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Monday, May 29

MEMORIAL DAY

Tuesday, May 30

United Methodist: Bible Study at 10 a.m.
Senior Menu: Tater tot hotdish, green beans, orange half, sugar cookie, whole wheat bread.

Wednesday, May 31

United Methodist: Wednesday Coffee, 9 a.m.
James Valley Telco annual meeting at Groton Area High School, 12:30 p.m.
Senior Menu: Baked pork chop, macaroni salad, squash, pineapple strawberry ambrosia, whole wheat bread.

The Rumor Mill!

Rumors have been floating around that the sixth graders will be returning to the elementary school once the construction is completed. This morning I talked with Steve Smith, president of the Groton Area School Board. He said that the sixth graders will not be moving back to the elementary school and that they will remain at the middle school.

So if you hear such a rumor, now you know the truth!

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**



Sperry Stump Removal
Tyler: 605/216-8431
Over 30 Years of Combined Experience!
TJ: 605/380-7915
TreeLine Tree Service

Safely Cut the Cost of Elective Medical Expenses

By Nathaniel Sillin

Whether it's a matter of comfort, appearance or safety, there are many medical procedures that you may want or need, but your health insurance won't cover.

Laser eye surgery may fall into the want category for most people and it can be a hefty investment with each eye costing several thousand dollars. For those wanting to start a family, infertility treatments, which can cost over \$10,000, may be closer to a need. Yet most states don't require health insurance to cover treatments.

Considering the lasting impact that these and other procedures can have on your life, you may not want to seek out the least expensive option. However, that doesn't mean you should forgo attempts to save altogether. From tax-advantaged accounts to comparison shopping doctors, there are many approaches to safely cutting costs.

See if you could get a tax break. Although tax breaks don't lower a medical procedure's price, tax deductions can decrease your taxable income and by using a tax-advantaged account you may be able to pay for some medical procedures with income-tax-free money.

Take a medical expense tax deduction. If you itemize your tax deductions, you can get a deduction for your qualified medical expenses that exceed 10 percent of your adjusted gross income. Laser eye surgery and some fertility enhancement treatments may qualify. However, cosmetic surgery doesn't unless it's related to a congenital abnormality, disfiguring disease or an injury resulting from trauma or an accident.

Use an employer-sponsored flexible spending account (FSA). Some employers offer FSAs as an employee benefit. You can make tax-deductible contributions to the account each year and withdraw the money tax-free to pay for qualified medical expenses, including health insurance deductibles and copayments. However, this approach could require planning as you may forfeit remaining FSA money at the end of each year.

Enroll in health insurance with a health savings account (HSA). An HSA account is similar to an FSA in that you can contribute pre-tax money and withdraw funds to pay for eligible medical expenses tax-free. HSAs don't have the use-it-or-lose-it requirement, but to qualify for an HSA account, you need to enroll in a High Deductible Health Plan (HDHP) and can't be eligible for Medicare.

Ask your health insurance company about discounts. Even when a health insurance provider doesn't cover a procedure, members may still be able to save money by going through their insurance.

For example, health insurance generally won't cover the cost of Laser eye surgery, but your provider may offer a 5 to 15 percent discount if you get the surgery at partner eye care centers.

Health insurance requirements can also vary from one state to another, and you should double-check your benefits before assuming something isn't covered. Infertility treatment is one of these gray areas, as some states require health insurance plans to provide coverage while others do not.

Compare costs from different providers. Varying medical costs sometimes make headlines when patients find out that a \$3,000 medical procedure at a hospital could cost several hundred at a nearby clinic. If it's not an emergency, there are websites that you can use to comparison shop nearby medical centers and get estimated prices.

Some people also look for savings in other countries. Medical tourism is a growing industry, and millions of people travel outside their home countries seeking lower costs, higher-quality services, treatments that aren't available at home, a relaxing environment to recover in or a combination of several of these factors. While the U.S. is a destination for some medical tourists, Canada, Southeast Asia, Latin America and parts of Europe are also popular.

Bottom line: Although you may not be able to convince your health insurance company to cover what it considers an elective procedure; you can turn to other methods to save money. As with other large expenses, you can take a dual big- and little-picture approach by looking for tax breaks that lower your effective cost and savings opportunities that can reduce a procedure's price.

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

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jordan Wright

The Minnesota Vikings social media team released a video of Teddy Bridgewater dropping back and throwing during organized team activities, and the video has been circulated and talked about since. If you haven't seen the video, go to the Vikings website and check it out. Vikings' General Manager Rick Spielman and head coach Mike Zimmer have both said there is still no timetable on Bridgewater, and that they're taking it one step at a time right now. But the video proves Teddy is working extremely hard to come back from his gruesome knee injury, and it's only a matter of time before he takes the field again.

There are many Vikings fans who feel Sam Bradford gives the Vikings a better chance to compete, and that he should be the starter when/if Teddy Bridgewater comes back. Personally, I think Teddy Bridgewater is the better quarterback, but let's get into some stats:

	Sam Bradford	Teddy Bridgewater
Games played:	78	28
Career quarterback rating:	84.5	87.0
Total touchdowns per game:	1.28	1.14
Total yards per game:	243.6	234
Yards per attempt:	6.6	7.2
Wins per 16 starts:	6.6	9.7

Looking at the stats, both players have advantages. Bradford has played more games, averages more touchdowns per game, and slightly more yards per game. Bridgewater, on the other hand, has a higher quarterback rating, averages more yards per attempt, and wins considerably more games per season.

The Vikings are in a tough spot right now, because they don't know if Teddy will ever come back and be the player he once was. Let's take a look at the Vikings' options at quarterback this season and next.

The best-case scenario for Minnesota would be for Teddy to come back at full strength, while also having Bradford play at a high level in 2017. If the Vikings can afford to sit Bridgewater through the first six weeks of the season, the last year of his rookie contract will toll, essentially adding another year and locking him up through the 2018 season. If Bradford is playing at a high level, and Teddy is ready to come back in week 7, the Vikings could theoretically trade Bradford and play Teddy the rest of the season. This option would recoup a draft pick or two for Minnesota, making the two-year rental of Bradford more palatable.

The worst-case scenario for the Vikings would be if Bradford plays horribly this season, and Teddy Bridgewater is unable to come back from injury. In this case, the Vikings would likely let Bradford walk after the 2017 season (he only has one year left on his contract). The team would once again be in the market for a franchise quarterback, and the defense's prime years will have been wasted with nothing to show for it.

