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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 **Open**

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Senior Menu: Chicken fried steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, chocolate cake, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: French toast, sausage links, fruit, milk and juice.

School Lunch: BBQ, tater tots, carrots and dip, fruit.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Nigeria Circle, 2 p.m.

JH Football: at Sisseton, 7th grade at 4 p.m.; 8th grade at 5 p.m.

Volleyball: hosts Britton-Hecla, 7th grade at 4 p.m.; 8th grade to follow; JV at 6 p.m. followed by varsity match.

Soccer: Groton Boys host JV Christian, 4 p.m.

Welcome Back Picnic: 5 p.m. at GHS Gym.

United Methodist: Prayer Group, 7 p.m.

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Senior Menu: Meatloaf, baked potato with sour cream, creamed peas, Jell-O with fruit, whole wheat bread.

School Breakfast: Breakfast sandwich, fruit, milk and juice.

School Lunch: Pepperoni pizza, green beans, romaine salad, fruit.

Football: at Beresford, 7 p.m.

Soccer: Girls host West Central, 4 p.m.

Dance Practice: Groton Community Center (Sugar Babes 3:50 to 4:35, Sweet Sensations 4:40 to 5:25, Spice Girls 5:30 to 6:30)

Groton Christian & Missionary Alliance: Men's Bible Study at the Groton Dairy Queen, 6:30 a.m.



Put our experienced team to work for you!

GROTON
Ford

GROTONFORD.COM 605-397-2311

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“It is not what life brings us, but the manner in which we receive it, that shapes our destiny.”

-Marie Dubsky

Chicken Soup
for the Soul

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**Soup, Pie,
& Sandwich**
\$2.00 per item

St. John's Lutheran Church
Groton, SD
Thursday, September 14th

11:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.
Craft Items - Baked Goodies -
Garden Produce

Soups available:
Chili, Wild Rice,
Potato, Ham & Bean

**For take-out orders, please call
397-2386 at 10:30 a.m. or after.**

Rounds Staff to Visit Groton on September 13

WASHINGTON—Staff from the office of U.S. Senator Mike Rounds (R-S.D.) will visit Groton on Wednesday, September 13, 2017, to assist residents with any issues they may have dealing with federal agencies.

WHAT: Senator Rounds Staff Visit to Groton
WHERE: Community Center, 109 W. 3rd Ave., Groton, SD
WHEN: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

GROTON KIWANIS CLUB

Lavonne Helmer gave a talk on places she's seen in the United States, and of how proud she is to be an America, to the Kiwanis Club, Wednesday.

Next week's program leader is Tom Mahan, followed by Tom Paepke, and then Roger Rix.

Tom and Barb Paepke were the chefs for the day.

Help Wanted

Full- or part-time for the following positions: Healthcare workers for Nurse's-RN or LPN, and Nursing Assistants, Dietary Cook and assistant, and Housekeeper. (12 hour shifts/rotating weekends for nurses and C.N.A.s)

Contact Jessica Lindskov or Nellie Peterson at 605-397-2365 or apply in person.

EOE/AA/M/F/V/D-Drug Free Workplace



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

Death Notice: Marty Sippel

Martin "Marty" Sippel, 67, of Groton passed away Wednesday, September 06, 2017 at Groton Care and Rehabilitation Center. Services are pending with Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

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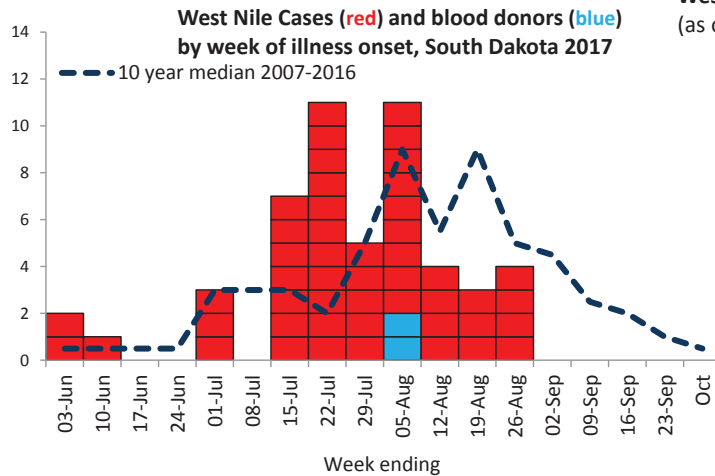
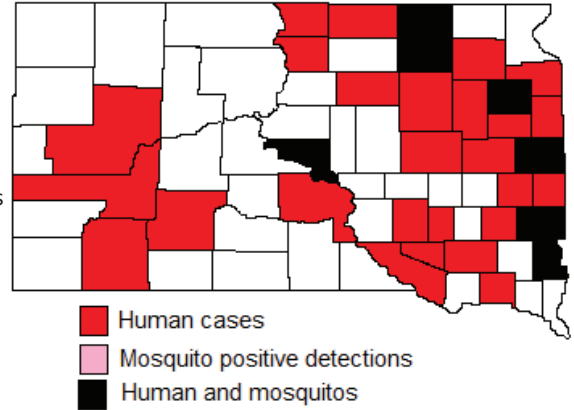


All auto owners!
Save \$2-\$4 /tank
& grow your local economy
by choosing low carbon
Super Premium E30's
94 octane, more power,
same mileage, fewer
carbon deposits, lower
maintenance costs,
slashed benzene & related
genotoxic, carcinogenic
tailpipe emissions;
*see sdfu.org's E30 tab for
info, E30 prices\locations.

***Farmers Union's
PSA: Courtesy Merle
Anderson (Merle is 94
year old founder of Ace
and legendary ethanol
supporter... "because it is
the right thing to do")**

West Nile update: South Dakota, 6 September 2017

- **49 human cases of West Nile virus disease have been reported to the SD Department of Health.** 31% of cases have neuroinvasive disease, 69% have West Nile Fever. 39% hospitalized.
- **Deaths:** 1.
- **Age:** median age 51 years; range 4-85 years.
- **Race:** 88% White, 10% American Indian, 2% Other. **Sex** 51% male, 49% female.
- **Counties with human WNV cases:** Aurora 1, Beadle 2, BonHomme 2, Brookings 4, Brown 3, Campbell 1, Charles Mix 1, Clark 1, Codington 4, Davison 2, Day 1, Deuel 1, Douglas 1, Faulk 2, Grant 1, Hamlin 1, Hughes 1, Hutchinson 3, Jackson 1, Kingsbury 1, Lake 1, Lincoln 2, Lyman 1, McCook 1, McPherson 1, Meade 1, Minnehaha 1, Moody 1, Oglala Lakota 1, Pennington 1, Walworth 1, Yankton 2.
- **Viremic blood donors:** 2, both in Brown County.
- **WNV positive mosquito detections:** Brookings, Brown, Codington, Hughes, Lincoln and Minnehaha counties.
- **WNV positive horse:** Codington County.
- **WNV positive birds:** 2 Red-tailed hawk, Codington County.



West Nile virus activity reported to CDC, by state, United States, 2017 (as of 5 September 2017)



SD Department of Health phone 800-592-1861
 SD Department of Health: <http://westnile.sd.gov>
 SDSU WNV risk assessment: <http://mosquito.sdstate.edu>
 CDC West Nile: www.cdc.gov/westnile

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**Webster Scale Weekly Meeting
with the S.D. D.O.T.**

**Thurs., Sept. 7, 2017, 1 p.m.
Groton Community Center**

Upcoming GDI Events

Click on Image
Programs under the images

It's Volleyball Action on GDILIVE.COM



Groton Area Tigers

VS



Britton-Hecla Braves

Thursday, Sept. 7, 2017, 7 p.m.
Groton Area High School Arena

[Click here for the program](#)

It's Football Action on GDILIVE.COM



Groton Area Tigers

VS



Beresford Watchdogs

Friday, Sept. 8, 2017, 7 p.m.
at Beresford, SD

[Click here for the program](#)

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Today in Weather History

September 7, 1961: A tornado struck a farm near the McPherson-Brown county line, or about 10 miles east and 2 miles north of Leola, at around 825 pm CDT. All farm buildings were destroyed including two chicken coops, granary, machine shop, and two trailer homes. The house was pushed about a foot off its foundation and had windows broken, plaster cracked, and part of the roof ripped. A farm truck and tractor were both blown about 500 feet and demolished. Rain up to 2.5 inches and hail accompanied the storm and caused minor damage.

