Falls, Kadoka, Pine Ridge, and Martin. 8 inches also fell in Watertown and Highmore, with 7 inches at Bryant and 6 inches in Clear Lake.

1869 - A post Christmas storm in New York and Vermont produced record storm totals of 30 inches at Burlington, VT, and 39 inches at Montpelier VT. A public emergency was declared in Vermont. (David Ludlum)

1892 - An Atlantic coast storm produced a record 18.6 inches of snow at Norfolk, VA, including 17.7 inches in 24 hours. The storm also produced 9.5 inches of snow at Raleigh NC, and brought snow to northern Florida for the first time in 35 years. (26th- 28th) (The Weather Channel)

1982 - The worst Louisiana rainstorm in more than 100 years came to an end. More than 18 inches fell at Vinton, LA, during the three day storm. Flooding was widespread, and property damage was estimated at 100 to 200 million dollars. President Reagan visited the state and declared ten parishes in northeastern Louisiana disaster areas. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - A winter storm produced snow and high winds in Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska. Denver CO experienced its worst snowstorm since December 1983 as high winds gusting to 46 mph created near blizzard conditions, whipping the fifteen inch snow into drifts five feet high, and closing Stapleton Airport. Snowfall totals in the foothills southwest of Denver ranged up to 42 inches, at Intercanyon. Blizzard conditions raged across southeastern Wyoming through the day, stranding 300 holiday travelers in the tiny town of Chugwater. Heavier snowfall totals included 19 inches at La Grange WY, and 22 inches at Elsmere NE. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)








1988 - Severe thunderstorms developing along a cold front in the south central U.S. spawned a dozen tornadoes in Mississippi between early afternoon and sunrise the following day. A tornado at Harpersville destroyed five chicken homes killing thousands of chickens. Strong thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Rolling Fork MS. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Half a dozen cities in the northeastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date, including Elkins, WV, with a reading of 13 degrees below zero. Watertown NY was the cold spot in the nation with a morning low of 37 degrees below zero. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

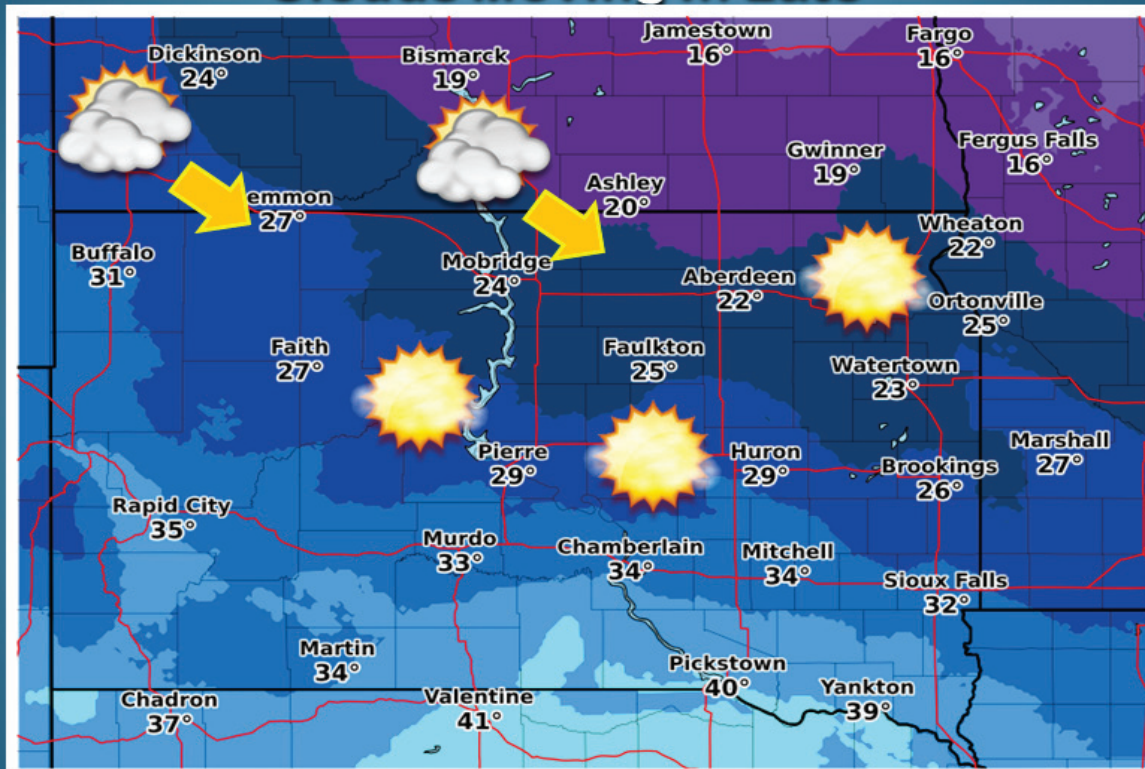
2004 - A major storm system affected parts of the western United States during December 27-29, bringing a variety of weather conditions to the region. Heavy rainfall broke daily precipitation records at some locations in California. Very heavy snow fell across the Sierra Nevada Mountains, with some areas receiving several feet of accumulation. Winds with this weather system gusted over 65 mph at some coastal and mountain locations in California.

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Today	Tonight	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday	Thursday Night	Friday
						
Mostly Sunny	Mostly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Partly Cloudy and Blustery	Mostly Sunny and Blustery	Partly Cloudy	Mostly Cloudy
High: 21 °F	Low: 12 °F↑	High: 34 °F	Low: 21 °F	High: 28 °F	Low: 10 °F	High: 28 °F

Mostly Sunny With Average Temperatures Clouds Moving In Late



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD

weather.gov/Aberdeen



National Weather Service Aberdeen



@NWSAberdeen

Published on: 12/27/2016 at 4:35AM

Weak high pressure will dominate conditions today. A weak system will move mainly north of the area tonight, which will bring in some cloud cover and breezy conditions.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 36.1