The most probable thing to happen would likely fall in the middle of the two scenarios listed above. More than likely, Bradford will play well but not well enough to reach the Super Bowl, while Bridgewater will take all of 2017 to heal. If this happens, the Vikings will be between a rock and a hard place, wanting to extend Bradford's contract (which will be expensive, because good quarterbacks are always expensive) while also holding out hope Bridgewater can still become the quarterback the team thought he could be.

My sincere hope is that Teddy comes back sooner rather than later, so the coaches can discern which player gives the team the best chance to win. The winner of that competition will likely get a nice contract from the Vikings next offseason, with the loser being allowed to walk and sign somewhere else.

What are your thoughts? Do you prefer Bradford or Bridgewater? Let me know by messaging me on Facebook ([facebook.com/SkolJWright](https://www.facebook.com/SkolJWright)) or on Twitter (@SkolJWright)

Until next week... SKOL!

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Today in Weather History

May 29, 1953: An auditorium was almost entirely unroofed, and barns, along with outbuildings were destroyed in McLaughlin by a tornado. Seven businesses and two homes were also damaged. Estimate of property damage at \$100,000. This tornado was estimated to have F2 strength.

May 29, 2004: Hail, with the largest a quarter sizes, fell in many parts of north central South Dakota. Lightning struck a house in Veblen and caused some damage. Glass from a broken window hit a man, and some debris from the ceiling hit a woman. They were taken to the hospital and treated for minor injuries. The torrential rains of 3 to 6 inches fell between Westport and Columbia with cropland and many roads flooded. Also, some basements were flooded. Four, weak F0 tornadoes, also were reported. The first two touched down near Bath causing no damage. The other two occurred near Ipswich, also causing no damage.

1947: An unprecedented late-spring snowstorm blasts portions of the Midwest from eastern Wyoming to eastern Upper Michigan. The heavy snow caused severe damage to power and telephone lines and the already-leafed-out vegetation.

1951 - A massive hailstorm, from Wallace to Kearney County in Kansas, caused six million dollars damage to crops. (David Ludlum)

1953 - A tornado, 600 yards wide at times, killed two persons on its 20 mile path from southwest of Fort Rice ND into Emmons County. Nearly every building in Fort Rice was damaged. The Catholic church was leveled, with some pews jammed four feet into the ground. (The Weather Channel)

1982: Two major tornadoes ripped through southern Illinois. The most severe was an F4 that touched down northeast of Carbondale, Illinois then moved to Marion. The twister had multiple vortices within the main funnel. Extensive damage occurred at the Marion Airport. A total of 10 people were killed, and 181 were injured. 648 homes and 200 cars were damaged or destroyed, with total damages around \$100 million dollars.

1986: Hailstones over 3 inches in diameter pounded South Shore in Montreal, Quebec Canada causing over \$65 million dollars in damage.

1987 - Thunderstorms in West Texas produced softball size hail at Lamesa, and hail up to twelve inches deep east of Dimmitt. Thunderstorms also spawned seven tornadoes in West Texas, including one which injured three persons at Wolfforth. Thunderstorms deluged the Texas Hill Country with up to eleven inches of rain. Severe flooding along the Medino, Hondo, Seco, Sabinal and Frio rivers caused more than fifty million dollars damage. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

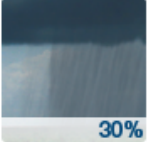
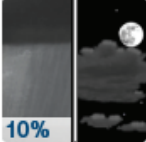





1988 - A powerful cold front brought snow and high winds to parts of the western U.S. Austin, NV, was blanketed with ten inches of snow, and winds gusted to 75 mph at the Mojave Airport in California. Strong southerly winds and unseasonably warm weather prevailed in the north central U.S. Glasgow, MT, equalled their record for the month of May with a high of 102 degrees. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Wintry weather gripped parts of the northwestern U.S. for the second day in a row. Great Falls, MT, was blanketed with 12 inches of snow, which pushed their total for the winter season to a record 117.4 inches. Six inches of snow whitened the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

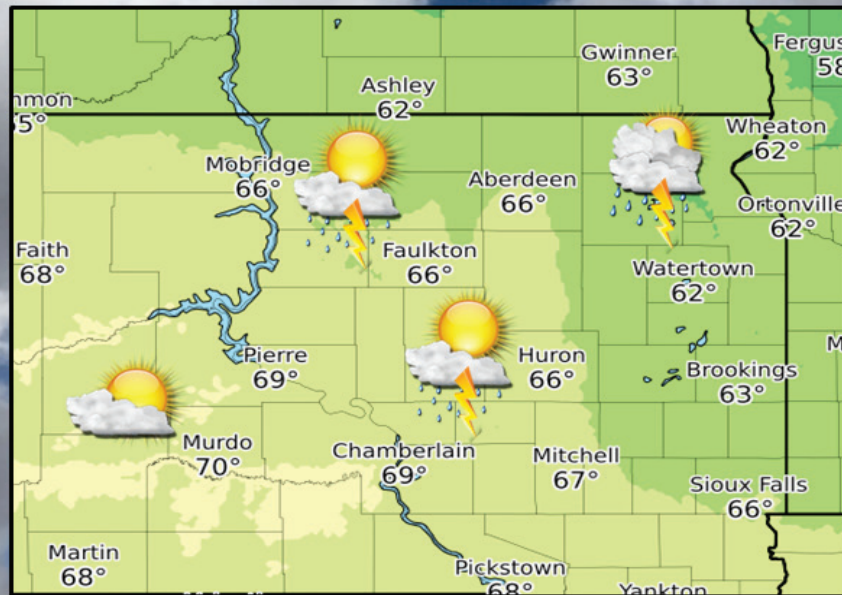
1990 - Afternoon and evening thunderstorms produced severe weather from north central Colorado to the northern half of Texas. Severe thunderstorms spawned four tornadoes, and there were seventy reports of large hail or damaging winds. Midday thunderstorms produced wind gusts to 90 mph at Hobart, OK, and produced up to three and a half inches of rain in eastern Colorado in four hours. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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Memorial Day	Tonight	Tuesday	Tuesday Night	Wednesday	Wednesday Night	Thursday
						
Scattered Showers and Breezy	Isolated Showers then Partly Cloudy	Mostly Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Mostly Sunny
High: 65 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 66 °F	Low: 36 °F	High: 74 °F	Low: 52 °F	High: 82 °F