1881 - The temperature soared to 101 degrees at New York City, 102 degrees at Boston MA, and 104 degrees at Washington D.C. (David Ludlum)

1888 - Much of the Middle and Northern Atlantic Coast Region experienced freezing temperatures. Killer frosts resulted in a million dollars damage to crops in Maine. (David Ludlum)

1909 - Topeka, KS, was drenched with 8.08 inches of rain in 24 hours to establish a record for that location. (6th- 7th) (The Weather Channel)

1970 - A lightning bolt struck a group of football players at Gibbs High School in Saint Petersburg FL, killing two persons and injuring 22 others. All the thirty-eight players and four coaches were knocked off their feet. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Showers and thunderstorms produced 4 to 8 inch rains in three to six hours in Virginia, with totals across the state for the Labor Day weekend ranging up to fourteen inches. The Staunton River crested at 34.44 feet at Altavista on the 8th, its highest level since 1940. Damage due to flooding was estimated at seven million dollars around Bedford, Henry, and Franklin. (Storm Data) (The National Weather Summary)








1988 - Fifty cities across the eastern U.S. reported record low temperatures for the date. The low of 56 degrees at Mobile AL was their coolest reading of record for so early in the season. The mercury dipped to 31 degrees at Athens OH, and to 30 degrees at Thomas WV. (The National Weather Summary)

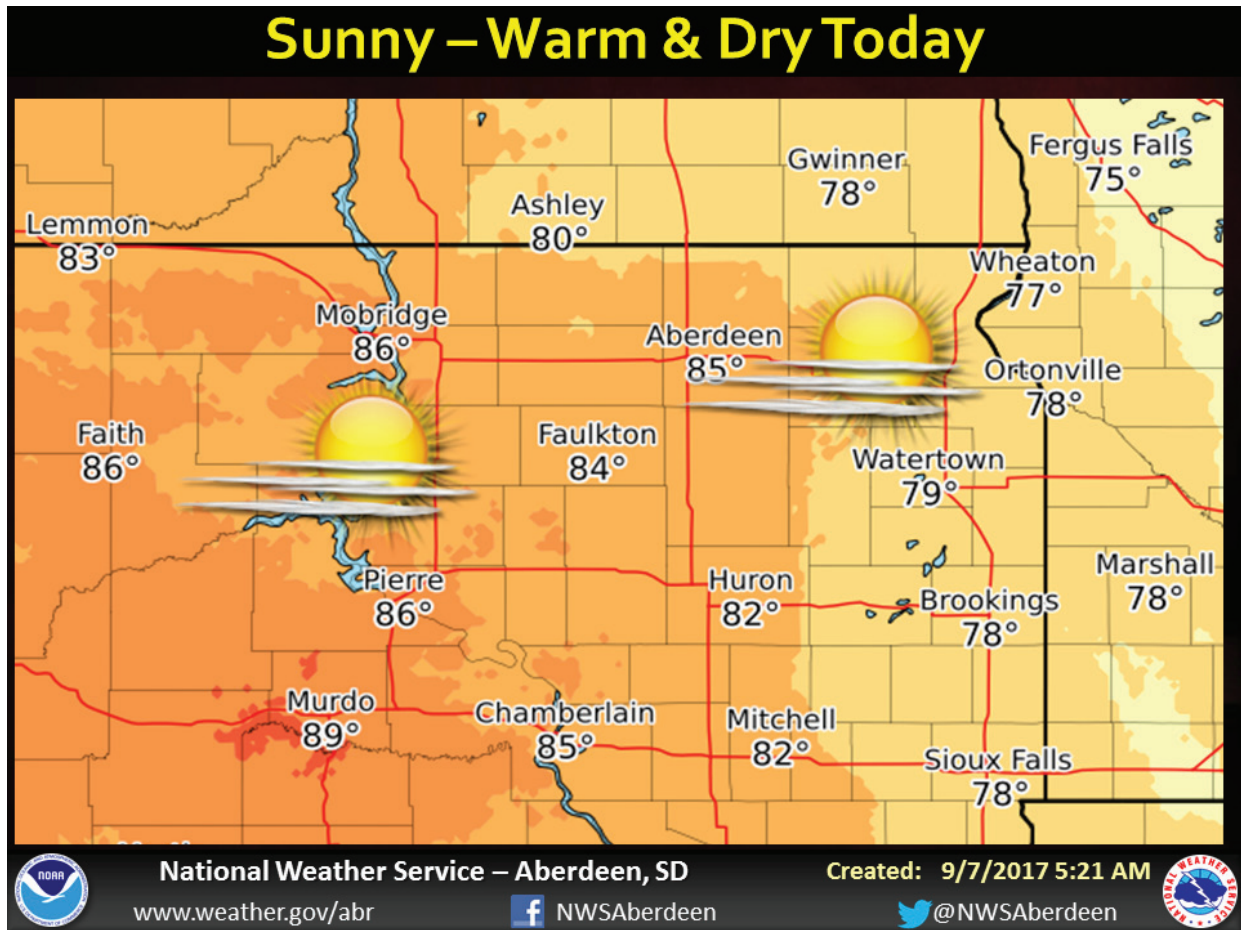
1989 - Thunderstorms in the central U.S. produced four inches of rain at Texamah overnight, and up to six inches of rain in southwestern Iowa. Evening thunderstorms in eastern Colorado produced golf ball size hail at Clear Creek and at Nederland. Late evening thunderstorms in Iowa drenched Harlan with more than four inches of rain. (The National Weather Summary)

1998: Two Derechos occurred on this day with one affecting most of Pennsylvania and New York City, the other impacting central New York.

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Today	Tonight	Friday	Friday Night	Saturday	Saturday Night	Sunday
						
Sunny	Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny
High: 85 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 76 °F	Low: 54 °F	High: 81 °F	Low: 60 °F	High: 82 °F



Sunny warm and dry conditions today - with temperatures at or above average for the next few days. Generally dry conditions are expected to close out the work week and through the weekend into next week.

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Yesterday's Weather

High Outside Temp: 71.0

Low Outside Temp: 38.1

High Gust: 13

Precip: 0.00

Today's Info

Record High: 101° in 1897

Record Low: 29° in 1895

Average High: 76°F

Average Low: 50°F

Average Precip in Sept: 0.52

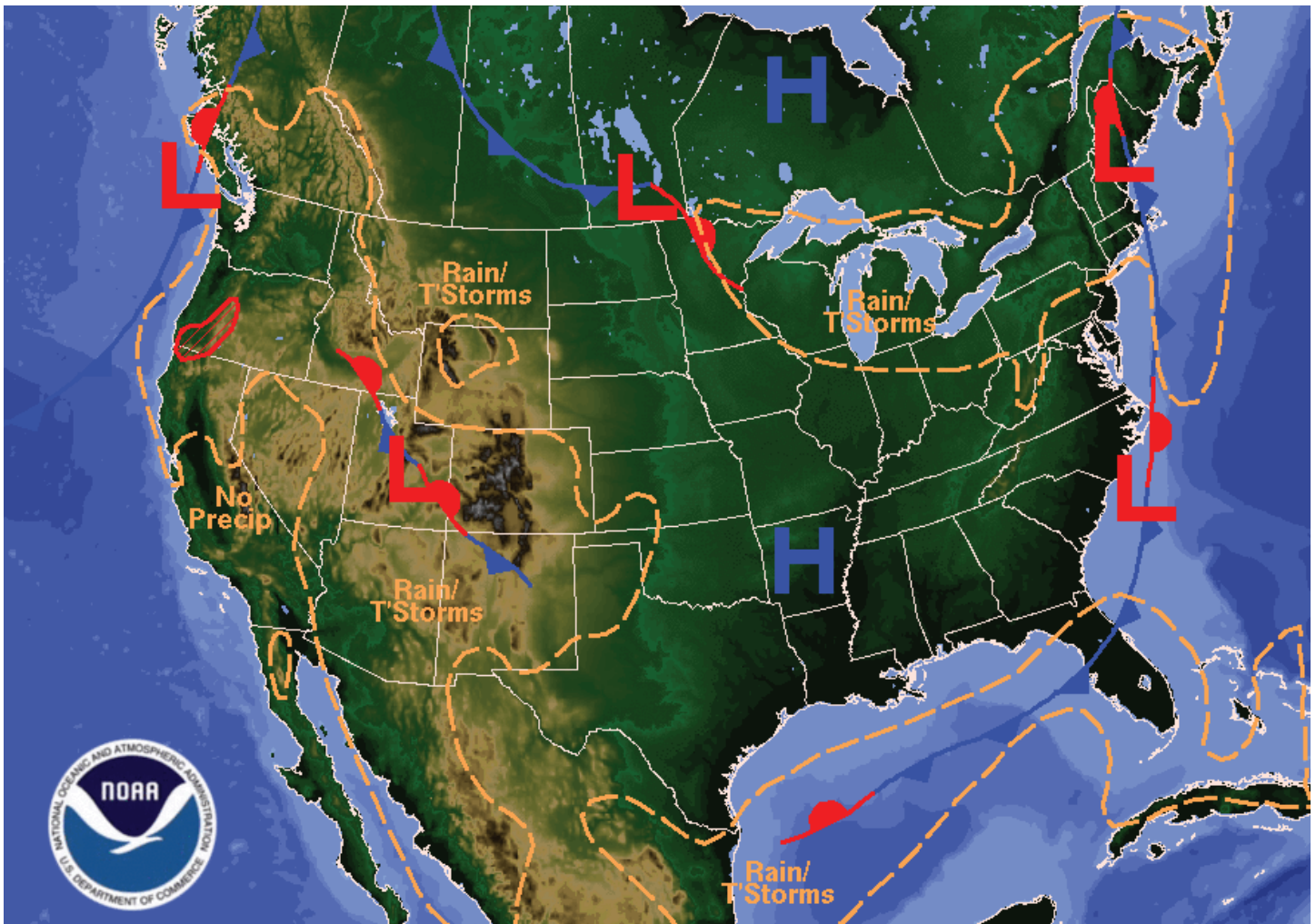
Precip to date in Sept: 0.11

Average Precip to date: 16.81

Precip Year to Date: 9.63

Sunset Tonight: 7:59 p.m.