Low Outside Temp: 12.1

High Gust: 39

Rain: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 54° in 1928

Record Low: -29° in 1914

Average High: 23°F

Average Low: 3°F

Average Precip in Dec.: 0.45

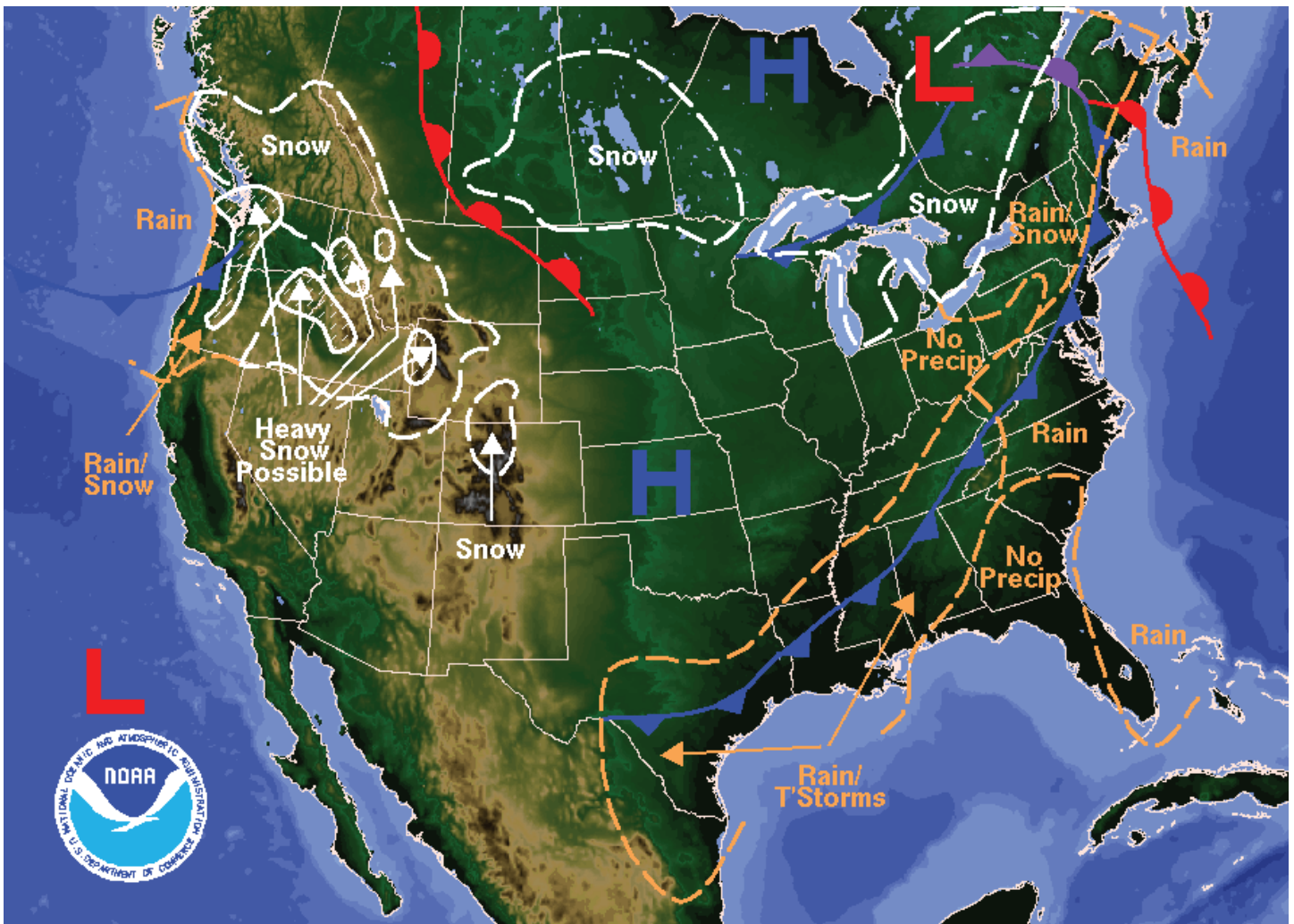
Precip to date in Dec.: 1.74

Average Precip to date: 21.65

Precip Year to Date: 19.08

Sunset Tonight: 4:57 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 8:13 a.m.



Weather Forecast for Tue, Dec 27, 2016, issued 4:55 AM EST
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McReynolds based on WPC, SPC and NHC forecasts

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RECEIVING AND BELIEVING

God works in an unusual way. Before we can ever receive anything from Him, we must believe in His power and ability to do what He says He is capable of doing.

An excellent example of this is God speaking to Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Initially, when the angel spoke to her about a special assignment from God, Mary had a difficult time believing what was happening or in accepting the responsibility God had for her. But she finally said, "I am the Lord's servant. May it be to me as You have said."

This is always the way God works in us and through us. We can never see everything that He has planned for us. It may appear to be too overpowering, too difficult, too threatening or too impossible. It may seem foolish, impractical, unwise or unrealistic. But God always works in unseen and unheard of ways.

Mary could never have imagined the angels that would protect her, the shepherds that would visit her, the Magi that would honor her, the gifts that were presented to her, the escape that was provided for her or the Voice that spoke to her, nor the Son that God gave to her to become our Savior.

Like Mary, we can never imagine all that God has in store for us!

Prayer: Father, give us a faith that exceeds our limited sight and a trust that believes the impossible. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture: Luke 1:46 And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord."

News from the Associated Press

Winter storm weakens but thousands still without power

CHICAGO (AP) — The fury of the winter storm that swept into the northern Great Plains on Christmas Day weakened heading into Tuesday, but thousands remained without power in the Dakotas and Michigan.

High winds and drifting snow continued to make travel hazardous in the Dakotas, even as vast stretches of highways that had been closed reopened to traffic.

The storm has caused extensive power outages in the Dakotas, Nebraska and Michigan.

The South Dakota Rural Electric Association said roughly 13,700 of its customers were without power as of 1 a.m. Tuesday. In Nebraska, winds gusting up to 70 mph were cited for hundreds of power outages in central and eastern portions of the state Sunday, although by Monday morning, utilities reported that power had been restored to most customers.

High winds knocked out power to thousands of customers in Michigan on Monday.

Consumers Energy spokesman Brian Wheeler told WOOD-TV that more than 20,000 customers in the state were without power Monday evening. Most of the outages occurred between 7 and 8 p.m., he said.

The Traverse City Record Eagle reported that customers of several utilities in northern Michigan were without power Monday afternoon.

The combination of freezing rain, snow and high winds that bore down on the northern plains starting on Christmas Day led to no-travel warnings for much of North Dakota. The National Weather Service's blizzard warning for western and central portions of the state expired Monday afternoon, but the agency warned that drifting snow still blocked some roads.

Interstate 94 remained closed west of Jamestown, North Dakota.

In South Dakota, Interstate 90, which had been closed for 260 miles between the Wyoming border and Chamberlain, was reopened to traffic Monday.

Severe whiteout conditions led to the closure of Minot International Airport, which wasn't expected to reopen until 3 a.m. Tuesday. The airports serving Fargo and Bismarck also listed flight cancellations on their websites.

Winds gusting 40 mph to 50 mph also led to delays and cancellations at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.

The Latest: Some residents could be without power for days

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The Latest on complications from winter storm conditions in South Dakota (all times local):

5:10 p.m.

A rural electric cooperatives association says it could take several days before power is restored to all areas in South Dakota experiencing outages from winter storm conditions.

South Dakota Rural Electric Association spokeswoman Brenda Kleinjan says that 13 cooperatives on Monday reported outages to 19,000 members' homes and businesses in South Dakota.

She says eight South Dakota cooperatives dispatched line workers to help five of the hardest-hit cooperatives. The workers will continue arriving Tuesday as travel allows.

Crews from other states have also been asked to help. Kleinjan says people must be aware of downed power lines and give crews space to get work completed.

2 p.m.

State officials have fully re-opened Interstate 90 to traffic after stretches in South Dakota had been closed because of poor winter weather conditions.

The state Department of Transportation said Monday that the interstate has been re-opened from Rapid City to Vivian. But authorities are still warning motorists that winter driving conditions remain.

Officials say icy roads and strong winds are causing difficult travel conditions along I-90. Authorities are

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asking drivers to be patient while traveling and to give snowplows space while they clear roads.

Earlier in the day, officials re-opened I-90 from the Wyoming border to Rapid City in western South Dakota, and from Vivian to Chamberlain in the central part of the state.

1:20 p.m.

A rural electric cooperatives association says roughly 19,000 of its members across South Dakota are without power due to winter storm conditions.

South Dakota Rural Electric Association spokeswoman Brenda Kleinjan said Monday that crews have been out making progress and that the situation is fluid. But she warned that some households may face extended outages.

The association's website shows the outages extend from far southwestern South Dakota to the state's northeastern most counties. Among the hardest hit are members in the northwest and the northeast.

Kleinjan says the storm is "significant" in terms of the number of impacted cooperatives. She says people must be aware of downed power lines and give crews space to get work completed.

12:25 p.m.

State officials have re-opened stretches of Interstate 90 in central and western South Dakota that had been closed due to poor weather conditions.

The state Department of Transportation cautioned motorists Monday that icy roads and strong winds are still making travel difficult even though I-90 has been opened from the Wyoming border to Rapid City in western South Dakota, and from Vivian to Chamberlain in the central part of the state.

Transportation officials say that the interstate remains closed from Rapid City to Vivian. They're asking motorists not to sit on the roadway waiting for it to open.

The agency says Highway 83 to Pierre is slippery and subject to winds exceeding 40 mph. In northeastern South Dakota, authorities say morning snowfall and brawny winds spell difficult travel.

8:23 a.m.

Interstate 90 remains closed along the western half of South Dakota from the Wyoming border to Chamberlain. And the South Dakota Department of Transportation warns that travel will be extremely difficult across the state this morning.

The National Weather Service says blizzard conditions will continue across the plains of north and east of the Black Hills before improving later in the day. Blowing snow whipped by winds gusting into the mid-40 mph range are cutting visibility in eastern South Dakota, too.

The Rapid City Fire Department sent out its special tracked vehicle for the first time this season to help stranded motorists east of Rapid City.

The South Dakota Rural Electric Association says over 12,000 of its customers are without power, mostly in northeastern South Dakota.

Surveyor shortens South Dakota's tallest peak by 11 feet

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A surveyor who determined that South Dakota's tallest mountain is 11 feet shorter than originally thought likes to be precise.