Cooler and Breezy Today – Scattered Showers



National Weather Service – Aberdeen, SD
weather.gov/Aberdeen



Published on: 05/29/2017 at 5:38AM

Another upper level disturbance will rotate southward into the region today, on the backside of a large upper low over Ontario. Widely scattered showers with a few isolated storms are expected again this afternoon, mainly east of the Missouri River. With a more stable atmosphere today, any showers and storms are not expected to pack quite the punch as the storms of Sunday. Temperatures will be cooler today, with continued breezy northwest winds.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 73.2 F at 3:02 PM

Low Outside Temp: 42.2 F at 6:48 AM

High Gust: 48.0 Mph at 3:18 PM

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 99° in 1934

Record Low: 23° in 1947

Average High: 72°F

Average Low: 49°F

Average Precip in May: 2.91

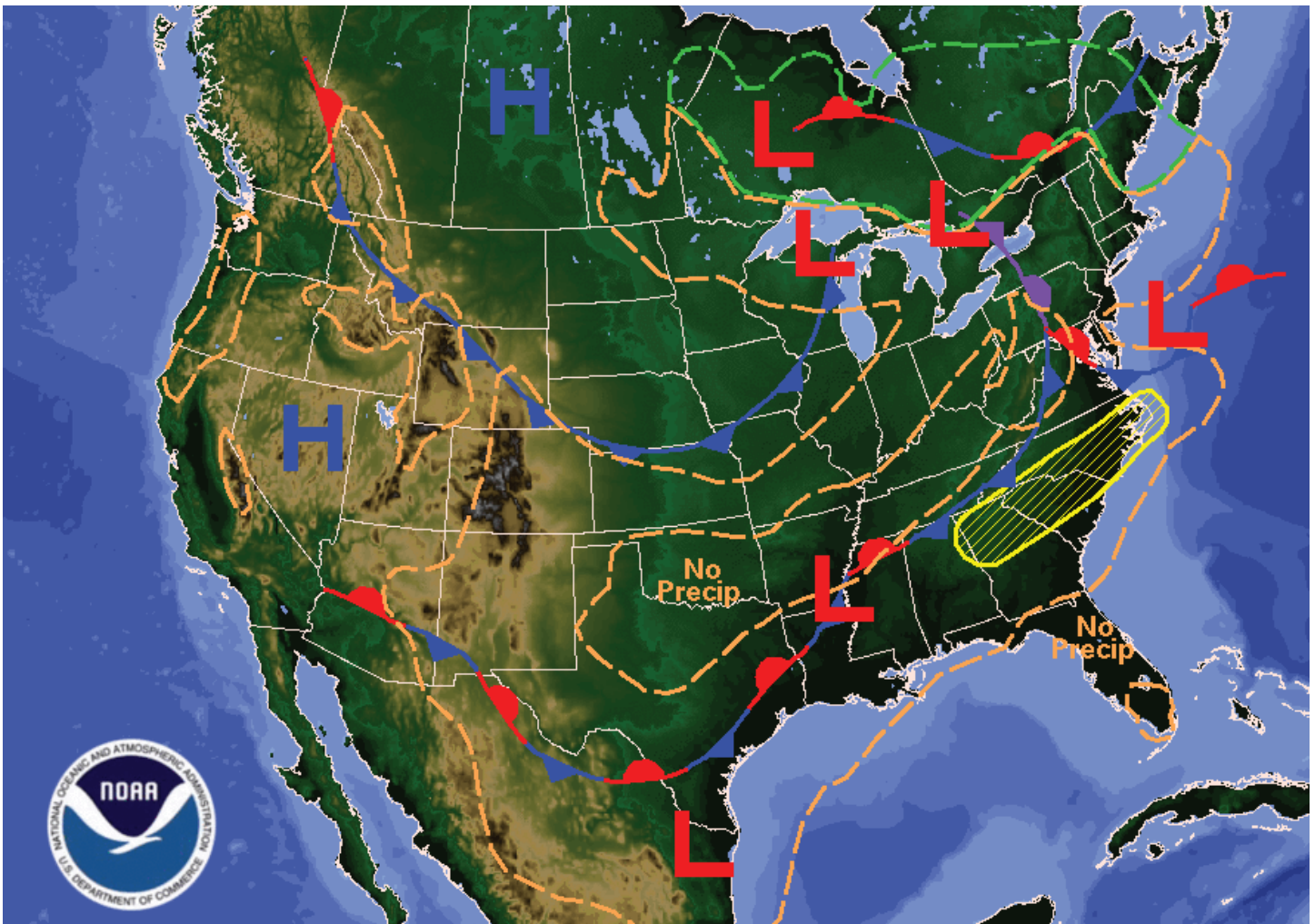
Precip to date in May: 1.21

Average Precip to date: 6.94

Precip Year to Date: 3.19

Sunset Tonight: 9:12 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:49 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Mon, May 29, 2017, issued 4:43 AM EDT
DOC/NOAA/NWS/NCEP/Weather Prediction Center
Prepared by McCreynolds with WPC/SPC/NHC forecasts

Rain

Rain and T'Storms

Rain and Snow

Snow

Flash Flooding Possible (hatched)

Severe T'Storms Possible (hatched)

Freezing Rain Possible (hatched)

Heavy Snow Possible (hatched)

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HELPING HANDS

Years ago there was a picture of a mother and father walking down a beautiful pathway holding the hands of their two small children who were walking with them. Underneath were the words, "Their Future is in Your Hands." That is true in a certain sense and to a certain degree.

But David realized there was another hand that was far more important than the hand of any parent: "You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing." What did he mean?

God is sufficient to save. When he began to sink in swirling waves, Peter shouted, "Save me, Lord!" And He did. Immediately Jesus saw a person who was in need and He reached out and saved him. He did it for Peter and He will do the same for anyone who willingly calls on Him for salvation.

God is sufficient to supply every need that we have. Our God is a good and gracious God who is willing to meet the needs of those who depend on Him. God not only saves us by His grace, but His Word assures us that "God will supply our every need according to the riches of His glory in Christ Jesus." God does not give grudgingly, but generously, because His grace is endless!

God is sufficient to sustain us. Jude assures us that "He is able to keep us from falling and present us before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy to His Father." Are there any other words that bring more comfort in times of anxiety, adversity or abandonment?