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:04 a.m.



Day 1 National Forecast Chart

Valid Thu, Sep 07, 2017, issued 4:44 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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"SOUL FOOD"

"Mother," cried Sally as she climbed into bed, "you forgot my soul!"

"What do you mean, Sweetheart?" asked her Mom. "I don't understand."

"Well, when we said our prayers you didn't say, 'I pray the Lord my soul to keep.' What if God forgets about my soul tonight? What will happen?"

It is difficult to watch television, listen to the radio, or read a paper or magazine without the ever present emphasis to lose weight, get in shape, have cosmetic surgery or try a new shampoo. We are constantly challenged to nourish our bodies more carefully, strengthen our muscles to become healthier or do something to look more appealing.

Certainly God expects us to care for our bodies. He created us in His image and gave us the breath of life. But too often we are encouraged to care for our bodies at the expense of caring for our souls.

David longed desperately for God's presence in his life. He compared his longing for God to that of a thirsty deer panting for water. "My soul," he cried, "thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"

The Psalmist had a "thirst" in his soul that could only be satisfied by God's "living water" – much like a deer panting for water.

God places in each of our hearts a thirst that cannot be quenched by the waters of this world. As appealing as they are – fame and fortune, power and prestige, wealth and well-being – nothing will ever satisfy the thirst that God has planted deep within us. As Jesus said, only those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" and find it in Him, will ever be satisfied.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for that never-ending thirst that can only be satisfied when our lives are filled with Your grace. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture for Today: Psalm 42:2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

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News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) _ These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Wednesday:

Hot Lotto

03-07-12-24-30, Hot Ball: 10

(three, seven, twelve, twenty-four, thirty; Hot Ball: ten)

Estimated jackpot: \$10.2 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$70 million

Powerball

08-14-32-58-67, Powerball: 17, Power Play: 3

(eight, fourteen, thirty-two, fifty-eight, sixty-seven; Powerball: seventeen; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$83 million

Mother of man killed by South Dakota officer sues city

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — The family of a man killed during a struggle with a South Dakota police officer has filed a federal lawsuit against the city.

The Argus Leader reports the lawsuit filed on behalf of the estate of Curtis Meyer requests a jury trial and seeks unspecified damages. Meyer's mother, Hon Kasselder, also named former Mitchell police officer Russell Stevenson in the lawsuit.

The lawsuit alleges that Meyer's civil rights were violated. The police department declined comment.

Stevenson shot and killed the 37-year-old Meyer in 2015 during a struggle for the man's gun after Stevenson responded to a noise complaint. State Attorney General Marty Jackley found Stevenson was justified in using lethal force.

Jackley's report said Meyer was legally drunk and had been making suicidal statements the night of the shooting.

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

Excerpts from recent South Dakota editorials

By The Associated Press

American News, Aberdeen, Sept. 6

Candlelight vigil shines spotlight on violence against Native American women

Too often, too many and too sad.

There was recently a nationwide night of candlelight vigils to remember missing or murdered Native American women.

Aberdeen and Mobridge were among the locations.

Sometimes it feels as if most of society doesn't care, or care enough, about missing or murdered Native American women.

No woman deserves such treatment. Only respect, regardless of race, creed or color.

Patryc Jordan, a Northern State University student from the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, said the

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importance of being at the vigil was to bring awareness to what's happening to indigenous women.

"There's been a lot that have gone missing and the cases have usually been swept under the rug. It isn't right," Jordan said.

"It boils down to a racial thing. They'd rather bend over backwards to find a white lady rather than a native lady. I just don't think it's right. Everyone deserves to be treated equal. One voice over a thousand voices — it's hard to highlight one voice. That's why it's important for everyone to be here."

We agree with Jordan.

No one deserves to think they would be treated different because they look, sound or are different. But it happens.

Too often, too many and too sad.

Here are some cases in the Aberdeen area:

— Candace Rough Surface, 18, of Kenel disappeared Aug. 2, 1980. A rancher found her bullet-ridden body nine months later in a shallow bay of Lake Oahe. The case was solved in 1995 when James Stroh II told how he and his cousin, Nicholas Scherr, raped and killed Rough Surface. Both men pleaded guilty. Stroh got 15 years. Scherr is serving a 100-year prison term.

— A hit-and-run driver struck and killed 21-year-old Katrina Wind on Jan. 1, 1986. She was walking along U.S. Highway 281 south of Aberdeen, and the case has not been solved.

— The body of Candace Hope Grey, 17, of Waubay, was found on U.S. Highway 12 near Ortley. She was run over the night of March 10, 1990, by a vehicle in heavy fog.

— Monica Bercier-Wickre, 42, was found in the James River near Stratford on June 16, 1993. She disappeared April 7, 1993, and left behind three children. Investigators said they think they know who killed her, but no one ever was charged.

— The body of 22-year-old Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind was found in the Red River near Fargo, N.D., Aug. 27. She was eight months pregnant when she disappeared Aug. 19. A newborn baby, now believed to be hers, was found in a Fargo apartment building. Brooke Lynn Crews, 38, and William Henry Hoehn, 32, have been charged with conspiring to kill LaFontaine-Greywind.

All victims and their families deserve justice, despite race, color or creed.

For those who only see victims as victims and work hard toward resolving their cases, thank you for your efforts.

For those who don't, you are saying violence is OK against some folks, and not OK against others — probably others like them.

Our hearts, thoughts and hopes for peace go out to all victims of violence and their families. You deserved better, and got the worst.

Too often, too many and too sad.

Rapid City Journal, Rapid City, Sept. 3

Midnight Star's closure no cause for alarm

The news last week that Kevin Costner's Midnight Star casino had suddenly closed in the heart of downtown Deadwood after 26 years generated headlines nationwide since it was owned by a movie star with wide name recognition.

It doesn't mean, however, that Deadwood gaming can expect the same fate as Wild Bill Hickok, who was famously murdered in the historic mining town on Aug. 2, 1876, while playing poker at No. 10 Saloon and is buried alongside Calamity Jane at Mt. Moriah Cemetery.

There are those who might wonder, however, if the closure is a sign of the times or just a bump in the road for Deadwood gaming. It's probably a little of both.

In 1989, Deadwood joined Nevada and Atlantic City as the only places in the nation offering legalized gambling. Since then, the entire state has benefited as the millions of dollars collected there have been used for historic preservation grants, the state's tourism budget and for numerous projects in the town of around 1,300 people.

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Today, however, the entertainment landscape has changed considerably. Gambling has become common nationwide with Native American casinos, online betting and games like Powerball that generate millions of dollars for states. South Dakota is among the states offering Powerball as well as video lottery and a long list of scratch ticket games.

But despite the explosion of gambling opportunities, Deadwood casinos still reported \$99 million in adjusted gross revenue in 2016, according to the South Dakota Commission on Gaming. In March, bettors wagered \$93.6 million in Deadwood. So even though there has been a decline in gaming revenue in Deadwood in the past year, a lot of money continues to change hands there.

Deadwood, a community that prides itself on its authentic Old West heritage, also has a few more cards to play in the tourism game.

It has restored Victorian facades, brick streets and period lighting throughout the community. The town has a new \$6 million Days of '76 Museum, featuring one of the most impressive carriage, wagon and stagecoach collections in the U.S. There is a new \$7 million Deadwood Welcome Center and \$3 million was spent for the restoration of Mt. Moriah Cemetery. The town simply screams of western history.

As result of these efforts and others and the natural splendor of the area that offers hiking, mountain biking, skiing and camping amenities, hotels have seen their occupancy rates increase while gambling receipts declined.

The closure of the Midnight Star is not the first disappointment Deadwood has experienced, nor will it be the last. It only proves that even star power can't ensure success in the volatile and now more competitive tourism and gaming industries. And while gaming was the economic engine that fueled Deadwood's modern-day renaissance, the community has shown vision by taking steps to diversify its attractions and economy.

History will show that it is far too early to bet against Deadwood.

The Daily Republic, Mitchell, Sept. 5

Hisses and cheers

CHEERS to the outstanding community support Saturday during the second annual Kernel Bowl.

This sounds familiar — the Mitchell football team (2-0) picked up another win and the volleyball team is still unbeaten, now eight matches into the season. Fall sports are in full swing, and Mitchell fans have reason to be excited.

The Kernel Bowl was a huge success again this year with strong turnout. About 2,500 attended the football game and 500 for volleyball. There also was good food, an awesome post-football game fireworks show and, of course, victories for the Kernels.

Here's to hoping for continued success this year for Mitchell's athletic squads and a reminder to all fans to get out and support our local teams.

HISSES to the news that Corsica's Dakota Trails Golf Course will close this year following significant vandalism at the recently renovated attraction.

Officials say someone poured a weed killer known as Roundup on the natural grass greens in mid-August causing thousands of dollars in damage. The case is being investigated by law enforcement.

We don't know why someone or a group of people would chose to do this to a small-town golf course that impacts so many. Dakota Trails fundraised to switch to natural greens and had nice success with increasing memberships. Now, because of the vandals, course officials say they're closing this year.

Our hearts are out to all the people impacted and hope the people who caused the damage are caught and forced to pay for their recklessness.

CHEERS to the wonderful new gymnasium in Emery.

Last week, the Bridgewater-Emery School District utilized its new gym for the first time during a high school volleyball game.