Jerry Penry told the Rapid City Journal (<http://bit.ly/2iaU0pr>) that he felt compelled to bring modern technology to the task when he learned that the popularly accepted elevation of Black Elk Peak, known until August as Harney Peak, was based on surveys from the late 1890s.

"We're living in an era of precise measurements," he said, "and to have something out there that still relies upon something of an imprecise nature, it's almost a disservice to the way we say that we can measure things."

In September, Penry and six team members spent two days of their own time and money producing a better measurement.

They determined that the highest natural point on the peak, excluding the stone lookout tower, is 7,231

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feet above sea level. That's 11 feet lower than the original estimate of 7,240 feet from the 1890s, which was later changed to 7,242 feet listed on the bronze plaque on the summit.

Government publications and websites have conflicting information: The datasheets of the National Geodetic Survey say 7,244 feet, the U.S. Geological Survey's National Map says 7,191 feet and the same agency's Geographic Names Information System says 7,211 feet. The Black Hills National Forest, which includes the peak, says it's 7,242 feet, as does Custer State Park, which contains a popular trailhead.

Penry, who's from Denton, Nebraska, said he doesn't plan to push for changes to signs, publications or websites partly because he undertook the project only to satisfy his own curiosity and also because there is no formal process for requesting such changes.

Penry's work has an endorsement from David Doyle, the retired former chief geodetic surveyor for the National Geodetic Survey. Doyle said Penry's team is representative of the kind of exacting persistence that is often required of surveyors, and the advancement of the profession, which grows ever more precise.

"It's chasing the truth, if you will, and you may never actually get there," Doyle said. "But you're always in a quest to make it the best it can possibly be."

Online:

Survey details: <http://www.penryfamily.com/harneypeak/main.html>

Information from: Rapid City Journal, <http://www.rapidcityjournal.com>

Residents of Minnesota town fear big South Dakota dairy farm

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Residents of the western Minnesota town of Hendricks thought they had won a feedlot war two years ago when they sued to stop a big dairy farm that was being planned just across the border in South Dakota.

They feared that any leak from the farm's huge manure lagoons would run into streams that feed Lake Hendricks, a little gem that they had worked hard to rescue from years of pollution. The lake, which straddles the state line, was once so choked with algae that fishing lures wouldn't sink.

But officials in Brookings County of South Dakota have, for the second time, granted a permit for the 4,000-cow feedlot and members of the Lake Hendricks Improvement Association are contemplating their next step, the Star Tribune reported Monday (<http://strib.mn/2hZTLg7>). Their first lawsuit cost \$90,000 and they're short on funds for another fight. Plus they find themselves up against a South Dakota governor who is actively trying to lure dairy farmers with promises of plentiful water, low taxes and light regulation.

"We're essentially back to square one," former mayor Jay Nelson said.

Brookings County has become South Dakota's largest milk-producing county. Officials there say they can protect local water without shutting down an important economic engine. But opponents in Hendricks, home to about 1,100 people, cite calculations by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that a farm with 4,000 dairy cows would produce the same volume of waste as a city of 650,000 people.

"If there's a major spill, it's a South Dakota problem for one hour and it's a Minnesota problem for a long period of time," said Tom Landmark, the lake association secretary.

The proposal now heads to South Dakota's Department of Environment and Natural Resources for approval.

Randy Hukriede, feedlot program manager for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, said South Dakota's feedlot permitting rules are similar to those in Minnesota.

"We're confident that they have the requirements in place in their permit process to protect the environment," Hukriede said.

Information from: Star Tribune, <http://www.startribune.com>

Rescuers find flight recorder from Black Sea plane crash

By VERONIKA SILCHENKO and NATALIYA VASILYEVA, Associated Press

SOCHI, Russia (AP) — Rescue workers on Tuesday found a flight recorder from the Russian military plane that crashed into the Black Sea over the weekend, the defense ministry said.

All 92 people aboard the Tu-154 plane are believed to have died Sunday morning when it crashed two minutes after taking off from the southern Russian city of Sochi. The 84 passengers included dozens of singers from Russia's world-famous military choir who were going to the Russian Air Force base in Syria to perform at a New Year's concert.

The defense ministry said in a statement that one of the flight recorders was found early Tuesday morning about a mile away from the shore.

State television showed footage of rescue workers on an inflatable boat carrying a container with a bright orange object submerged in water. The ministry said later on Tuesday that the black box was flown to a ministry laboratory outside Moscow and at first examination it did not appear to be seriously damaged.

It was not immediately clear when the data from the black box would be available but Magomed Tolboyev, a decorated Russian test pilot, told the Interfax news agency that investigators could retrieve data from the flight recorder later in the day.

Mourners on Tuesday continued to bring flowers to the pier of Sochi's sea port as 3,500 people, 45 ships and 192 divers swept the vast crash site for bodies of the victims and debris. Rescue teams so far have recovered 12 bodies and numerous body fragments, which have been flown to Moscow for identification.

Divers found fragments of the fuselage, parts of the engine and various mechanical parts overnight, the defense ministry said.

Officials still have not announced the cause of the crash, but they have been anxious to squelch speculation that it might have been caused by a bomb planted on board or a portable air defense missile.

But some aviation experts have noted that the crew's failure to communicate any technical problem and the large area over which fragments of the plane were scattered point to a possible explosion on board.

Russia's main domestic security and counter-terrorism agency, the FSB, said it has found "no indications or facts pointing at the possibility of a terror attack or an act of sabotage on board the plane."

The FSB said that investigators are looking into bad fuel, pilot error, foreign objects stuck in the engines or equipment failure.

The Tu-154 is a Soviet-built three-engine airliner designed in the late 1960s. The plane that crashed Sunday was built in 1983, and underwent factory check-ups and maintenance in 2014 as well as earlier this year.

Vasilyeva reported from Moscow.

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. OBAMA, JAPAN'S PM TO SEEK RECONCILIATION AT PEARL HARBOR

Though Japanese leaders have come to Pearl Harbor before, Shinzo Abe will be the first to visit the memorial built in the hallowed waters above the sunken USS Arizona.

2. RESCUERS FIND FLIGHT RECORDER FROM BLACK SEA PLANE CRASH

The Russian defense ministry says the "black box" would be immediately flown to Moscow but doesn't mention whether it has been damaged.

3. U.S., RUSSIAN MILITARY TALKS ON FIGHTING ISLAMIC EXTREMISTS PROVING USEFUL

The progress dispels the notion that ties between the former Cold War foes are "frozen."

4. WHAT TRUMP THINKS OF THE U.N.

The president-elect is questioning the effectiveness of the international organization, saying it's just a club for people to "have a good time."

5. EXPORT BAN ON MONUMENTS HITS AT PYONGYANG'S SOFT POWER

The U.N. statue sanctions are a slap at one of North Korea's most venerable cultural institutions.

6. WHERE WINTER STORM CREATES TREACHEROUS TRAVEL

High winds and drifting snow continue to make driving hazardous in the Dakotas, and the severe weather disrupts air travel in the region.

7. EGYPT EASES PRESSURE ON GAZA STRIP

After nearly a decade of helping Israel to blockade Gaza, Cairo makes a step toward improving ties with the territory's Hamas rulers.

8. WHY EX-SOMALI REFUGEES REGRET COMING HOME

Upon return to their country from the world's largest refugee camp in Kenya, Somalis report hunger, gangs and the threat of attack by extremist group al-Shabab.

9. WHO PLANS TO LAND PROBES ON MARS BY 2020

China says that it is determined to quicken the pace of the development of its space industry, which has already rapidly advanced.

10. AT MINNESOTA, BOYCOTT IS OVER BUT TENSIONS ARE NOT

In the week since Minnesota avoided canceling its Holiday Bowl plans because of a player protest, The AP speaks to six people involved in the saga concerning the suspension of 10 players in connection with an alleged sexual assault.

Obama, Japan's Abe to seek reconciliation at Pearl Harbor

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — Putting 75 years of resentment behind them, the leaders of the United States and Japan are coming together at Pearl Harbor for a historic pilgrimage to the site where the bloodshed of surprise attacks thrust America into World War II.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit Tuesday with President Barack Obama is powerful proof that the former enemies have transcended the recriminatory impulses that weighed down relations after the war, Japan's government has said. Although Japanese leaders have visited Pearl Harbor before, Abe will be the first to visit the memorial that now rests on the hallowed waters above the sunken USS Arizona.