Prayer: Great is Your faithfulness, O Lord, to save us, supply our every need and sustain us each day of our lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 145:16 You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

News from the Associated Press

Injured trooper was dragged as patrol vehicle was stolen

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A South Dakota Highway Patrol trooper who was injured during a traffic stop was assaulted and dragged as his patrol vehicle was stolen.

Authorities have released more details about the Saturday night incident on Highway 79 south of Rapid City.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office says one suspect was able to get control of the trooper's vehicle during a traffic stop, and the trooper was dragged as the person tried to flee.

The trooper shot at the vehicle, and the vehicle eventually crashed into a creek embankment. The two suspects were able to get away in their own vehicle, but they were arrested later in the night on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

The trooper was treated at a hospital and released. Neither the trooper nor the suspects were identified.

Cars, building struck by bullets in Sioux Falls shooting

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police are investigating a shooting in which two parked vehicles and a building were struck by bullets.

No injuries were reported in the incident about 10:15 p.m. Sunday.

Officers responded to several reports of gunshots near a city intersection and found a number of shell casings. They're working to develop suspects.

New technology looks to fill senior care workforce gaps

By **PATRICK ANDERSON, Argus Leader**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Rita Dozal doesn't want to worry about her mom having to train the nursing aides.

But there are times when the 87-year-old nursing home resident doesn't know who is going to help her get to bed at night. She doesn't know who is going to help her when she wakes up in the morning. She doesn't know who's going to bring her meals.

Every time, especially on the weekends, it could be a new face. A new face with minimal training.

"These people are here 24 hours a day every day and they can't go home," Dozal told the Argus Leader (<http://argusne.ws/2qNdrZ9>). "So you have to create an environment that they feel they have consistency and that they're home."

Workforce shortages in South Dakota nursing homes will likely get worse unless something is done to fix the problem. To fill the gap, businesses are responding with new technology, and a focus on creating a strong workplace culture for new employees.

Dozens of nursing homes in the state are failing again and again in the same category. State officials have raised red flags about the lack of workers, especially at front-line positions, such as aides, who work directly with residents such as Dozal's mother, a double amputee and diabetic.

Leaders for Avera eCARE are preparing to break free from grant funding next year with a business-to-business telemedicine model they developed in part thanks to federal innovation dollars that will allow a team of care providers to assist nursing homes in rural areas. Executives for a newly opened assisted living community in western Sioux Falls, Grand Living at Lake Lorraine, say they are beating the workforce shortage by reinforcing a culture of respect and dignity for both residents and employees.

New to a Sioux Falls market, where local joblessness already hangs well below 3 percent, Grand Living has been able to hire on employees, CEO Dan Peterka said.

Peterka knows full well how hard hiring can be in the senior care industry.

"Everybody I think is confronted with what employment is," Peterka said. "We've had really good success."

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Sioux Falls and the rest of the state are at the cross section of two troubling trends when it comes to finding staff to provide medical treatment at assisted living and nursing home communities.

One is a local problem of low unemployment and the shortages created across industries, from restaurants to construction. Nursing homes and other long-term care facilities are competing with other sectors when it comes to filling entry-level jobs. Aides and other starting positions don't require much training, but it can be difficult for employers to compete for the pool of potential workers because of the work involved in assisted living — or at least because of the perception.

"They're really competing with everybody else," said Gloria Pearson, who heads the state's Department of Human Services. "If you're going to receive the same pay and benefits, it's just really hard to recruit people and then retain them as well."

State officials commissioned a report in 2015 about long-term care options in South Dakota. The company hired to conduct the research, Abt Associates Inc., noted problems with the projected workforce.

Adding to the complexity of the state's workforce shortage is a second, broader problem of the aging Baby Boomers and anemic growth in the number of long-term care providers across all specialties, from doctors to aids to social workers.

The number of South Dakotans older than 65 is projected to grow 84 percent between 2010 and 2035, according to state population data.

The trend line for employment in long-term care, meanwhile, is far less steep. Between 2014 and 2024, all jobs in the residential care sector are expected to increase 6.5 percent, according to the state Department of Labor.

It's a problem the state's AARP office is well aware of and trying to address.

"I definitely see that there is a trend," said Eric Gaikowski, state director for AARP South Dakota. "An increased need for workers in that area."

Dan Peterka knew what he was getting into when he started Grand Living, the company that runs the Lake Lorraine assisted living community.

Peterka worked for years in the industry before co-founding the Twin Cities-based business that is quickly expanding its presence in the Midwest with new projects in Sioux Falls and Iowa, not including freshly inked deals to open two more assisted living communities in Florida.

He's not worried about finding workers. That's because from the start his company has been very intentional about the culture and "resort style" hospitality it promotes among its staff.

"We've had very good success because of our service culture," Peterka said. "The caliber of individual that we select and hire within our company . we've been very blessed from that standpoint."

Grand Living leaders have a carefully guided approach to customer service, using a set of philosophies crafted with help from a former Ritz-Carlton executive. The company even branded its approach to service, called "The Sterling Touch."

Three cornerstones provide the foundation of Grand Living's approach to service, Peterka said: A passion to provide remarkable, personalized experiences to clients, recognizing dedicated staff and respecting contributions of others to the daily work.

The company also has 10 principles for customer service, and each day employees focus on one.

"It's how we sustain our customer service culture," Peterka said.

Dozal doesn't see much consistency for her mother, who needed to leave assisted living years ago for the increased care available at a nursing home.

Cracks are already showing from the workforce shortage and the effect of a continued drought leave her wondering about the management of Sioux Falls Village, the nursing home where her mother lives. Her most pressing question: What kind of care is her mom getting?

"You've got so many people coming and going," Dozal said. "You lose a lot of efficiencies, you lose a lot of confidence."

Inspectors have reported thousands of deficiencies at South Dakota nursing homes in the last four years, and one of the most common offenses was a failure to meet professional standards.

Between 2015 and 2016, Sioux Falls Village was repeatedly written up for not having policies that properly

screened employees and allowed for reporting abuse, and for ensuring staff met professional standards of quality. The Good Samaritan Society-run facility failed to meet those standards in three successive inspections, spread across a year and a half.

A Good Samaritan spokesman didn't respond by print deadline to a request for comment. But Sioux Falls Village is far from the worst offender. Nursing homes across the state failed to meet professional quality standards, many of them failing in that same category inspection after inspection, year after year. Nursing homes in Woonsocket, Flandreau, Garretson and Lennox all failed multiple times.