With a shiny hardwood floor, updated scoreboards and positive comments from school officials, the gym looks to be a resounding success.

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The upgrade was needed, considering the old facility in Emery was built in the 1950s. Students, coaches and faculty deserve to have something to be proud of, and this is exactly that.

Sioux Falls-based program treats 1M people, looks to expand

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — International clinics run by a Sioux Falls medical facility have treated a million patients, a milestone for the decade-old program.

Sanford Health's World Clinic program began after philanthropist T. Denny Sanford donated \$400 million in 2007, the Argus Leader reported .

World Clinic Program Director Dr. Dan Blue says the program initially focused on pediatric care in the U.S., but has expanded internationally.

Sanford officials said the 25-clinic program is considering a new partnership in New Zealand, up to 300 additional clinics in Ghana and new clinics in other countries.

"We're not prescriptive in terms of our agenda in any given country," said Micah Aberson, who provides oversight of the World Clinic program as Sanford's chief global brand officer. "We're opportunistic as we pursue potential new locations, making sure it serves the need at the local level."

Blue said a key part of the program's growth is providing sustainable medical care in the area, regardless of whether funding comes from donations or through a relationship with the country's government. He said visiting the new Sanford clinic in China gave him a different perspective of the health care scene compared to what he's used to in the U.S.

"When you go into a culture, you have to respect that culture. It really isn't something you throw a switch and change it overnight. We have to work with them, and it's going to take some time," he said. "Where are the paths that get us to a better state? Those are, for us, learning moments, that we can understand from their view what their needs are."

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

Officials in Iowa brace for ambulance service to stop

SIOUX CITY, Iowa (AP) — Officials in northwest Iowa are scrambling to line up an emergency ambulance service after a nonprofit announced it'll cease assistance at the end of the year.

Siouxland Paramedics Inc. officials announced last month it'll cease 911 services in Sioux City and North Sioux City as it tries moving toward a more sustainable model, the Sioux City Journal reported . They said a growing number of uninsured patients, declining Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements, and increased personnel costs have prompted the move.

A statement from the Siouxland Paramedics Association union said the company has been challenged by the presence of Omaha-based Midwest Medical Transport Company.

Sioux City Fire Rescue Chief Tom Everett said officials are considering absorbing future 911 services into the department or contracting with another private company.

Though the city owns all of Siouxland Paramedics' ambulances, absorbing the services wouldn't be profitable, Everett said. The city is currently considering providing those 911 services within city limits.

No private companies have expressed interest in offering 911 transport services in the city, but some have demonstrated interest in non-emergency transport services, Everett said.

North Sioux City Fire Chief Bill Pappas said officials hope to form a partnership with Sioux City, but are also considering how to raise money to staff the city's own service.

"We have a volunteer staff, and we can take this over temporarily, I guess, but we don't have the staffing to do it continually 24/7, 365 days a year," he said.

Outlying cities in nearby rural areas are also waiting to see how their service will be affected, and many officials fear a decrease in the quality of service.

Siouxland Paramedics assists volunteer paramedics in Akron with critical patients on about 16 percent of calls, said Lynette Kiger, the city's EMS director. She said she's worried about increasing risk to those

in rural areas without the service.

Information from: Sioux City Journal, <http://www.siouxcityjournal.com>

Initiative supporters seek to cap price state pays for drugs

By JAMES NORD, Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Backers of a proposed ballot measure that would cap the amount state agencies could pay for prescription drugs hope to start building support soon to put the initiative before voters in 2018, a key proponent said Wednesday.

The plan is meant to save taxpayer dollars and drive down the cost of prescriptions, supporter Rick Weiland told The Associated Press. It would impose a price limit on state drug purchases at the lowest price paid for the same drug by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

"This is going to be a very interesting campaign with Big Pharma loaded to bear because they don't want this to become a stepping stone to other state efforts to do the same thing," said Weiland, a former Democratic U.S. Senate candidate who is involved in several initiative campaigns.

The plan — adapted from an Ohio initiative that's on the ballot this year — has already attracted the pharmaceutical industry's attention. South Dakota Biotech and Washington-based Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America last week filed a court challenge to the state attorney general's ballot question explanation.

The industry groups are asking a judge to direct Attorney General Marty Jackley to modify his explanation. The groups said in a statement that the explanation falls short because it doesn't mention language giving supporters legal standing if the initiative is challenged in court.

Jackley said that his team works "very diligently" to ensure ballot question explanations are fair. A hearing is scheduled for Tuesday.

Weiland said the organizations missed the deadline in state law to file such a challenge, contending that the move is an attempt to tie up the initiative in court so supporters don't have time to collect enough signatures to qualify for the ballot.

Backers must submit nearly 14,000 valid signatures to the secretary of state by November 2017 to get on the ballot in 2018. Weiland said the goal is to collect 20,000 names.

Measures have been placed on California and Ohio ballots to cap what those states pay for all prescription drugs at the lowest price the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs pays. California's was voted down last year after the pharmaceutical industry spent more than \$100 million to oppose it. Ohio's measure will go before voters this November.

South Dakota initiative supporters have tapped Sioux Falls City Council candidate Clara Hart to serve as chairwoman of pro-initiative group South Dakotans for Lower Drug Prices.

Hart said that pharmaceutical companies need to "wake up and learn" that people are hurting. "They need to have a heart instead of money, money all the time," she said.

Ex-teen bride wins \$16 million case against polygamous group

By LINDSAY WHITEHURST, Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A woman who was married to her cousin at age 14 in a ceremony overseen by polygamous sect leader Warren Jeffs has won a \$16 million lawsuit against the group.

Elissa Wall's lawyer said Wednesday that the decision lets attorneys investigate the secretive group's bank accounts and property held in states all over the U.S.

"This is hopefully to continue the attack on illegal and criminal conduct so they'll comport their doctrines to what's permissible under the U.S. Constitution," said Wall's attorney Alan Mortensen.

In his ruling, Judge Keith Kelly said that he found the behavior of Jeffs and the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints "was so extreme that it went beyond all possible bound of decency and is regarded as atrocious and utterly intolerable in a civilized society."

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Wall plans to use the money to help people leaving the group, which is based along the Utah-Arizona border and has a compound in South Dakota.

"I can now close these chapters in my life and focus on building a better future for myself and my children," Wall said in a statement. The state of Utah is also entitled to half the punitive damages in the case, up to \$6 million, under state law, Mortensen said.

Last year, Wall agreed to a \$2.75-million settlement with the group's communal property trust, but her case against Jeffs and the group continued until Tuesday. Neither Jeffs nor his group got a lawyer or defended themselves in the case.

Her testimony about the 2001 marriage helped convict Jeffs in Utah of being an accomplice to rape, though the verdict was overturned on a technicality. He's now serving a life prison sentence in Texas for sexually assaulting girls he considered wives.

His group does not have a spokesman or a phone listing where leaders can be contacted.

The Associated Press doesn't generally identify victims of sexual assault, but Wall has spoken publicly and written a book about her experiences.

The federal government has also gone after the group on multiple fronts, winning child labor cases in Utah and recapturing high-ranking leader Lyle Jeffs, who fled home confinement in a food-stamp fraud case.

An Arizona jury found last year that the border towns that form the town's home base denied nonbelievers police protection, building permits and water hookups on the basis of religion.

The communities of Hildale, Utah and Colorado City, Arizona, are now under court supervision for the next decade as punishment.

Hurricane impacts talks between pipeline company, state

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Hurricane Harvey has impacted the pace of negotiations between the company that built the Dakota Access oil pipeline and North Dakota regulators investigating potential violations of state rules during construction.

Public Service Commissioner Julie Fedorchak says attorney negotiations have continued but Texas-based Energy Transfer Partners also has been busy with hurricane response.

ETP is based in Dallas but has facilities on the Gulf Coast. The company said it dedicated about 1,000 employees to a hurricane response team.

North Dakota alleges ETP improperly reported the discovery of American Indian artifacts. The state also is looking into whether crews removed too many trees and improperly handled some soil while laying pipe in the state. Both are potentially finable offenses.

The PSC said Wednesday it's too early to know when negotiations might conclude.

4-month sentence for assault on baby

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — A Parmelee woman has been sentenced to four months in federal prison for assaulting a baby.

Prosecutors say 22-year-old Charlee Spotted Tail started an altercation in a store parking lot last year with a woman who was holding a 6-month-old baby. Spotted Tail tried to strike the woman, but hit the baby in the head instead. She then hit the baby a second time before fleeing.

The Argus Leader says Spotted Tail was convicted of one count of assault.

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

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Wentworth woman killed in Lake County crash identified

MADISON, S.D. (AP) — Authorities have identified a Wentworth woman who died in a two-vehicle crash over the weekend in Lake County.

The Highway Patrol says 70-year-old Barbara May was driving a sport utility vehicle that was rear-ended at an intersection on state Highway 34 about 7 miles east of Madison.

May was declared dead at the scene shortly before 2 p.m. Saturday. The driver of the SUV that struck her vehicle suffered minor injuries. Charges are pending against the 75-year-old Madison woman.

Charges filed against jail inmate accused of assault, escape

YANKTON, S.D. (AP) — Four felony charges have been filed in Charles Mix County against an inmate who authorities say assaulted a guard before escaping the county jail and ending up in a standoff with law enforcement in Vermillion.