For Obama, it's likely the last time he will meet with a foreign leader as president, White House aides said. It's a bookend of sorts for the president, who nearly eight years ago invited Abe's predecessor to be the first leader that Obama hosted at the White House.

For Abe, it's an act of symbolic reciprocity, coming six months after Obama became the first sitting U.S. president to visit Hiroshima in Japan, where the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb in hopes of ending the war.

"This visit, and the president's visit to Hiroshima earlier this year, would not have been possible eight years ago," said Daniel Kritenbrink, Obama's top Asia adviser in the White House. "That we are here today is the result of years of efforts at all levels of our government and societies, which has allowed us to jointly and directly deal with even the most sensitive aspects of our shared history."

More than 2,300 Americans died on Dec. 7, 1941, when more than 300 Japanese fighter planes and bombers attacked. More than 1,000 others were wounded. In the ensuing years, the U.S. incarcerated roughly 120,000 Japanese-Americans in internment camps before dropping atomic bombs in 1945 that killed some 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 70,000 in Nagasaki.

Abe will not apologize for Pearl Harbor, his government has said. Nor did Obama apologize at Hiroshima in May, a visit that he and Abe used to emphasize their elusive aspirations for a nuclear-free future.

No apology needed, said 96-year-old Alfred Rodrigues, a U.S. Navy veteran who survived what President Franklin D. Roosevelt called a "date which will live in infamy."

"War is war," Rodrigues said as he looked at old photos of his military service. "They were doing what they were supposed to do, and we were doing what we were supposed to do."

After a formal meeting in the morning, Obama and Abe planned to lay a wreath aboard the USS Arizona Memorial, which is accessible only by boat. Then they'll go to nearby Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, where both leaders will speak.

Obama and Abe signed off on the visit last month when they met in Peru on the sidelines of an economic

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summit. Though the parallels with Obama's Hiroshima visit are palpable, both governments said that one visit wasn't contingent on the other.

Meanwhile, China criticized Abe's visit as an insincere attempt to absolve Japan of its wartime aggression. "Trying to liquidate the history of World War II by paying a visit to Pearl Harbor and consoling the dead is just wishful thinking on Japan's part," said Hua Chunying, a Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman in Beijing, at a regular briefing.

"Japan can never turn this page over without reconciliation from China and other victimized countries in Asia," she said. "Japanese leaders should stop being so evasive and dodging, and instead take a responsible attitude toward history and future, deeply and sincerely reflect upon the history of aggressive war, and draw a clear break with the past."

Abe's visit is not without political risk given the Japanese people's long, emotional reckoning with their nation's aggression in the war. Though the history books have largely deemed Pearl Harbor a surprise attack, Japan's government insisted as recently as this month that it had intended to give the U.S. prior notice that it was declaring war and failed only because of "bureaucratic bungling."

"There's this sense of guilt, if you like, among Japanese, this 'Pearl Harbor syndrome,' that we did something very unfair," said Tamaki Tsukada, a minister in the Embassy of Japan in Washington. "I think the prime minister's visit will in a sense absolve that kind of complex that Japanese people have."

Since the war, the U.S. and Japan have built a powerful alliance that both sides say has grown stronger during Obama's tenure. There are questions about what the relationship will look like under President-elect Donald Trump.

During the campaign, Trump suggested that Japan and South Korea should obtain nuclear weapons so the U.S. would no longer be burdened with costs of defending them, a disquieting notion in many Asian capitals. But after Trump's election, Abe became the first foreign leader to meet with him, sitting down in Trump Tower with the business mogul and Trump's daughter, Ivanka.

Though no Japanese prime minister has visited the USS Arizona Memorial, former Japanese leader Shigeru Yoshida visited Pearl Harbor in 1951, six years after Japan surrendered. He stopped there on his way home from signing the San Francisco peace treaty with the U.S. and others, and paid a courtesy visit to the office of Adm. Arthur W.R. Radford.

Other prime ministers have since visited Pearl Harbor and the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, known as Punchbowl.

Associated Press writers Brian Skoloff in Kailua, Hawaii, and Mari Yamaguchi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

Japanese prime minister lays wreaths at Hawaii cemeteries

By BRIAN SKOLOFF

PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii (AP) — Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe laid wreaths at various cemeteries and memorials Monday ahead of a visit to the site of the 1941 bombing that plunged the United States into World War II.

Abe landed at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam and then headed to National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, where he laid a wreath. He stood for a moment of silence at the cemetery near downtown Honolulu, which is known as Punchbowl.

He later visited a nearby memorial for nine boys and men who died when a U.S. Navy submarine collided with their Japanese fishing vessel in 2001. At the Ehime Maru Memorial, he again laid a wreath and bowed his head. Abe finished his day with a reception dinner at the Hawaii Convention Center in Honolulu where he spoke about his visit.

On Tuesday, he'll be the first Japanese prime minister to visit the memorial that honors sailors and Ma-

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rines killed in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Japan's former leader Shigeru Yoshida went to Pearl Harbor six years after the country's World War II surrender, but that was before the USS Arizona Memorial was built. Yoshida arrived at Pearl Harbor in 1951, shortly after requesting a courtesy visit to the office of Adm. Arthur W.R. Radford, commander of the U.S. Pacific fleet. The office overlooked Pearl Harbor, offering a direct view of the attack site.

Two other Japanese prime ministers have also visited Pearl Harbor. Ichiro Hatoyama spent time here in 1956 and Nobusuke Kishi in 1957. The Japanese government confirmed the visits by Hatoyama and Kishi this week after a Japanese language newspaper in Hawaii pointed them out.

The memorial will be closed to the public Tuesday when Abe visits the historic site, joined by U.S. President Barack Obama, who is vacationing in Hawaii with his family.

The importance of the visit may be mostly symbolic for two countries that, in a remarkable transformation, have grown into close allies in the decades since they faced off in brutal conflict. At the same time, it's significant that it took more than 70 years for U.S.-Japanese relations to get to this point.

Abe won't apologize for Japan's attack when he visits, a government spokesman said earlier this month.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said that "the purpose of the upcoming visit is to pay respects for the war dead and not to offer an apology."

The visit comes six months after Obama became the first sitting American president to visit Hiroshima for victims of the U.S. atomic bombing of that city at the end of the same war.

Pearl Harbor survivor Alfred Rodrigues said Monday he welcomes the visit by Japan's top leader to Hawaii.

"I'm glad he's coming to show that we're all peaceful now and you know, we were doing what we were supposed to do and they were doing what they were supposed to do," he told The Associated Press.

Remembering the day of the attack in 1941, Rodrigues said that he had just sat down to have breakfast when the alarm sounded and the word got out, 'Man your battle stations, this is not a drill,' he recalled.

"We all ran out to the armory to get rifles and ammunition and we could see the planes up above with the red circles on the bottom. We knew it was the Japanese planes," Rodrigues said.

Rodrigues says he doesn't think Abe should apologize. "War is war. I mean, they were doing what they were supposed to do and we were doing what we were supposed to do. I have no animosity at all towards them."

Associated Press writer Mari Yamaguchi contributed to this report from Tokyo.

Officials: US, Russian military talks quietly proving useful

By **LOLITA C. BALDOR** and **BRADLEY KLAPPER**, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S.-Russian talks on their separate fights against the Islamic State group are improving and becoming more frequent, American officials said, with each side trading information in real time and even outlining some of their strategic objectives in the months ahead. The progress dispels the notion that ties between the former Cold War foes are "frozen."

In the discussions, Russia has made clear its counterterrorism priority in Syria is retaking the ancient city of Palmyra, officials said. The U.S. is determined to pressure IS' headquarters in Raqqa.

The closer contacts have developed despite the former Cold War foes' bitter accusations against one another over the devastation in Aleppo and Moscow's claim that relations are now "frozen on all practical levels."

The confidential military discussions aren't focusing on the two countries' opposing positions in Syria's civil war, where Russia is fighting alongside the government and the United States has backed rebel groups, officials said.