Professional standards of quality was one of the biggest overall failings of nursing homes in the state, according to four years of Medicaid data, with 193 total infractions.

The AARP sees solutions on a couple of fronts, especially as members express a desire to live at home longer and avoid community-based settings, Gaikowski said.

One of those is paying more respect to the family caregivers who sacrifice their own personal time to provide for their older relatives.

"The more they can provide services in their homes," Gaikowski said. "They're better able to stay in their home; they don't have to take up a nursing home bed."

But another solution to the state's problematic workforce problem is telemedicine.

Avera eCARE was able to serve 45 additional long-term care facilities in the region thanks to an \$8.8 million federal innovation grant it received in 2015. Now in its final and third year of the grant, eCARE leaders are hopeful about the business model moving forward that will allow them to continue contracting with nursing homes and easing the burden on health care providers.

The Sioux Falls-based call center includes a team of physicians, nurses, mental health providers and social workers who can answer calls remotely, working directly with patients. Collaborating with family doctors and other providers who work one-on-one with the patient, telemedicine allows for a faster response, said Deanna Larson, CEO for Avera eCARE.

"We augment, we support them, we specialize," Larson said. "We want to be there when they need us."

Dr. Joseph Rees works with eCARE's long-term care team as a fellow. He wants to earn credentials in geriatric medicine because he likes the team approach to care. But he also noticed something happening around him as he worked with other Avera Health patients in his years as a hospitalist.

"There was certainly a growing proportion of patients that were elderly," Rees said.

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

5 people including pregnant woman die in reservation crash

WANBLEE, S.D. (AP) — Authorities say five people including a pregnant woman have died in a crash on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in southwestern South Dakota.

It happened Saturday night on Highway 44, around five miles west of Wanblee.

Pennington County Fire Administrator Jerome Harvey tells KNBN-TV (<http://bit.ly/2rcRD9A>) the victims were in a vehicle that crossed the center line and collided head-on with a semi-tractor trailer.

The station says the victims were identified as 21-year-old Ashton Standing Bear; 7-year-old Jacey Cummings; 5-year-old Micah Cummings; Devin Conquering Bear, whose age was unknown; and 30-year-old Tawni Wilcox, who was six months pregnant. A baby in the vehicle survived and was taken to a Rapid City hospital.

The driver and a passenger in the semi were unhurt.

Wanblee is about 100 miles southeast of Rapid City.

Information from: KNBN-TV, <http://www.newscenter1.com>

Aid deal promises quicker fire evacuations in Black Hills

SILVER CITY, S.D. (AP) — Officials in Pennington County and the Black Hills National forest have entered a new agreement that will speed up the clearing of county roads in the event of a fire evacuation.

Under the mutual aid agreement, federal and county departments will combine forces to reduce the biomass on both sides of Edelweiss Mountain Road near the Pactola Reservoir.

"Anything that we can do to enhance safety for the public, as well as the firefighters, you know, it is really paramount," said Chris Stover, an assistant fire management officer for fuels with the Mystic Ranger District of the Black Hills National Forest. "If we can reduce the surface fuels or modify the surface fuel loads that we have out here as well as all the pine regeneration that we have going on along this road and in the general area, this is going to be a benefit for everyone."

NewsCenter1 (<http://bit.ly/2qohRm7>) reports that the landscape fire management strategy is expected to give emergency responders better access to the area when fighting wildfires, and increase safety for motorists traveling in the area.

"It opens up the tree canopy," said Scott Guffey, the natural resources director for Pennington County. "We are going to get more sunlight on the road surface, more snow melt, ice melt. Hopefully less county maintenance in the winter time - money savings there."

The plan calls for additional biomass reductions on 10 county roads over the next 10 years. When completed, over 3,059 acres will be landscaped in the Black Hills area.

Information from: KNBN-TV, <http://www.newscenter1.com>

The Latest: Trump tweets thanks to US service members

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Latest on President Donald Trump's Memorial Day observance (all times local): 9:15 a.m.

President Donald Trump is thanking the men and women who died in service to the United States.

In the first of two tweets Trump sent out on Monday, he says: "Today we remember the men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in serving. Thank you, God bless your families & God bless the USA!"

In the second, Trump says: "I look forward to paying my respects to our brave men and women on this Memorial Day at Arlington National Cemetery later this morning."

The president is to deliver his first Memorial Day address and lay a wreath at the cemetery, the final resting place for many U.S. military members and others who have served the country.

3:15 a.m.

President Donald Trump is preparing his first Memorial Day address at Arlington National Cemetery.

Trump is also set to lay a wreath Monday at the cemetery, the final resting place for many U.S. military members and others who have served the country.

Trump previewed the address Saturday before he flew home from Italy, the final stop on his first trip abroad since taking office.

He addressed U.S. service members stationed at a naval base in Sicily as "warriors of freedom" and the "patriots who keep the fires of liberty burning."

Trump also noted his desire to boost spending on the military, and as commander in chief pledged his "complete and unshakeable support" to the men and women in uniform.

Putin visits France, hopes to mend strained ties with West

By VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV and SYLVIE CORBET, Associated Press

VERSAILLES, France (AP) — On a visit likely to shape Russia-France ties for years, French President Emmanuel Macron hosted Russian President Vladimir Putin at the sumptuous Palace of Versailles on Monday for what the newly-elected French leader said would be "demanding" talks on Syria, the Ukrainian crisis

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and other thorny issues driving the rift between Russia and the West.

The leaders' first handshakes — relatively brief and cordial — after Putin climbed out of his limousine at Versailles were far less macho than Macron's now famous who-will-blink-first handshake showdown with President Donald Trump when the two leaders met for the first time last week.

Monday's visit offered Putin and Macron a chance to reset a relationship that got off on a less-than-ideal foot during Macron's presidential campaign. Macron had strong words for Russia in his race for the presidency, saying France and Russia don't share the same values. Putin bet — wrongly — on Macron's far-right opponent Marine Le Pen, hosting her at the Kremlin in March, before Macron then handily beat her.

Macron is the first Western leader to speak to Putin after the Group of Seven summit over the weekend, where relations with Russia were a key topic.

The Kremlin hailed the visit as a chance for Putin and Macron to get to know each other and better understand their views on a range of disputed issues, including the Ukrainian crisis, the war in Syria and Russia's ties with the European Union.