Nineteen-year-old Jubal Grant is charged with escape, simple assault on a correctional officer, burglary and grand theft.

The Yankton Daily Press & Dakotan reports that Grant appeared in court Tuesday but did not enter pleas to the charges.

Authorities say Grant stole a car after escaping on Aug. 30. He and the car were found the next day at a Vermillion residence, and he was taken into custody after a standoff that lasted about seven hours.

Information from: Yankton Press and Dakotan, <http://www.yankton.net/>

Sioux Falls casino robbed at gunpoint; no injuries reported

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Sioux Falls police are looking for a man who robbed a casino at gunpoint.

Authorities say the man entered the Crown Casino about 1 a.m. Wednesday armed with a handgun and demanded cash. He fled with an undisclosed amount of money.

No injuries were reported.

New Myanmar fires in empty Rohingya village raise questions

BANGKOK (AP) — Journalists saw new fires burning Thursday in a Myanmar village that had been abandoned by Rohingya Muslims, and pages ripped from Islamic texts that were left on the ground. That intensifies doubts about government claims that members of the persecuted minority have been destroying their own homes.

About two dozen journalists saw the fires in Gawdu Zara village in northern Rakhine state on a government-controlled trip. Some 164,000 Rohingya from the area have fled across the border in Bangladesh in less than two weeks since Aug. 25, when Rohingya insurgents attacked police outposts in Gawdu Zara and several others, the U.N. refugee agency said Thursday.

The military has said nearly 400 people, most they described as insurgents, had died in clashes and that troops were conducting "clearance operations." It blames insurgents for setting the villages on fire, without offering proof.

The Rohingya who have fled Myanmar, however, all described large-scale violence perpetrated by Myanmar troops and Buddhist mobs — setting fire to their homes, spraying bullets indiscriminately, stabbing civilians and ordering them to abandon their homes or be killed.

On the Myanmar side of the border, reporters saw no Rohingya in any of the five destroyed villages they were allowed to tour Thursday, making it unlikely they could have been responsible for the fires.

An ethnic Rakhine villager who emerged from the smoke said police and Rakhine Buddhists had set the fires. The villager ran off before he could be asked anything else.

No police were seen in the village beyond those who were accompanying the journalists. But about 10 Rakhine men with machetes were seen there. They looked nervous; the only one who spoke said he had

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just arrived and didn't know how the fires started.

Among the buildings on fire was a madrassa, an Islamic school. Copies of books with texts from the Quran, Islam's holy book, were torn up and thrown outside. A nearby mosque was not burned.

Another village the journalists visited, Ah Lel Than Kyaw, was blackened, obliterated and deserted. Cattle and dogs wandered through the still-smoldering remains.

Local police officer Aung Kyaw Moe said 18 people were killed in the village when the violence began last month. "From our side, there was one immigration officer dead, and we found 17 dead bodies from the enemy side," he said.

He said the fires were set Aug. 25, though some of them continued to burn Thursday. Virtually all buildings in the village seen by journalists had been burned, along with cars, motorbikes and bicycles that fleeing villagers left behind. A mosque was also damaged.

Columns of smoke could be seen rising in the distance, and distant gunshots could be heard.

"They burned their own houses and ran away," Aung Kyaw Moe said. "We didn't see who actually burned them because we had to take care of the security for our outpost. ... But when the houses were burned, Bengalis were the only ones in the village."

Burning Rohingya homes can make it less likely that they return. Tens of thousands of Rohingya were driven from their homes in another wave of violence in 2012. Many of them are now confined to camps, while the land they once held is either vacant or occupied by Buddhist squatters.

Nay San Lwin, a Rohingya activist and blogger based in Europe with contacts in northern Rakhine, said that according to witnesses, the Burmese military, border guard police and Rakhine villagers came to Ah Lel Than Kyaw and burned the houses from Monday to Wednesday.

On Aug. 25, he said, young men with swords and knives tried to attack the border guard outpost in Aley Than Kyaw but failed. The authorities took away all Buddhist villagers, and many Rohingya villagers fled on their own.

Nay San Lwin said the remaining villagers left after the Burmese military warned them they would be shot dead if they didn't leave.

Myanmar refers to Rohingya as Bengalis, contending they migrated illegally from Bangladesh, though many Rohingya families have lived in Myanmar for generations.

Myanmar's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, has dismissed the Rohingya crisis as a misinformation campaign.

According to her office, she said such misinformation helps promote the interests of "terrorists," a reference to the Rohingya insurgents who attacked security posts on Aug. 25.

The crisis response director for Amnesty International called Suu Kyi's response "unconscionable."

On Thursday, Suu Kyi told reporters her government was working to improve security and livelihoods for Rohingya, but that "it's a little unreasonable to expect us to resolve everything in 18 months" since her administration took office.

With Rohingya fleeing by the thousands daily across the border, pushing existing camps in Bangladesh to the brink, the government in Dhaka pledged to build at least one more. The International Organization for Migration has pleaded for \$18 million in foreign aid to help feed and shelter tens of thousands now packed into makeshift settlements or stranded in a no man's land between the two countries' borders.

U.N. agencies said they were distributing food to new arrivals, about 80 percent of whom were women and children, joining about 100,000 who had already been sheltering in Bangladesh after fleeing earlier convulsions of violence in majority-Buddhist Myanmar.

Aid workers said many were arriving with violence-related injuries, severe infections or childbirth complications.

With so many Rohingya fleeing, it's unclear how many remain in Myanmar amid reports of soldiers burning villages and killing civilians. Before the recent violence, aid experts had estimated about 1 million Rohingya were living in northern Rakhine state, but aid agencies have been unable to access the area since.

Turkey said Myanmar agreed to allow its aid officials to enter Rakhine state with a ton of food and goods for Rohingya, and that its foreign minister would visit a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar on Thursday.

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Associated Press writers Muneeza Naqvi in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, Grant Peck in Bangkok, Ashok Sharma in New Delhi and Edith M. Lederer at the United Nations contributed to this report.

US adds launchers to THAAD as dozens hurt in SKorea protests

By KIM TONG-HYUNG, Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Dozens of people were injured in clashes between South Korean protesters and police Thursday as the U.S. military added more launchers to the high-tech missile-defense system it installed in a southern town to better cope with North Korean threats.

Seoul has hardened its stance against Pyongyang after its torrent of weapons tests, the latest a detonation Sunday of what North Korea said was a thermonuclear weapon built for missiles capable of reaching the U.S. mainland.

The clashes came as South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met in Russia's Far East and repeated their calls for stronger punishment of North Korea over its nuclear ambitions, including denying the country oil supplies. The demand contradicted the stance of their host, Russian President Vladimir Putin, who has dismissed sanctions as a solution.

Putin says he believes President Donald Trump's administration is willing to defuse tensions over North Korea's nuclear ambitions. Its sixth nuclear test on Sunday prompted the United States to speak about a "military response" and South Korea to conduct major military exercises.

Speaking at an economic forum in Russia's eastern port of Vladivostok, Putin said Thursday he believes the Trump administration is "willing to resolve the situation." He said there are "many reasonable people in the current administration" who are experienced and who have dealt with similar crises.

Putin called on all North Korea's neighbors to show restraint, indicating the bellicose rhetoric and the military drills are only "playing into their hands."

Moon and Abe in their meeting agreed to cooperate on seeking tougher United Nations sanctions against North Korea and pledged to strengthen efforts to persuade Beijing and Moscow into cutting off oil supplies to the North, said Yoon Young-chan, Moon's chief press secretary. Putin expressed concern that cutting off oil supplies would hurt regular North Koreans, Yoon said.

"We should not give in to emotions and push Pyongyang into a corner," Putin said in a news conference after meeting with Moon. The Russian leader will meet with Abe later in the day.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang reiterated Beijing's opposition to South Korea's deployment of the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense System, also known as THAAD. Beijing says the system's powerful radars will be able to monitor flights and missile launches deep inside northeastern China.

Geng told reporters that China had complained to the U.S. and South Korea and urged them to "take seriously the security concerns and interests of China and other regional countries." The U.S. and South Korea should "immediately stop the deployment process and withdraw relevant equipment," Geng said.

In South Korea, thousands of police officers in riot gear swarmed some 400 protesters who had been occupying a road leading to the site where THAAD is installed in the rural town of Seongju. Six police officers and 32 other people were injured, none seriously, in the clashes, said a fire department official in Seongju who spoke on condition of anonymity, citing office rules.

Several U.S. military vehicles, including trucks carrying payloads covered in black sheets that appeared to be launchers, had been seen heading toward the site.

A THAAD battery normally consists of six launchers capable of firing up to 48 interceptor missiles, but only two have been operational. South Korea's Defense Ministry couldn't immediately confirm when the four launchers added on Thursday will be operationally capable.

Washington and Seoul began deploying THAAD before a conservative South Korean government was ousted in March in a corruption scandal. The liberal Moon took office in May calling for diplomacy with Pyongyang but the escalation in weapons tests has been the North's only response.

Moon temporarily halted the THAAD installation for environmental reviews to ease residents' concerns.

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But after North Korea's two test-launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles, he allowed more launchers to be set up before the reviews are conducted.

South Korean officials say THAAD will strengthen the country's missile defenses, which now rely on Patriot-based systems, and will deter North Korea, which has missiles that can be fired from road-mobile launchers or submarines. They also say the health rumors that have spurred local concerns about the system's powerful radar component are groundless and no such issues have been reported at other THAAD sites.