But U.S. officials with knowledge of the ongoing conversations are crediting both sides with putting aside much of the public animosity, which has included Washington's accusations of Russian war crimes in Aleppo and Moscow's charges of American support for terrorist groups such as al-Qaida.

Much of the talk has concerned the two nations' immediate operations.

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Since Dec. 15, the U.S.-led coalition has conducted airstrikes on about two dozen locations around Palmyra, destroying air defense weapons, tanks, aircraft shelters, storage bunkers and other vehicles and equipment. At the same time, U.S. and Russian officials have been ensuring that the two militaries' don't cross paths in the airspace above the city that IS militants seized for the second time earlier this month, and that American strikes don't mistakenly hit Russian or Syrian forces.

But the talks have gone beyond the granular and even touched on broader U.S. and Russian plans, according to several U.S. officials, who weren't authorized to speak publicly on the confidential discussions and demanded anonymity.

The Russians have spelled out that after they retake Palmyra, they want to move on IS militants congregated in Deir el-Zour, a city closer to the Iraqi border. Succeeding in Deir el-Zour, according to one U.S. official, could take Russia several months.

Palmyra became a more urgent mission after Islamic State militants ended the Syrian government's nine-month hold over the city, seizing Russian and Syrian military equipment and weapons in the process. These include dangerous air defense artillery that could be used against coalition and friendly forces.

According to officials, the U.S. and Russian military have been communicating regularly, often in real time as strikes have been about to launch to make sure innocent troops aren't at risk. The new concentration of U.S. strikes around Palmyra in the past week has made the effort especially important for Russia, one senior U.S. official said.

The scope of the discussions suggests the two sides are pulling back from some of the extreme rhetoric in recent months, mainly colored by Russia's support for the successful Syrian military effort to retake all of Aleppo. While Russian President Vladimir Putin has expressed hopes that Donald Trump will improve U.S.-Russian cooperation, it appears some of the groundwork already is being done.

U.S. officials have legal constraints on how far they can go. American law prohibits any military-to-military relations with Russia in the aftermath of its 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region.

But as Syria's various conflicts have escalated, it became more critical for the U.S. and Russia to make sure they avoid crashes and other problems in the increasingly crowded skies — as happened when the U.S. mistakenly killed dozens of Syrian soldiers in airstrikes near Deir el-Zour in September.

"We certainly don't want to have a repeat of that," said Air Force Col. John Dorrian, spokesman for the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq and Syria.

Palmyra poses particular difficulties. Several hundred IS forces are believed to be in the city. But Syrian government and Russian troops are also there, making it difficult to tell them apart.

Trump says UN just a club for people to 'have a good time'

By VIVIAN SALAMA, Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. (AP) — Days after the United Nations voted to condemn Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, Donald Trump questioned its effectiveness Monday, saying it's just a club for people to "have a good time."

The president-elect wrote on Twitter that the U.N. has "such great potential," but it has become "just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time. So sad!"

On Friday, Trump warned, "As to the U.N., things will be different after Jan. 20th," referring to the day he takes office.

The decision by the Obama administration to abstain from Friday's U.N. vote brushed aside Trump's demands that the U.S. exercise its veto and provided a climax to years of icy relations with Israel's leadership.

Trump told The Associated Press last December that he wanted to be "very neutral" on Israel-Palestinian issues. But his tone became decidedly more pro-Israel as the presidential campaign progressed. He has spoken disparagingly of Palestinians, saying they have been "taken over" by or are condoning militant groups.

Trump's tweet Monday about the U.N. ignores much of the work that goes on in the 193-member global organization.

This year the U.N. Security Council has approved over 70 legally binding resolutions, including new sanc-

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tions on North Korea and measures tackling conflicts and authorizing the U.N.'s far-flung peacekeeping operations around the world. The General Assembly has also approved dozens of resolutions on issues, like the role of diamonds in fueling conflicts; condemned human rights abuses in Iran and North Korea; and authorized an investigation of alleged war crimes in Syria.

Trump's criticism of the U.N. is by no means unique. While the organization does engage in large-scale humanitarian and peacekeeping efforts, its massive bureaucracy has long been a source of controversy. The organization has been accused by some Western governments of being inefficient and frivolous, while developing nations have said it is overly influenced by wealthier nations.

Trump tweeted later Monday, "The world was gloomy before I won — there was no hope. Now the market is up nearly 10 percent and Christmas spending is over a trillion dollars!"

Markets are up since Trump won the general election, although not quite by that much. The Standard & Poor's 500 is up about 6 percent since Election Day, while the Dow has risen more than 8 percent.

As for holiday spending, auditing and accounting firm Deloitte projected in September that total 2016 holiday sales were expected to exceed \$1 trillion, representing a 3.6 percent to 4.0 percent increase in holiday sales from November through January.

Finally, Trump took to Twitter again late Monday to complain about media coverage of his charitable foundation. He wrote that of the "millions of dollars" he has contributed to or raised for the Donald J. Trump Foundation, all of it "is given to charity, and media won't report."

Trump said Saturday he will dissolve his charitable foundation before taking office to avoid conflicts of interest. The New York attorney general's office has been investigating the foundation following media reports that foundation spending went to benefit Trump's campaign.

The president-elect is spending the holidays at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. He had no public schedule Monday.

Associated Press writer Edith Lederer in New York contributed to this report.

Trump's pick for ambassador to Israel sparks hot debate

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — If President-elect Donald Trump wanted to show he planned to obliterate President Barack Obama's approach to Israel, he might have found his man to deliver that message in David Friedman, his pick for U.S. ambassador.

The bankruptcy lawyer and son of an Orthodox rabbi is everything Obama is not: a fervent supporter of Israeli settlements, opponent of Palestinian statehood and unrelenting defender of Israel's government. So far to the right is Friedman that many Israel supporters worry he could push Israel's hawkish Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to be more extreme, scuttling prospects for peace with Palestinians in the process.

The heated debate over Friedman's selection is playing out just as fresh tensions erupt between the U.S. and Israel.

In a stunning decision Friday, the Obama administration moved to allow the U.N. Security Council to pass a resolution condemning Israeli settlements as illegal. The move to abstain, rather than veto, defied years of U.S. tradition of shielding Israel from such resolutions, and elicited condemnation from Israel, lawmakers of both parties, and especially Trump.

"Things will be different after Jan. 20th," when he's sworn in, Trump vowed Friday on Twitter. On Monday, he added: "The United Nations has such great potential but right now it is just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time. So sad!"

Presidents of both parties have long called for a two-state solution that envisions eventual Palestinian statehood, and Netanyahu says he agrees. Friedman, who still must be confirmed by the Senate, does not. He's called the two-state solution a mere "narrative" that must end.

Under Obama, the U.S. has worked closely with J Street, an Israel advocacy group sharply critical of Netanyahu. Friedman accuses Obama of "blatant anti-Semitism" and calls J Street "worse than kapos," a

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reference to Jews who helped the Nazis imprison fellow Jews during the Holocaust.

For decades, the U.S. has opposed Israeli settlement-building in lands it seized in the 1967 Mideast war. Friedman runs a nonprofit that raises millions of dollars for Beit El, a settlement of religious nationalists near Ramallah. Beit El runs a right-wing news outlet and a yeshiva whose dean has provocatively urged Israeli soldiers to refuse orders to uproot settlers from their homes.

So it's unsurprising that Friedman's nomination has already sharpened a growing balkanization of American Jews, between those who want the U.S. to push Israel toward peace and those who believe Obama's approach abandoned America's closest Mideast ally.

It's a debate playing out even at Temple Hillel, near the Long Island-Queens border, where Friedman's father was rabbi for almost half a century.

"Clearly, David's opinions do not appeal to everybody in the synagogue, and they appeal to others in the synagogue," said Ken Fink, the synagogue's president and longtime congregant. "But there's a huge amount of pride for the hometown boy."

Thirty-two years before Trump's election, President Ronald Reagan donned a yarmulke and noshed on chicken cutlets and noodle pudding at Rabbi Morris Friedman's home, after a speech at Temple Hillel affirming the separation between church and state. Coming just two weeks before Reagan's re-election, the attempt to woo Jewish voters struck some as opportunistic, and they protested on the streets of the heavily Jewish town of North Woodmere.