During his G-7 news conference on Saturday, Macron promised to have a "demanding dialogue" with Russia, especially on Syria. He called it a failure that European nations were not involved in the talks over Syria's future but were being hit by the effects of that crisis, including the huge number of Syrian refugees trying to get to Europe.

"We must talk to Russia to change the framework for getting out of the military crisis in Syria and to build a much more collective and integrated inclusive political solution," Macron declared.

Macron's invitation for Putin was a surprise after his tough stance on Russia during the French election. Macron's aides also claimed that Russian groups launched hacking attacks on his presidential campaign. Moscow strongly denied all allegations of election meddling.

Monday's visit offers both sides an opportunity to improve ties that steadily deteriorated in the closing months of the presidency of Macron's predecessor, Socialist Francois Hollande.

"As a person who pays utmost attention to personal contacts, Putin believes that only a one-on-one meeting could give answers to many questions about Macron as a person and as president of France, as well as his future foreign policy course and his stance on Russia," Tatyana Stanovaya of the Center for Political Technologies, an independent Moscow-based think-tank, wrote.

In October, Putin abruptly shelved a trip to Paris after Hollande alleged that Russia could face war crime charges for its actions in Syria. Hollande also refused to take part in the opening of the newly built Russian Orthodox Spiritual and Cultural Center in Paris and was only interested in talking with Russia about Syria.

Later Monday, Putin is to visit the center near the Seine River that includes the Holy Trinity Cathedral. The site was sold to Russia under former President Nicolas Sarkozy amid criticism from rights groups.

After their talks at Versailles, Putin and Macron will tour an exhibition there marking the 300th anniversary of Russian Czar Peter the Great's trip to Paris that was prepared by St. Petersburg's Hermitage Museum.

With Peter the Great widely seen as a ruler who modernized Russia and sought to open it up to the West, the exhibition offers a symbolic backdrop for both to talk about the importance of Russia-France ties.

Putin's foreign affairs adviser, Yuri Ushakov, said Russia was dissatisfied with the current level of political contacts and that the meeting "is very important for both Russia and France."

Ushakov said he expects an "interesting discussion" on ways to implement a 2015 Minsk deal for eastern Ukraine, which was brokered by Germany and France. The U.S. and the EU have made the prospect of lifting economic and financial sanctions against Moscow contingent on fulfilling the peace agreement.

The deal has helped reduce the scale of fighting between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine, but clashes have continued and political elements of the agreement have stalled. Ukraine and Russia have blamed one another for the fighting that has left some 10,000 people dead.

Ushakov said that the two leaders will also have a "frank" discussion on Syria, where Russia has backed Syrian President Bashar Assad and France has pushed strongly for his removal. He added that last week's suicide attack on Manchester Arena emphasized the need to pool efforts in the fight against terrorism.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Sunday urged European Union nations to stick together in the face of emerging policy divisions with the U.S., Britain's decision to leave the bloc and other challenges.

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Merkel also stressed the importance of being good neighbors "wherever that is possible, including with Russia, but also with others."

Human rights activists protested Monday in Paris over the situation of gays in the Russian republic of Chechnya, holding a banner "Stop homophobia in Chechnya" near the Eiffel Tower.

"It's important that Mr. Putin is ready to hear, we hope, strong words coming from Mr. Macron, to say 'stop' to that homophobia, which has lasted for too long," Cecile Coudriou of Amnesty International said.

Human Rights Watch said last week that high-level officials in Russia's Chechnya humiliated inmates during visits to detention facilities where gay people were being held and tortured.

John Leicester in Paris contributed to this report.

Kelly defends plan for Russia back channel as a 'good thing'

By HOPE YEN and VIVIAN SALAMA, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly is defending an alleged effort by top White House adviser Jared Kushner to create back-channel communications with Russia as a "good thing," while the Trump administration sought to quell mounting questions over secret ties to the Kremlin.

Speaking on Sunday's news shows, Kelly said he didn't know whether the reports by The Associated Press and other news outlets involving Kushner, who is President Donald Trump's son-in-law, were true. But Kelly said such back-channel communications don't bother him and would not be harmful to U.S. security interests.

"It's both normal, in my opinion, and acceptable," Kelly said. "Any way that you can communicate with people, particularly organizations that are maybe not particularly friendly to us, is a good thing."

Congressional Democrats demanded to hear directly from Kushner over allegations of the proposed secret back-channel, saying his security clearance may need to be revoked. But Trump immediately railed against administration leaks in a flurry of tweets Sunday, calling them "fabricated lies."

Rep. Adam Schiff of California, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, said it was "obviously very concerning" if a key Trump campaign figure was possibly seeking secret communications during the transition period with a country that intelligence experts say intervened in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Schiff said the government needed to "get to the bottom" of the matter and urged a review of Kushner's security clearance "to find out whether he was truthful."

"If not, then there's no way he can maintain that kind of a clearance," Schiff said.

The AP and other news organizations reported that Kushner in December proposed a back channel between the Kremlin and the Trump transition team. Kushner spoke with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak about facilitating sensitive discussions to explore the incoming administration's options with Russia as it developed its Syria policy. The intent was to connect Trump's chief national security adviser at the time, Michael Flynn, with Russian military leaders, a person familiar with the discussions told the AP. The person wasn't authorized to publicly discuss private policy deliberations and insisted on anonymity.

Russia, a pivotal player in Syria, has backed Syrian President Bashar Assad, often at the expense of civilians and at odds with U.S. policy during Syria's long civil war.

The White House did not acknowledge the meeting or Kushner's attendance until March. At the time, a White House official dismissed it as a brief courtesy meeting.

Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, described the latest allegations involving Kushner as "serious" and called for a thorough investigation.

"He needs to answer for what was happening at the time," Booker said. "What's worrying me are the patterns we're seeing. So one is this administration not talking about our values, cozying up to authoritarian leaders. And the other pattern we have is just a continuous drumbeat of inappropriate contacts with the Russians."

Lawyers for Kushner said he was willing to talk with federal and congressional investigators about his

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foreign contacts and his work on the Trump campaign.

The disclosure of the back channel has put the White House on the defensive. Just back from visiting the Middle East and Europe, Trump on Sunday dismissed recent reports as "fake news."

"It is my opinion that many of the leaks coming out of the White House are fabricated lies," Trump tweeted. He added: "Whenever you see the words 'sources say' in the fake news media, and they don't mention names ... it is very possible that those sources don't exist."