Associated Press writers Nataliya Vasilyeva in Moscow and Ken Moritsugu in Tokyo contributed to this report.

Hurricane Irma brings death, destruction to the Caribbean

By DANICA COTO and ANIKA KENTISH, Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP) — Hurricane Irma has killed at least 10 people as the dangerous Category 5 storm continued its destructive march across the Caribbean early Thursday.

At least eight people were killed and 23 injured in French Caribbean island territories, France's interior minister said. Speaking Thursday on French radio France Info, French Interior Minister Gerard Collomb said the death toll in Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthelemy could be higher because rescue teams have yet to finish their inspection of the islands.

"The reconnaissance will really start at daybreak," Collomb said.

At a news conference, Collomb also said 100,000 food rations have been sent to the islands, the equivalent of four days of supplies.

"It's a tragedy, we'll need to rebuild both islands," he said. "Most of the schools have been destroyed."

French President Emmanuel Macron's office said he will go to the islands as soon as weather conditions permit.

Irma blacked out much of Puerto Rico, raking the U.S. territory with heavy wind and rain while staying just out to sea, and it headed early Thursday toward the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

To the east, authorities struggled to get aid to small Caribbean islands devastated by the storm's record 185 mph (298 kph) winds earlier Wednesday, while people in Florida rushed to get ready for a possible direct hit on the Miami area.

Communications were difficult with areas hit by Irma, and information on damage trickled out.

Nearly every building on Barbuda was damaged when the hurricane's core crossed almost directly over the island early Wednesday and about 60 percent of its roughly 1,400 residents were left homeless, Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne told The Associated Press.

"It is just really a horrendous situation," Browne said after returning to Antigua from a plane trip to the neighboring island.

He said roads and telecommunications systems were wrecked and recovery would take months, if not years. A 2-year-old child was killed as a family tried to escape a damaged home during the storm, Browne told the AP.

One death also was reported in the nearby island of Anguilla, where officials reported extensive damage to the airport, hospitals, shelters and school and said 90 percent of roads are impassible, according to the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency.

The agency also reported "major damage" to houses and commercial buildings in the British Virgin Islands.

On St. Thomas in the nearby U.S. Virgin Islands, Laura Strickling spent 12 hours hunkered down with her husband and 1-year-old daughter in a boarded-up basement apartment with no power as the storm raged outside. They emerged to find the lush island in tatters. Many of their neighbors' homes were damaged and once-dense vegetation was largely gone.

"There are no leaves. It is crazy. One of the things we loved about St. Thomas is that it was so green. And it's gone," Strickling said. "It will take years for this community to get back on its feet."

Significant damage was also reported on St. Martin, an island split between French and Dutch control.

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Photos and video circulating on social media showed major damage to the airport in Philipsburg and the coastal village of Marigot heavily flooded. France sent emergency food and water there and to the French island of St. Bart's, where Irma ripped off roofs and knocked out electricity.

By early Thursday, the center of the storm was about 95 miles (155 kilometers) north of Punta Cana, Dominican Republic, and was moving west-northwest near 17 mph (28 kph).

More than half the island of Puerto Rico was without power, leaving 900,000 in the dark and nearly 50,000 without water, the U.S. territory's emergency management agency said in the midst of the storm. Fourteen hospitals were using generators after losing power, and trees and light poles were strewn across roads.

Puerto Rico's public power company warned before the storm hit that some areas could be left without power from four to six months because its staff has been reduced and its infrastructure weakened by the island's decade-long economic slump.

State maintenance worker Juan Tosado said he was without power for three months after Hurricane Hugo in 1989. "I expect the same from this storm. It's going to be bad," he said.

President Donald Trump approved an emergency declaration for the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, allowing the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other agencies to remove debris and give other services that will largely be paid for by the U.S. government.

Pauline Jackson, a 59-year-old registered nurse from Florida visiting Puerto Rico, said she had tried to leave before the storm but all flights were sold out.

She has a reservation to fly out Friday and is worried about her home in Tampa. "When you're from Florida, you understand a Category 5 hurricane," she said.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center predicted Irma would remain at Category 4 or 5 for the next day or two as passes just to the north of the Dominican Republic and Haiti on Thursday, nears the Turks & Caicos and parts of the Bahamas by Thursday night and skirts Cuba on Friday night into Saturday. It will then likely head north toward Florida.

The storm is expected to hit Florida sometime Sunday, and Gov. Rick Scott said he planned to activate 7,000 National Guard soldiers by Friday. He warned that Irma is "bigger, faster and stronger" than Hurricane Andrew, which wiped out entire neighborhoods in south Florida 25 years ago.

Experts worried that Irma could rake the entire Florida east coast from Miami to Jacksonville and then head into Savannah, Georgia, and the Carolinas, striking highly populated and developed areas.

"This could easily be the most costly storm in U.S. history, which is saying a lot considering what just happened two weeks ago," said Brian McNoldy, a hurricane researcher at the University of Miami.

Associated Press writer Danica Coto reported this story in San Juan and AP writer Anika Kentish reported from St. John's, Antigua. Associated Press writers Seth Borenstein in Washington, Michael Weissenstein in Havana, Samuel Petrequin in Paris and Ben Fox in Miami contributed to this report.

HURRICANE NEWSLETTER - Get the best of the AP's all-formats reporting on Irma and Harvey in your inbox: <http://apne.ws/ahYQGtb>

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. IRMA'S DEADLY RAMPAGE THROUGH FRENCH CARIBBEAN

The Category 5 storm has killed at least eight people and injured 23 in Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthelemy, France's interior minister says. The overall death toll is at least 10.

2. AP: MOST FLORIDA FLOOD ZONE PROPERTY NOT INSURED

Flood insurance coverage has dropped in the state, where 59 percent of properties in hazard zones go without, an AP analysis of Federal Emergency Management Agency data finds.

3. WHERE PRESIDENT'S OLDEST SON IS HEADED

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Donald Trump Jr. is expected to meet privately with a Senate committee investigating Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election.

4. WHAT POPE IS AIMING TO DO IN COLOMBIA

Francis will encourage everyone to rally behind a peace process seeking an end for Latin America's longest-running conflict and to address the inequalities that fueled it.

5. IN MESSAGE TO PYONGYANG, THAAD UPGRADED

Dozens of protesters are injured as the U.S. military adds more launchers to the high-tech missile-defense system it installed in a South Korean town to better cope with the North's threats.

6. RESEARCHERS TACKLING FRESH QUESTIONS ABOUT CTE AFFECTING NFL

The suspected cause is repeated head blows for the degenerative brain disease now detected in the brains of nearly 200 football players after death.

7. EX-CONFEDERATE CAPITAL EYES STATUES' REMOVAL

Richmond, Virginia, was in the midst of studying how to add historical context to the monuments. But when deadly violence hit Charlottesville, new calls were sparked for the statues to come down.

8. FEDS EXPECTED TO SHARE PLANS ON TITLE IX ENFORCEMENT

Obama administration guidance that governs how colleges handle sexual assault complaints may be revised because some critics say the rules went too far.

9. DEAD TREES FORCE FIREFIGHTERS TO SHIFT TACTICS

U.S. Forest Service statistics compiled for the AP show that about 6.3 billion dead trees are still standing in 11 western states and about 20 percent were likely killed by a massive beetle outbreak.

10. WHO STOOD IN WAY OF COVETED US OPEN MATCHUP

Juan Martin del Potro beat Roger Federer in the quarterfinal round, spoiling a showdown with the Swiss tennis star's longtime rival, Rafael Nadal.

DeVos expected to share plans on Title IX enforcement

By COLLIN BINKLEY, Associated Press

Education Secretary Betsy DeVos has said Obama administration guidance on how colleges should handle sexual assault complaints isn't working and suggested it needs revisions.

She was expected to detail her plans Thursday in what the U.S. Education Department described as a "major policy address on Title IX enforcement."

Enacted in 1972, Title IX is a federal law that forbids discrimination based on sex in education. It was once seen as a measure to ensure equity in college sports, but in recent years has been associated with efforts to address sexual assault and harassment at college campuses across the country.

The Obama administration reshaped how colleges handle complaints of sexual assault, setting new rules and launching investigations into colleges accused of straying from them.

DeVos hasn't shared her plans on the topic, but in an interview with The Associated Press she said the system "is not working right and well for anyone."

"We know we have to get this right," she said. "We have to get this right on behalf of all students."

In contemplating policy changes, DeVos held meetings with victims of assault, those who said they were wrongly accused and representatives of colleges and universities.

Central to the debate is a 2011 memo from the Education Department that laid out rules colleges must follow when responding to complaints of sexual assault from their students.

Known as the "Dear Colleague Letter," the memo requires colleges to investigate complaints even if there's a separate criminal inquiry, and it established a polarizing standard of evidence used to judge cases.

Unlike in criminal courts, where guilt must be proved beyond a reasonable doubt, colleges judge students based on whether it's "more likely than not" they committed the offense.

Colleges that are found to have violated Title IX rules can lose federal funding entirely, although the Education Department has never dealt that penalty.

Some advocacy groups say the Obama-era policies are flawed but worth saving. They argue the poli-

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cies have protected many students and forced colleges to confront problems that were long kept quiet. But opponents say the rules have swung the pendulum too far and pressure colleges to take hasty and heavy action against students accused of misconduct.