Seated at the Sabbath table with Reagan was David Melech Friedman — his middle name means "king" in Hebrew. The rabbi's son went on to become Trump's bankruptcy lawyer, an advocate for far-right policies on Israel, and now, Trump's choice for ambassador, despite having no diplomatic experience.

Cindy Grosz, who said she's known Friedman for nearly 50 years, recalled big parties with boisterous debates about Jewish issues held in his family's sukkah, the outdoor hut Jews build during the harvest festival Sukkot.

"He still has the same best friends he's had for over 30 years," Grosz said.

At his midtown Manhattan law firm, Friedman opens his offices to those in mourning who need a minyan — a quorum of 10 men in Orthodox Judaism — to say the Mourner's Kaddish, a prayer that observant Jews say daily for one year after a parent's death.

And it was a parent's death, in a way, that brought Friedman and Trump closer together. Over the years, Friedman has told friends the story of how the billionaire real estate mogul defied an oppressive snowstorm that had kept others away to "sit shiva" for Friedman's father during the Jewish mourning period.

Educated at Columbia University and NYU School of Law, Friedman developed a reputation as an aggressive, high-stakes bankruptcy attorney, representing Trump when his Atlantic City casinos went through bankruptcy.

In the courtroom, he's known as a formidable opponent, said attorney Tariq Mundiya, Friedman's adversary in several cases. He said he'd been aware of Friedman's advocacy on Israel but added, "When you're in the fog of war with David, the last thing you're talking about is the Middle East."

Enraged by Trump's pick, left-leaning groups and Palestinian officials have suggested his confirmation could spell the end of any serious discussions about peace.

Netanyahu has stayed publicly quiet about Trump's pick. Friedman and Trump's transition team didn't respond to requests for comment.

Associated Press writers Josef Federman and Daniel Estrin in Jerusalem and Tia Goldenberg in Beit El, West Bank, contributed to this report.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

Obama vs Trump: Dispute erupts over who would have won

By JOSH LEDERMAN, Associated Press

HONOLULU (AP) — In an alternate universe in which President Barack Obama ran for a third term against Donald Trump, who would have won?

No surprise: The president and the president-elect disagree.

A fresh dispute erupted Monday between Obama and his successor, spurred by Obama's hypothetical musings that had he run again, he would have been victorious. Interviewed for a podcast, Obama suggested he still holds enough sway over the coalition of voters that elected him twice to get them to vote for him once again.

"I am confident in this vision because I'm confident that if I had run again and articulated it, I think I could've mobilized a majority of the American people to rally behind it," Obama told his former White House adviser, David Axelrod, in a podcast released Monday.

Trump, naturally, disagreed. He took to his preferred medium — Twitter — to offer his reaction.

"President Obama said that he thinks he would have won against me. He should say that but I say NO WAY!" Trump wrote.

He suggested Obama's record would have prevented him from securing a victory, citing jobs that have left the U.S., troubles with Obama's Affordable Care Act and the ongoing threat posed by the Islamic State group as examples.

The White House declined to comment on Trump's tweet.

In the podcast, Obama didn't address whether he would have been able to surmount the obstacle that the Electoral College posed for Hillary Clinton. The Democrat failed to secure a majority of electoral votes despite winning the popular vote by millions.

Yet Obama said he's spoken to people across the U.S. who have told him the direction he pursued "is the right one," a sentiment he said extends even to some people "who disagreed with me." He suggested Democrats' failure in the election may have stemmed from the prevailing assumption that Clinton's victory was all but assured.

"If you think you're winning, then you have a tendency — just like in sports — maybe to play it safer," Obama said.

Though Obama railed against Trump during the campaign, he's largely held his tongue since the Republican's Election Day victory, in large part to ensure a smooth transition of power. He and Trump have spoken regularly by phone, and Trump has praised his predecessor for the graciousness with which he's handled the process.

But in recent days, points of tension between their two teams have started to emerge, driven by Trump's picks of Cabinet nominees who have vowed to dismantle much of what Obama has accomplished. The Obama administration has also been dismayed by requests from Trump's team for information they fear could be used to try to identify and then eliminate bureaucrats who have worked on Obama priorities like climate change and women's rights overseas.

Obama, who is vacationing in Hawaii, was prohibited by the Constitution's 22nd Amendment from running for a third term. But Obama has said even if there weren't term limits for presidents, he believes it's important for the country to have a change of leadership after eight years. He's also suggested his wife, first lady Michelle Obama, would have had little patience for a third term in the White House.

Reach Josh Lederman on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/joshledermanAP>

Simone Biles soars to AP Female Athlete of the Year

By WILL GRAVES, AP Sports Writer

Simone Biles tried to treat the 2016 Summer Olympics like just your average ordinary gymnastics meet. So what if the stage and the stakes were different?

The floor was still the floor. The vault still the vault. The uneven bars still uneven. The balance beam still a four-inch wide test of nerves.

And the 19-year-old with the electric smile and boundless talent was still the best in the world. Maybe the best of all-time.

Over the course of 10 days in August, the biggest meet of her life ended like pretty much all the others in the four years that came before it: with Biles standing atop the podium, a gold medal around her neck and the sport she's redefining one boundary-pushing routine at a time staring up at her. Not that she remembers any of it.

"It's kind of a blur," Biles said.

Maybe to Biles, but not to the rest of the world. Her massive haul in Rio de Janeiro — a record-tying four golds to go along with a bronze for the dominant U.S. women's team — propelled her to stardom and rendered her last name superfluous. Now there's one more honor to add to what on Twitter is known simply as #SimoneThings: Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year.

In a vote by U.S. editors and news directors announced Monday, Biles received 31 votes out of a possible 59 votes. U.S. Olympic swimmer Katie Ledecky, who won four golds and a silver in Rio, finished second with 20 votes. Serena Williams, who won Wimbledon for the seventh time to tie Steffi Graf's record of 22 Grand Slam titles, and three-time AP women's NCAA basketball Player of the Year Breanna Stewart tied for third with four votes each.

The AP Male Athlete of the Year will be announced Tuesday.

Biles became the fifth gymnast to win the honor, joining Olga Korbut in 1972, Nadia Comaneci in 1976, Mary Lou Retton in 1984 and Gabby Douglas in 2012. It's company joined while completing a run of dominance that included three straight all-around World Championships, an unprecedented run at the top in a sport where peaks are often measured in months, not years.

The teenager from Spring, Texas, hardly seemed burdened by the outsized expectations. If anything, she embraced them. She opted out of a verbal commitment to compete collegiately at UCLA to turn professional so she could cash in on the lucrative opportunities afforded an Olympic champion, a bit of a gamble considering the window is so narrow and directly tied to success at the Games.

Yet Biles seemed immune to it. At least on the outside. Inside, there were more than a few butterflies when she stepped onto the floor during team preliminaries on Aug. 7. They vanished the moment she stepped onto the green and cream colored floor at Rio Olympic Arena as she and the rest of her "Final Five" teammates — Douglas, Aly Raisman, Laurie Hernandez and Madison Kocian — put on a clinic that showcased how substantial the gap between the Americans and the rest of the world has grown.

Then again, the gulf between Biles and every other gymnast on the planet — even her good friends in red, white and blue — may be even wider.

"In prelims I did very well I kind of shocked myself," Biles said. "I came in thinking, 'I've been to three worlds.' I knew the gist of it. Once I got (prelims) out of the way, I just kind of relaxed."

What followed was a run of brilliance: a team gold as a fitting send off to retiring national team coordinator Martha Karolyi. Another in the all-around two days later, where her score of 62.198 bettered Raisman by more than two full points, the gymnastics equivalent of winning a football game by three touchdowns. A third gold came on vault, the first ever by an American woman at the Olympics and Biles' first in major international competition to fill the only hole in her increasingly peerless resume.

A bronze on beam followed thanks to a messy landing on a front flip, her only major form break in Rio. No matter, she put the exclamation point on her gold rush with a gravity-escaping floor routine that ended with Biles rushing to embrace longtime coach Aimee Boorman as their long journey to this moment ended in triumph.