Kushner's involvement in the proposed back channel was first reported by The Washington Post, which said he suggested using Russian diplomatic facilities for the discussions, apparently to make them more difficult to monitor. The newspaper cited anonymous U.S. officials who were briefed on intelligence reports on intercepted Russian communications.

The Post reported that Kislyak was taken aback by the suggestion of allowing an American to use Russian communications gear at its embassy or consulate — a proposal that would have carried security risks for Moscow as well for as the Trump team.

According to the person familiar with the Kushner meeting, the Trump team eventually felt there was no need for a back channel once Rex Tillerson was confirmed as secretary of state on Feb. 1.

Flynn served briefly as Trump's national security adviser before being fired in February. Officials said he misled Vice President Mike Pence about whether he and the ambassador had discussed U.S. sanctions against Russia in a phone call.

Sally Yates, the former acting attorney general, told Congress this month that the deception left Flynn vulnerable to being blackmailed by the Russians. Flynn remains under federal investigation in Virginia over his foreign business ties. He was interviewed by the FBI in January about his contacts with Kislyak.

Kushner was a trusted Trump adviser last year, overseeing the campaign's digital strategy. He remains an influential confidant within the White House as does his wife, Ivanka Trump.

Reuters has reported that Kushner had at least three previously undisclosed contacts with Kislyak last year, including two phone calls between April and November. Kushner's attorney, Jamie Gorelick, told Reuters that Kushner "has no recollection of the calls as described."

Federal investigators and several congressional committees are looking into any connections between Russia and the Trump campaign, including allegations that there may have been collaboration to help Trump and harm his Democratic opponent, Hillary Clinton.

The Senate intelligence committee, which is investigating Russia's meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, has requested information and documents from Trump's campaign dating back to July 2015, the AP and other news outlets confirmed.

Kelly appeared on "Fox News Sunday," NBC's "Meet the Press" and ABC's "This Week," Schiff also spoke on ABC, and Booker was on CNN's "State of the Union."

Associated Press writers Catherine Lucey, Eileen Sullivan, Julie Bykowicz, Chad Day and Eric Tucker contributed to this report.

Merkel spokesman: Germany still seeking stronger US ties

By DAVID RISING, Associated Press

BERLIN (AP) — Berlin remains committed to strong trans-Atlantic relations, but Chancellor Angela Merkel's suggestion after meetings with President Donald Trump that Europe can no longer entirely rely on the U.S. "speaks for itself," her spokesman said Monday

Merkel's comments Sunday came after a Group of Seven summit at which the Europeans couldn't reach agreement with Trump on climate change.

"The times in which we can fully count on others are somewhat over, as I have experienced in the past few days," she said during the election campaign event in Bavaria. "And so all I can say is that we Europeans must really take our destiny into our own hands."

Merkel also emphasized the continued need for friendly relations with the U.S. and others, and spokes-

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man Steffen Seibert said Monday that the chancellor is "a convinced trans-Atlanticist."

U.S.-German relations "are a strong pillar of our foreign and security policy, and Germany will continue working to strengthen these relations," Seibert said. "Precisely because they are so important, it's right to name differences honestly."

Following the end of the G-7 meeting in Sicily on Saturday, Merkel was sharply critical of Trump's decision not to join the other countries in reiterating support for the 2015 Paris Agreement that aims to slow global warming, calling the climate talks "very unsatisfactory."

"Here is a situation where it's six, seven if you include the EU, against one," she said. "That means there are so far no signs whether the United States of America will remain in the Paris agreement or not."

Trump did not hold a news conference after the summit but later tweeted that he would make his "final decision" on the Paris accord this week.

Germany has also bristled at criticism from Trump over NATO defense spending and the country's large trade surplus, and it's also an election year, for Merkel who is seeking her fourth term as chancellor in September.

Her main challenger, the Social Democrat's chancellor candidate Martin Schulz, was even more outspoken in his comments about the G-7 and NATO meetings last week, saying Sunday night the summits made clear Trump was a "president of the United States of America who wants to humiliate others, who presents himself like an authoritarian ruler."

"Europe is the answer, and stronger cooperation between the European countries at all levels is the answer to Donald Trump," Schulz said on ARD public television. "And above all else we must not submit to Trump's arms-race logic."

Associated Press Writer Geir Moulson contributed to this story

NKorean missile launch may be testing rivals, not technology

By FOSTER KLUG and HYUNG-JIN KIM, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea's latest missile test Monday may have less to do with perfecting its weapons technology than with showing U.S. and South Korean forces in the region that it can strike them at will.

South Korean and Japanese officials said the suspected Scud-type short-range missile flew about 450 kilometers (280 miles) on Monday morning before landing in Japan's maritime economic zone, setting off the usual round of condemnation from Washington and the North's neighbors.

It's the latest in a string of test launches by North Korea as it seeks to build nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach the U.S. mainland, a drive that puts North Korea high on the list of foreign policy worries for Japan, Washington and Seoul.

North Korea already has an arsenal of reliable short-range missiles. While North Korean scientists could be tweaking them — for instance, developing a new solid-fuel short-range missile — the North tests these shorter-range missiles much less than it does its less dependable, longer-range missiles.

This sets up the possibility that North Korea hopes to use the test to show it can hit U.S. targets near and far and emphasize its defiance of U.S.-led pressure on its missile and nuclear programs, which has included vague threats from President Donald Trump and the arrival in Korean waters of powerful U.S. military hardware. Scuds are capable of striking U.S. troops in South Korea, for instance, and the two newly developed missiles tested earlier this month have potential ranges that include Japan, Guam and even, according to some South Korean analysts, Alaska.

The missile was launched from the coastal town of Wonsan, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. It landed in Japan's exclusive maritime economic zone, which is set about 200 nautical miles off the Japanese coast, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said. He said there was no report of damage to planes or vessels in the area.

North Korea is still thought to be several years from its goal of being able to target U.S. mainland cities

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with nuclear ICBMs.

South Korea says North Korea has conducted nine ballistic missile tests this year, including one in which four missiles were launched on the same day.

North Korea's state-controlled media had no immediate comment on Monday's test, but released a statement, without mentioning the launch, that accused Seoul and Washington of "aggravating the situation" on the Korean Peninsula by conducting joint military drills and other "reckless acts."

On Sunday, North Korea also said leader Kim Jong Un had watched a separate, successful test of a new type of anti-aircraft guided weapon system. The report didn't say when the test happened.

The official Korean Central News Agency cited Kim as ordering officials to mass-produce and deploy the system all over the country so as to "completely spoil the enemy's wild dream to command the air."