Since President Donald Trump took office, critics including men's rights groups and lawyers representing students accused of misconduct have called for an overhaul of the system.

Advocacy groups that support victims of assault have been bracing for changes to the rules but say Title IX will continue to protect students.

On Wednesday, students and representatives from groups including the National Women's Law Center delivered more than 100,000 petitions from across the country in support of the Dear Colleague letter.

Donald Trump Jr. heads to Capitol to explain 2016 meeting

By MARY CLARE JALONICK, Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump's oldest son is scheduled to make his first appearance on Capitol Hill Thursday as part of a Senate investigation into Russian meddling in the presidential election and a meeting he had with Russians during his father's campaign last year.

Donald Trump Jr. will be interviewed by staff on the Senate Judiciary Committee, which is one of three congressional committees investigating the meddling and possible Russian links to his Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

Trump Jr. released a series of emails in July that detailed preparations for the June 2016 meeting. The emails show he took the meeting expecting that he would be receiving damaging information about Democrat Hillary Clinton as part of what was described to him as a Russian government effort to aid the Trump campaign.

Special counsel Robert Mueller and the House and Senate intelligence committees are also investigating the meeting, which was attended by Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, and then-campaign chairman, Paul Manafort. A grand jury has heard testimony about it.

Staffers are expected to focus on the 2016 meeting but could also probe any other possible connections Trump's family had with Russia. Trump Jr. agreed to the interview in July after Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, subpoenaed him and Manafort. The committee withdrew the subpoenas after the two agreed to be interviewed privately by staff, and Grassley said they both would eventually be questioned by senators in a public hearing.

Senators on the Judiciary panel are allowed to attend Thursday's staff interview, but according to tradition they aren't allowed to ask questions. On Wednesday, Democratic senators were split as to whether they would go and watch the proceedings.

Sens. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., and Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., said they would be there. Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., was considering it. California Sen. Dianne Feinstein, the committee's top Democrat, said she would not attend because she thinks staff should be allowed to conduct the interview without interference. She said the staff interviews are intended to prepare their bosses for the public hearing, and "senators put a dent in it."

Feinstein said that she and Grassley have agreed that they will again subpoena Trump Jr. and Manafort if they don't agree to attend a public hearing. That hearing hasn't been scheduled.

Trump Jr. is also expected to appear before the Senate Intelligence Committee, which is conducting its own investigation. Sen. Mark Warner of Virginia, the top Democrat on the committee, said Wednesday that the panel wants to speak with others who attended the June 2016 meeting before they interview Trump Jr.

"We want to do this in a thorough way that gets the most information possible," Warner said.

Manafort met privately with staff on the Senate intelligence panel in July, and Kushner met with Senate intelligence staff and members of the House Intelligence Committee.

The House intelligence panel has also sought to talk to Trump Jr., but Rep. Eric Swalwell, a Democrat on that committee, said Wednesday that the panel is still negotiating the interview and a date hasn't yet been set.

Tough path for GOP on immigration _ and Trump made it harder

By STEVE PEOPLES, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — On immigration, there were few easy answers for the Republican Party's most vulnerable members. And President Donald Trump just made things harder.

Endangered Republicans from California to Colorado and Nevada to New Jersey have struggled in recent days to defend their president's decision to end the program that offered deportation protections for young people living here illegally who came to this country as children. The Trump administration gave Congress six months to agree on an alternative, yet it's far from certain that a divided Congress can do so.

And on the ground in key states and swing districts across America, a concerned Hispanic community is getting even angrier at Trump's Republican Party as next year's midterm elections loom.

"Those candidates who need Latino voters are on their own, and they're struggling," said Alfonso Aguilar, executive director of the Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles. "If he continues with this behavior and this rhetoric, things could get worse."

In isolated instances, Republicans facing difficult re-elections joined Democrats in condemning the president's move to end protections for young immigrants. The vast majority, however, praised Trump for ending what they viewed as an unconstitutional Obama-era program, even as they vowed to find a compassionate solution.

The varied responses highlight the GOP's struggle to balance competing interests. On one side: Trump's small but energized white nationalist base. On the other: a growing Hispanic community, which is poised to play an increasingly powerful role in national politics over the coming years.

"Although people in the Hispanic community in my district are not happy with the president, the fact is that he did give us some breathing room on this issue," said Rep. Mike Coffman, R-Colo., who has sponsored legislation that would give Congress an additional three years to protect the so-called "Dreamers," young adults brought to the United States as young children in many cases.

Coffman is one of two dozen Republicans serving in congressional districts carried by Hillary Clinton last fall. Most are considered top targets as Democrats seek to claim the House majority in the 2018 elections. And many serve in areas with growing Hispanic communities.

Coffman, a five-term congressman, estimated that Hispanics make up about 20 percent of his constituents.

"If I was just brand new coming out of the block, I think it'd be pretty difficult," he said of the environment created by Trump. "The tone coming out of the White House would make it more challenging."

Trump's latest move does not come in a vacuum.

The president last month pardoned Arizona's former Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who was convicted of ignoring a judge's order to stop profiling Latinos suspected of being in the country illegally. Trump also continues fighting for a massive wall along the U.S.-Mexico border and regularly highlights the dangers of illegal immigration.

The Republican's rhetoric is not going over well in Arizona and Nevada, two states with significant Hispanic populations and competitive Senate contests next fall.

Nevada Sen. Dean Heller, considered one of the nation's most vulnerable Republicans, broke from Trump this week on the program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA.

"While I remain concerned about the way in which DACA came to life, I've made clear that I support the program because hard-working individuals who came to this country through no fault of their own as children should not be immediately shown the door," Heller said.

In Arizona, where more than 20 percent of all eligible voters are Hispanic, Republican Sen. Jeff Flake said Trump was right to end an unconstitutional program. But, like Coffman, he supports legislation that would provide immediate protection for roughly 800,000 young immigrants in the country illegally who enrolled in the program.

"They are valued members of society and I hope they can stay," Flake said.

The Arizona senator also highlighted recommendations made by the Republican National Committee in 2013, which called on the GOP to adopt a more welcoming and inclusive tone to improve its standing with

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Hispanic voters. The future success of the party depended upon it, the RNC determined two years before Trump launched his campaign by calling Mexican immigrants criminals and rapists.

Florida Republican Gov. Rick Scott, a prominent Trump ally last fall, also toed the line this week as he condemned Obama's program, but praised the intent of the policy.

"This issue must be addressed. I do not favor punishing children for the actions of their parents," said Scott, who is weighing a bid to challenge incumbent Democratic Sen. Bill Nelson in 2018. Hispanics make up more than 18 percent of eligible voters in Florida, according to the Pew Hispanic Center.

Yet in many other states with smaller Hispanic communities, Republicans have far less political incentive to protect the young immigrants from deportation.

Matthew Dowd, a strategist for former President George W. Bush's campaign, has warned Republican leaders for nearly two decades that they must appeal to Hispanics. He noted that Trump's base of white, less-educated voters embraced the president's tone.

"Let us remember Trump is a symptom of where GOP voters are on immigration and race relations, not a cause of it," Dowd tweeted. In an interview, he said the Republican Party may have succeeded in 2016, but it cannot survive alienating Hispanic voters and other minorities for much longer.

"It's just a question of time," Dowd said. "If you look at the demographics of Trump support, that group is dwindling every single year."

And beyond those Republicans facing difficult re-elections in 2018, the message to Hispanics this week was often far from welcoming.

"They came here to live in the shadows and we're not denying them that opportunity to live in the shadows," Rep. Steve King, R-Iowa, said, when asked about the immigrant children.

Associated Press writers Thomas Beaumont in Des Moines, Iowa and Richard Lardner and Erica Werner in Washington contributed to this report.

Australian court dismisses challenge to gay marriage survey

By ROD McGUIRK, Associated Press

CANBERRA, Australia (AP) — Australians will be surveyed on their support for gay marriage from next week after the nation's highest court on Thursday dismissed challenges to the government's power to conduct the postal ballot without Senate permission.

Gay marriage could be legal in Australia by December if most Australians who take part in the ballot support the reform. But the lawmakers who could finally change the law within three weeks of the survey results becoming known would not be bound to accept the people's will.

Gay rights advocates argued in an emergency hearing in the High Court that the government did not have the constitutional power to survey the public through a unique 122 million Australian dollar (\$97 million) postal ballot.

The seven judges dismissed both cases argued by separate groups of rights advocates.

The government had already gone to the expense of starting to print the ballot papers, which are to be posted to more than 16 million voters nationwide from Tuesday.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull welcomed the ruling and urged all Australians to take part in the survey, which will be declared on Nov. 15.

"Lucy and I will be voting yes and I will be encouraging others to vote yes, but ... above all, I encourage every Australian to have their say because ... I respect every Australian's view on this matter," Turnbull told Parliament, referring to his wife Lucy Turnbull.

Opinion polls show that most Australians want same-sex marriage legalized, but many advocates question how representative of Australian attitudes the postal survey would be.

Opponents of gay marriage support the survey, although some conservative lawmakers have said they would not change the law even if a majority of Australians wanted reform.

The litigants who failed to stop the survey in the court immediately urged supporters of marriage equal-

ity to take part.