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The ensuing four months have been a whirlwind. Biles carried the U.S. flag at closing ceremonies, published her autobiography, took part in a post-Olympic tour with her teammates (including performing in eight shows despite a fractured rib) and hung out at the White House with the president. She remains open to giving it another shot in Tokyo in 2020. That's for later. In January she'll sit down and plot out her goals for the upcoming year. For the first time since she can remember, gymnastics won't be on the list. It'll be weird, sure. That's not necessarily a bad thing.

"I miss training with the girls and having a good time," Biles said. "Whenever I go to the gym to visit them and I see them, I do not miss this part at all right now."

Follow Will Graves at www.twitter.com/WillGravesAP or find his work at www.bigstory.ap.org/content/will-graves

AP New Year's poll: Americans hopeful for a better 2017

By **EMILY SWANSON** and **VERENA DOBNIK**, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Emotionally wrenching politics, foreign conflicts and shootings at home took a toll on Americans in 2016, but they are entering 2017 on an optimistic note, according to a new poll that found that a majority believes things are going to get better for the country next year.

A look at the key findings of the Associated Press-Times Square Alliance poll:

SO HOW WAS 2016?

Americans weren't thrilled with the year. Only 18 percent said things for the country got better, 33 percent said things got worse, and 47 percent said it was unchanged from 2015.

On a personal level, they were optimistic about 2017.

Fifty-five percent said they believe things will be better for them in the coming year than in the year that just concluded. That's a 12-point improvement from last year's poll.

Americans interviewed about the poll's results expressed some of that optimism.

"Next year will be better than this year, because people will have more jobs and they'll have more money to spend," said Bourema Tamboura, a Harlem resident behind the wheel of a New York car service.

"I'm hoping 2017 will be better," added Elizabeth Flynn, 62, an elementary schoolteacher from Peabody, Massachusetts. "You've got to be optimistic, and I'm going to try."

Democrats are more likely than Republicans to say 2016 was worse for the country than 2015. And Republicans are especially likely to feel that 2017 will be even better for them personally.

University of Miami professor Benjamin Alsup said he needed only three words to explain why 2016 felt worse for him: "Trump, Trump, Trump!"

Robert Greenstone, a New York commercial real estate broker, said the political discourse leading up to Republican Donald Trump's election as president played havoc with people's emotions.

"The amount of disinformation made people suspect of everything and everyone, even their neighbors," he said.

U.S. ELECTION LEADS TOP NEWS EVENTS

The U.S. elections top Americans' list of 10 top news events in 2016. Three-quarters called the presidential election and Trump's victory very or extremely important.

Sixty-three percent ranked mass shootings and bombings in Orlando, Florida, and in Belgium, Turkey, Pakistan and France as personally important news stories of the year.

Fifty-one percent said they found news stories about the deaths of people at the hands of police officers, or news about ambush attacks on police in three states, to be among the year's most important news events.

Fourth on the list are 43 percent who described the spread of the Zika virus as important.

The three events described by the largest percentages of Americans as not too important included the

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death of Muhammad Ali (50 percent), approval of recreational marijuana use in four states (43 percent), and the death of Fidel Castro (40 percent).

TOP MOMENTS IN POP CULTURE AND SPORTS

A majority of Americans, including 7 in 10 Midwesterners, called November's World Series win for the Chicago Cubs to end their 108-year drought memorable.

Of nine other pop-culture items tested, two were called memorable by about half of Americans: the death of Prince, David Bowie and Leonard Cohen; and the Olympic victories of the U.S. women's gymnastics team.

The two least-notable events for Americans, of the 10 possible choices in the poll, were the Angelina Jolie-Brad Pitt divorce filing and the "Pokemon Go" app game phenomenon, each described by most as forgettable.

RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR

About half of Americans plan to celebrate the New Year at home. About 2 in 10 plan to go out to a friend or family member's home, and 1 in 10 to a bar or restaurant. About a quarter don't plan to celebrate at all.

About 6 in 10 plan to watch the Times Square ball drop, nearly all of whom will watch on TV.

The AP-Times Square Alliance Poll of 1,007 adults was conducted online Dec. 9-11, using a sample drawn from GfK's probability-based KnowledgePanel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3 percentage points.

The poll is a cooperative effort between AP and the organizers of the Times Square New Year's Eve Celebration, the Times Square Alliance and Countdown Entertainment. The Alliance is a nonprofit group that seeks to promote Times Square, and Countdown Entertainment represents the owners of One Times Square and the New Year's Eve Ball Drop.

Online: <http://www.ap-gfcpoll.com>

Kremlin plays down terror attack possibility in jet crash

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and VERONIKA SILCHENKO, Associated Press

SOCHI, Russia (AP) — The Kremlin on Monday played down the possibility that a terror attack might have downed a Syria-bound Russian plane, killing all 92 people on board, as the nation observed a day of mourning for the victims, including most members of a world famous military choir.

The Tu-154 owned by the Russian Defense Ministry crashed into the Black Sea early Sunday two minutes after taking off in good weather from the city of Sochi. The plane was carrying members of the Alexandrov Ensemble, often referred to as the Red Army Choir, to a New Year's concert at a Russian military base in Syria.

About 3,500 people, 43 ships and 182 divers have been sweeping a vast crash site for bodies of the victims and debris, and dozens of drones and several submersibles also have been involved in the search. Rescue teams so far have recovered 11 bodies and numerous body fragments, which have been flown to Moscow for identification.

Divers have located parts of the plane's fuselage and other fragments, but the search for the jet's flight recorders will likely prove challenging as they lack underwater locator beacons for easy spotting common in more modern planes.

Officials sought to squelch speculation that the crash might have been caused by a bomb planted on board or a portable air defense missile.

But some aviation experts pointed that the crew's failure to communicate any technical problem and a large area over which fragments of the plane were scattered point at a possible explosion on board.

Evidence of a bombing of a Syria-bound military flight would badly embarrass the Kremlin, highlighting Russia's extreme vulnerability to attacks even as it boasts its success in Syria after Aleppo fell into President Bashar Assad's hands.

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President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told reporters that an attack isn't a likely scenario. Transport Minister Maxim Sokolov, who oversaw the rescue efforts, said investigators were looking into a possible technical fault or pilot error as the most likely reasons behind the crash.

But some experts remained skeptical, noting that the crew would have reported any technical glitch.

"Possible malfunctions ... certainly wouldn't have prevented the crew from reporting them," Vitaly Andreyev, a former senior Russian air traffic controller, told RIA Novosti, adding that an "external impact" was the most likely reason.

Russia's main domestic security and counter-terrorism agency, the FSB, said it has found "no indications or facts pointing at the possibility of a terror attack or an act of sabotage on board the plane."

The plane departed from the Chkalovsky military airport just outside Moscow and stopped in Sochi for refueling early Sunday. The FSB said border guards and military servicemen were protecting the plane as it sat on the tarmac in Sochi, and the chief pilot along with the flight engineer personally monitored the refueling. The agency said that a border guard officer and a customs official were the only ones to briefly come on board in Sochi.

Some Russian media pointed at lax security at Chkalovsky outside Moscow where the plane was based, saying that it's quite porous compared to civilian airports.

Alexander Gusak, a former chief of the FSB special forces unit, also hinted at security breaches at Chkalovsky and said that even a much more secure Sochi airport could be vulnerable.

"It's possible to penetrate any facility. It depends on your skills," Gusak told Dozhd TV.

Russian planes have been brought down previously in terror attacks.

In October 2015, a Russian passenger plane was brought down by a bomb over Egypt, killing all 224 people aboard. Officials said the explosive device was planted in the plane's luggage compartment. A local affiliate of the Islamic State group claimed responsibility.

In August 2004, two Russian planes were blown up on the same day by suicide bombers, killing 89 people. A Chechen warlord claimed responsibility for the twin attacks, which were made possible by lax security at a Moscow airport.

While ruling out an attack in Sunday's crash, the FSB said that investigators are looking into bad fuel, pilot error, alien objects stuck in the engines or equipment failure.

John Goglia, a former U.S. National Transportation Safety Board member and aviation safety expert, argued that while pilot error or bad fuel "would be high on my list," they wouldn't have prevented the pilot from alerting traffic controllers to the situation. He also noted that the Tu-154 has been "a pretty reliable platform."

The Tu-154 is a Soviet-built three-engine airliner designed in the late 1960s. The plane that crashed Sunday was built in 1983, and underwent factory check-ups and maintenance in 2014 as well as earlier this year.