Trump has alternated between bellicosity and flattery in his public statements about North Korea, but his administration is still working to solidify a policy on handling the North's nuclear ambitions.

Monday's launch was North's Korea's third ballistic missile launch since South Korean President Moon Jae-in was inaugurated on May 10. He has signaled an interest in expanding civilian exchanges with North Korea, but it's unclear if he'll be able to push anytime soon for major rapprochement while the North continues to make serious advances in its nuclear and missile programs.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters that "North Korea's provocation by ignoring repeated warnings from international society is absolutely unacceptable."

Suga, the Japanese Cabinet secretary, said the missile fell about 300 kilometers (190 miles) north of the Oki islands in southwestern Japan and 500 kilometers (310 miles) west of Sado island in central Japan.

Suga said Japanese officials will discuss North Korea with a senior foreign policy adviser to Chinese President Xi Jinping, Yang Jiechi, who was scheduled to visit Japan later Monday. China is North Korea's only major ally.

Besides its regular ballistic missile test-launches, North Korea carried out two of its five nuclear tests last year — in January and September. Outside analysts believe North Korea may be able to arm some of its shorter-range missiles with nuclear warheads, though the exact state of its secretive weapons program is unknown.

AP journalists Mari Yamaguchi and Kaori Hitomi in Tokyo contributed to this report.

Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Monday, May 29, the 149th day of 2017. There are 216 days left in the year. This is the Memorial Day observance.

Today's Highlight in History:

On May 29, 1917, the 35th president of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, was born in Brookline, Massachusetts.

On this date:

In 1453, Constantinople fell to the Ottoman Turks, marking the end of the Byzantine Empire.

In 1660, Britain's King Charles II was restored to the throne on his 30th birthday after nine years in exile.

In 1765, Patrick Henry denounced the Stamp Act before Virginia's House of Burgesses.

In 1790, Rhode Island became the 13th original colony to ratify the United States Constitution.

In 1848, Wisconsin became the 30th state of the union.

In 1932, World War I veterans began arriving in Washington to demand cash bonuses they weren't scheduled to receive until 1945.

In 1942, the movie "Yankee Doodle Dandy," starring James Cagney as George M. Cohan, premiered at a war-bonds benefit in New York. Bing Crosby, the Ken Darby Singers and the John Scott Trotter Orchestra recorded Irving Berlin's "White Christmas" in Los Angeles for Decca Records. Actor John Barrymore died

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in Hollywood at age 60.

In 1953, Mount Everest was conquered as Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tensing Norgay of Nepal became the first climbers to reach the summit.

In 1961, a couple in Paynesville, West Virginia, became the first recipients of food stamps under a pilot program created by President John F. Kennedy.

In 1977, Janet Guthrie became the first woman to race in the Indianapolis 500, finishing in 29th place (the winner was A.J. Foyt).

In 1987, a jury in Los Angeles acquitted "Twilight Zone" movie director John Landis and four associates of involuntary manslaughter in the movie-set deaths of actor Vic Morrow and two child actors, 7-year-old Myca Dinh Le and 6-year-old Renee Shin-Yi Chen, who were killed by a falling helicopter.

In 1999, Discovery became the first space shuttle to dock with the International Space Station. Olusegun Obasanjo (ah-LOO'-see-guhn oh-BAH'-suhn-joh) became Nigeria's first civilian president in 15 years, ending a string of military regimes.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush ordered new U.S. economic sanctions to pressure Sudan's government to halt bloodshed in Darfur. Cindy Sheehan, the soldier's mother who galvanized an anti-war movement with her month-long protest outside President Bush's ranch, announced her "resignation" as the public face of the movement. In Hudson Oaks, Texas, Gilberta Estrada, 25, and her four daughters were discovered hanging in a closet in their home in an apparent murder-suicide; Estrada's 8-month-old baby survived.

Five years ago: Mitt Romney clinched the Republican presidential nomination with a win in the Texas primary. Serena Williams lost in the first round of a major tournament for the first time, falling to Virginie Razzano of France 4-6, 7-6 (5), 6-3 at the French Open. Doc Watson, the Grammy-award winning folk musician whose lightning-fast style of flatpicking influenced guitarists around the world for more than a half-century, died in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, at age 89.

One year ago: An Army veteran of two Afghanistan tours killed one person and wounded several others during a shooting rampage in west Houston before being gunned down by a SWAT officer. French President Francois Hollande (frahn-SWAH' oh-LAWND') and German Chancellor Angela Merkel (AHN'-geh-lah MEHR'-kuhl) solemnly marked 100 years since the World War I Battle of Verdun. Alexander Rossi won the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500.

Today's Birthdays: Former Baseball Commissioner Fay Vincent is 79. Motorsports Hall of Famer Al Unser is 78. Actor Kevin Conway is 75. Actor Helmut Berger is 73. Rock singer Gary Brooker (Procol Harum) is 72. Actor Anthony Geary is 70. Actor Cotter Smith is 68. Singer Rebbie (ree-bee) Jackson is 67. Movie composer Danny Elfman is 64. Singer LaToya Jackson is 61. Actor Ted Levine is 60. Actress Annette Bening is 59. Actor Rupert Everett is 58. Actor Adrian Paul is 58. Singer Melissa Etheridge is 56. Actress Lisa Whelchel is 54. Actress Tracey Bregman is 54. Rock musician Noel Gallagher is 50. Singer Jayski McGowan (Quad City DJ's) is 50. Actor Anthony Azizi is 48. Rock musician Chan Kinchla (Blues Traveler) is 48. Rock musician Mark Lee (Third Day) is 44. Cartoonist Aaron McGruder ("The Boondocks") is 43. Singer Melanie Brown (Spice Girls) is 42. Rapper Playa Poncho is 42. Latin singer Fonseca is 38. NBA player Carmelo Anthony is 33. Actor Billy Flynn (TV: "Days of Our Lives") is 32. Actor Blake Foster is 32. Actress Riley Keough is 28. Actor Brandon Mychal Smith is 28. Actress Kristen Alderson is 26. Actress Lorelei Linklater is 24.

Thought for Today: "We are not afraid to entrust the American people with unpleasant facts, foreign ideas, alien philosophies, and competitive values. For a nation that is afraid to let its people judge the truth and falsehood in an open market is a nation that is afraid of its people." — President John F. Kennedy (1917-1963).

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