While the Tu-154 is no longer used by Russian airlines because it's too noisy and fuel-hungry, the Russian military has continued to operate it. The plane has been popular with crews who appreciate its maneuverability and ruggedness.

Flags were at half-staff across Russia on Monday, nationwide television stations canceled their entertainment programs and the Cabinet began its session with a moment of silence as part of the nationwide mourning. People piled up red and white carnations outside the Moscow office of the Alexandrov Ensemble, popular across the world for its fiery performances.

Vadim Ananyev, a soloist who stayed home with his family, said he was devastated.

"I have lost my friends and colleagues, all killed, all five soloists," Ananyev told The Associated Press. "I have known these people for 30 years. I know their wives and children. I feel terrible for the children and for all that I have lost."

Ananyev said he had received condolences from all over Russia and from abroad.

"We were loved all over the world, never mind the political situation," he said.

In Rome, Pope Francis led thousands of faithful in silent prayer for the plane crash victims and noted that the Russian army choir had performed in 2004 at the Vatican.

Vladimir Isachenkov reported from Moscow. Nataliya Vasilyeva, Kate de Pury in Moscow, and Joan Lowy in Washington, contributed to this report.

Fans mourn pop's George Michael as charities reveal his work

By GREGORY KATZ, Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Grieving fans on Monday mourned the death of George Michael as British charities revealed that the pop star had secretly been a major behind-the-scenes donor who gave his time and money to support cherished causes.

The man with the reputation for self-indulgence had actually given millions of pounds (dollars) to charities involved with helping children, cancer victims and AIDS sufferers.

He was also remembered for small acts of kindness: helping his village in north London get a Christmas tree, and volunteering at a homeless shelter.

Former Beatle Paul McCartney posted a statement on his website praising Michael's "sweet soul music," which he said will live on.

"Having worked with him on a number of occasions his great talent always shone through and his self-deprecating sense of humor made the experience even more pleasurable," McCartney said, posting a picture of the two of them together.

The singer's death was announced late Sunday. Many paid tribute on Facebook and Twitter and others cited years of good works that received little publicity — largely because Michael insisted on keeping his charity work out of the limelight.

Fans placed flowers and other tributes at his homes in north London and in Goring, England, where he died of apparent heart failure.

Michael's later years were marked by occasional brushes with the law and a series of driving incidents related to substance abuse, but this was overlooked Monday as directors of major charities and advocacy groups stepped forward to praise him.

Among the groups he supported were the Terrence Higgins Trust, which helps people with AIDS, Macmillan Cancer Support, and Childline, which offers confidential phone counseling for young people.

Childline founder Esther Rantzen said Michael gave royalties from his 1996 hit "Jesus To A Child" to the charity along with many other donations.

"Over the years he gave us millions and we were planning next year, as part of our 30th anniversary celebrations to create, we hoped, a big concert in tribute to him — to his artistry, to his wonderful musicality but also to thank him for the hundreds of thousands of children he helped," she said.

She said Michael was determined that no one outside the charity should know "how much he gave to the nation's most vulnerable children."

Jane Barron from the Terrence Higgins Trust said Michael made many donations and gifts, including the royalties of his "Don't Let the Sun Go Down on Me" duet with Elton John in 1991.

Michael had spoken publicly about the pain of losing a partner to AIDS early in the epidemic, but he kept his long history of donations to the Trust private.

Rights activist Peter Tatchell, who knew Michael before he achieved fame, said Michael had hidden his homosexuality in the early part of his career because gay public figures were subjected to vicious treatment by the British tabloid press.

He praised the singer for making his sexual orientation known after he was arrested in 1998 for lewd behavior in a public toilet in Los Angeles.

Tatchell said Michael's response to his arrest amounted to "a defiant defense of the right to be gay" that had an impact throughout the gay community.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 27, the 362nd day of 2016. There are four days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 27, 1904, James Barrie's play "Peter Pan: The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up" opened at the Duke of York's Theater in London.

On this date:

In 1831, naturalist Charles Darwin set out on a round-the-world voyage aboard the HMS Beagle.

In 1927, the musical play "Show Boat," with music by Jerome Kern and libretto by Oscar Hammerstein II, opened at the Ziegfeld Theater in New York.

In 1932, New York City's Radio City Music Hall first opened.

In 1945, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were formally established.

In 1947, the original version of the puppet character Howdy Doody made his TV debut on NBC's "Puppet Playhouse."

In 1949, Queen Juliana of the Netherlands signed an act recognizing Indonesia's sovereignty after more than three centuries of Dutch rule.

In 1968, Apollo 8 and its three astronauts made a safe, nighttime splashdown in the Pacific.

In 1970, the musical play "Hello, Dolly!" closed on Broadway after a run of 2,844 performances.

In 1979, Soviet forces seized control of Afghanistan. President Hafizullah Amin (hah-FEE'-zoo-lah ah-MEEN'), who was overthrown and executed, was replaced by Babrak Karmal.

In 1985, Palestinian guerrillas opened fire inside the Rome and Vienna airports; 19 victims were killed, plus four attackers who were slain by police and security personnel. American naturalist Dian Fossey, 53, who had studied gorillas in the wild in Rwanda, was found hacked to death.

In 1995, Israeli jeeps sped out of the West Bank town of Ramallah, capping a seven-week pullout giving Yasser Arafat control over 90 percent of the West Bank's one million Palestinian residents and one-third of its land.

In 2007, opposition leader Benazir Bhutto (BEN'-uh-zeer BOO'-toh) was assassinated during a suicide bomb attack in Pakistan following a campaign rally.

Ten years ago: Saddam Hussein urged Iraqis to embrace "brotherly coexistence" and not to hate U.S.-led foreign troops in a goodbye letter posted on a website a day after Iraq's highest court upheld his death sentence. Former Democratic vice presidential nominee John Edwards jumped into the presidential race a day earlier than he'd planned after his campaign accidentally went live with his election website a day before his scheduled announcement.

Five years ago: Tens of thousands of defiant Syrian protesters thronged the streets of Homs, calling for the execution of President Bashar Assad shortly after his army pulled its tanks back and allowed Arab League monitors in for the first time to the city at the heart of the anti-government uprising. Sen. Ben Nelson of Nebraska, a conservative Democrat, said he would retire from the Senate rather than seek a third term. Abstract expressionist painter Helen Frankenthaler, 83, known for her bold, lyrical use of color, died in Darien, Connecticut.

One year ago: British Prime Minister David Cameron sent hundreds more troops into northern England to help exhausted residents and emergency workers fight back rising river waters that had inundated towns and cities after weeks of heavy rain. Death claimed Harlem Globetrotter Meadowlark Lemon at age 83; baseball player Dave Henderson at age 57; cinematographer Haskell Wexler at age 93; painter-sculptor Ellsworth Kelly at age 92.

Today's Birthdays: Actor John Amos is 77. ABC News correspondent Cokie Roberts is 73. Rock musician Mick Jones (Foreigner) is 72. Singer Tracy Nelson is 72. Actor Gerard Depardieu is 68. Jazz singer-musician T.S. Monk is 67. Singer-songwriter Karla Bonoff is 65. Actress Tovah Feldshuh is 64. Rock musician David Knopfler (Dire Straits) is 64. Journalist-turned-politician Arthur Kent is 63. Actress Maryam D'Abo is 56. Country musician Jeff Bryant is 54. Actor Ian Gomez is 52. Actress Theresa Randle is 52. Actress Eva LaRue

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is 50. Wrestler and actor Bill Goldberg is 50. Actress Tracey Cherelle Jones is 47. Bluegrass singer-musician Darrin Vincent (Dailey & Vincent) is 47. Rock musician Guthrie Govan is 45. Musician Matt Slocum is 44. Actor Wilson Cruz is 43. Singer Olu is 43. Actor Masi Oka is 42. Actor Aaron Stanford is 40. Actress Emilie de Ravin is 35. Christian rock musician James Mead (Kutless) is 34. Rock singer Hayley Williams (Paramore) is 28. Country singer Shay Mooney (Dan & Shay) is 25.

Thought for Today: "I'm not young enough to know everything." — Sir James Matthew Barrie, Scottish dramatist-author (1860-1937).