One of them, independent lawmaker Andrew Wilkie, said the judgment “doesn’t change the fact that this is bad government policy.”

“To be spending the money the way they are is out of step at least with the community’s expectations about how they should govern this country,” Wilkie said.

Lyle Shelton, spokesman for Coalition for Marriage which lobbies against reform, said recognizing same-sex marriage would lead to restrictions on freedom of speech and religion as well as “radical gender education in classrooms.”

“We know that this is a political agenda that carries many things with it, and radical LGBTIQ sex education is just one of those things,” Shelton said, referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and those questioning their sexual identities.

The survey was the second choice of Turnbull’s conservative government that had promised a rare, compulsory vote known as a plebiscite. But the Senate refused to approve the AU\$170 million (\$135 million) for such a vote.

Market researchers have said that telephone opinion polling could more accurately gauge the public’s view on gay marriage in each of Australia’s 150 electoral districts for around AU\$1 million — a fraction of the survey’s cost.

Science Says: How repeated head blows affect the brain

By LINDSEY TANNER, AP Medical Writer

CHICAGO (AP) — Researchers are tackling fresh questions about a degenerative brain disease now that it has been detected in the brains of nearly 200 football players after death. The suspected cause is repeated head blows, an almost unavoidable part of contact sports.

As a new NFL season gets underway, here’s a look at what’s known — and what still needs to be learned — about the condition:

WHAT’S NEW?

The largest report to date on chronic traumatic encephalopathy included 202 brains from football players at the youth, college and professional level, all donated post-mortem to a Boston brain bank. CTE was detected in all but one of the 111 NFL players studied, 90 percent of the college players and 20 percent of the high school players. It was absent in two younger players’ brains.

A previous report had described the disease in an 18-year-old football player, but finding additional cases at the high school level raises new questions about the game’s safety for young players.

HOW COMMON IS CTE?

The high occurrence of CTE in donated brains surprised researchers at Boston University and the VA Boston Healthcare System, whose brain bank is billed as the world’s largest focusing on traumatic brain injury and CTE.

But whether CTE is truly common in sports or the general population isn’t known. Most brains studied for CTE have been donated by family members because of concerns about mental symptoms that might be related to the disease — they don’t come from a random population of people. Some experts think it isn’t common since many athletes get repeated head blows and never develop symptoms.

WHAT CAUSES CTE?

Repeated knocks to the head are the most likely cause of CTE. Scientists believe genes probably play a role and may explain why some people with repeated head blows never develop the disease. Lifestyle habits including diet, alcohol and drugs may also somehow contribute.

HOW DO HEAD BLOWS AFFECT THE BRAIN?

Though the brain is jello-like in texture and cushioned in cerebrospinal fluid, a powerful hit — from a hard tackle, a fist or bomb shock wave — can cause a concussion, forcing the brain to ricochet back and forth inside the skull. Besides bruising and swelling, researchers believe that force can cause the brain to elongate, stretching nerve cells and their axons — fiber-like parts that transmit messages between cells.

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With a mild blow, these cells may return to normal, but a forceful hit may cause them to die.

Common symptoms after a concussion include dizziness, confusion, headaches, nausea and sometimes temporary loss of consciousness.

CTE has been linked with repeated concussions and some scientists believe it may occur after repeated head blows that don't cause any obvious symptoms. But they still don't know how many head hits is too many.

WHAT HAPPENS IN CTE?

The disease involves progressive brain damage, particularly in the frontal region, which controls many functions including judgment, emotion, impulse control, social behavior and memory. A signature feature is abnormal deposits of tau protein that accumulate around small blood vessels in brain crevices. Tau occurs normally in brain cells, helping them maintain their shape and function.

But researchers believe that multiple head blows may dislodge tau protein from the cell structure and cause it to form clumps inside nerve cells. These tau clumps can damage and ultimately kill nerve cells, and can spread as the disease progresses. At advanced stages, brain shrinkage may occur.

Abnormal tau deposits in different shapes, patterns and locations have been implicated in other brain diseases, including Alzheimer's Parkinson's disease and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or ALS.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Research suggests early stages of CTE may cause no obvious symptoms. Many players whose autopsies showed more advanced disease had experienced personality changes, aggressive behavior, paranoia, poor memory, attention problems, dementia and depression. Some died by suicide. Whether the tau changes associated with CTE cause those symptoms is unclear.

IS IT JUST A FOOTBALL DISEASE?

What's now called CTE was once thought to mainly affect boxers; the earliest known reference in the medical literature was a 1928 report by a New Jersey pathologist who referred to a "punch-drunk" syndrome.

The first published finding about CTE in a retired NFL player was a 2005 report on Pittsburgh Steelers Hall of Famer Mike Webster.

CTE also has been found in other contact sports including soccer, baseball and ice hockey; in soldiers exposed to bomb blast waves; domestic violence victims; and in psychiatric patients who engaged in repeated head-banging.

WHAT'S FOOTBALL'S RESPONSE?

Thousands of former players are due to get damage awards from a \$1 billion settlement stemming from lawsuits claiming the league hid what it knew about a link between concussions and CTE.

Earlier this year the NFL hired a Vanderbilt University sports concussion expert, neurosurgeon Dr. Allen Sills, as its first full-time chief medical officer.

Injury risks are part of football, but the league is trying to make the game safer, Sills said.

New "no-go" criteria this season for when to keep injured players out of the game list confusion, amnesia and loss of consciousness after an on-field injury. Injured players will be evaluated in new portable sideline exam tents, for privacy and to reduce distractions for those with suspected concussions.

There also will be a ban on "leaper" block attempts, where a defender leaping over the offense to block a kick is tackled midair.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Researchers are seeking to refine brain scan techniques to identify CTE tau deposits in living brains. They're also looking for clues in blood or cerebrospinal fluid that would allow them to diagnose CTE before death. If such markers exist, they could be targets for drug treatment.

Symptoms associated with CTE can sometimes be managed with drugs or other treatment, but there's no cure and the only way to prevent it is to avoid head blows.

Studies are underway to identify if specific genes make certain athletes more vulnerable to brain damage from head blows, and researchers hope to pin down how many head blows it takes to develop CTE.

Follow Lindsey Tanner on Twitter at @LindseyTanner. Her work can be found here .

This Associated Press series was produced in partnership with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Department of Science Education. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

AP Exclusive: Most Florida flood zone property not insured

By TERRY SPENCER and MEGHAN HOYER, Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — As Hurricane Irma bears down on Florida, an Associated Press analysis shows a steep drop in flood insurance across the state, including the areas most endangered by what could be a devastating storm surge.

In just five years, the state's total number of federal flood insurance policies has fallen by 15 percent, according to Federal Emergency Management Agency data.

Florida's property owners still buy far more federal flood insurance than any other state — 1.7 million policies, covering about \$42 billion in assets — but most residents in hazard zones are badly exposed.

With 1,350 miles of coastline, the most in the continental United States, Florida has roughly 2.5 million homes in hazard zones, more than three times that of any other state, FEMA estimates. And yet, across Florida's 38 coastal counties, just 42 percent of these homes are covered.

Florida's overall flood insurance rate for hazard-zone homes is just 41 percent. Fannie Mae ostensibly requires mortgage lenders to make sure property owners buy this insurance to qualify for federally backed loans, and yet in 59 percent of the cases, that insurance isn't being paid for.

In the counties being under at least partial evacuation orders Wednesday (Collier, Broward, Monroe and Miami-Dade), where 1.3 million houses are estimated to be in flood hazard zones, the percentage is an even lower 34.3 percent.

Nationwide, only half the 10 million properties that need flood insurance have it, said Roy Wright, who runs the National Flood Insurance Program. He told the AP last week that he wants to double the number of policies sold nationally in the near future.

The declines in coverage started after Congress approved a price hike in 2012, making policies more expensive. Maps of some high-risk areas were redrawn, removing a requirement that these homeowners get the insurance. About 7 of 10 homeowners have federally backed mortgages, and if they live in a high-risk area, they still are required to have flood insurance. But many let their policies slip without the lender noticing; loans also get sold and repackaged, paperwork gets lost and new lenders don't follow up.

FEMA, which is ultimately responsible for enforcing flood insurance requirements, did not respond to an email seeking comment from its Washington office on Wednesday.

The latest forecasts suggest Irma's most destructive winds could carve up much of Florida's priciest real estate, damaging properties from the Florida Keys through Jacksonville as it swirls north.

"This could easily be the most costly storm in U.S. history, which is saying a lot considering what just happened two weeks ago," said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

Insurance companies are still tallying the damage from Hurricane Harvey's extended stay over southern Texas in August, but insured losses are estimated at \$20 billion, and that's a fraction of the \$65 billion or more in losses due to flooding alone that could have been insured, according to the catastrophe modeling firm AIR Worldwide.

No one is expecting Irma to flood Florida on a similar scale. Harvey sat over Houston for days, dumping up to 50 inches of rain. Irma is moving swiftly and should bring less than a quarter of that to Florida cities.

South Florida also has a better flood control system, the ground is more porous and there aren't any hills to send water rushing down from above, said Hugh Willoughby, a former research director at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and now a professor at Florida International University in Miami.

Still, many Floridians could find themselves with no money for flood repairs, just like people in Houston, where flood coverage dropped by 9 percent since 2012.

If Irma's eye follows a track just west of Florida's eastern coast, the initial storm surge could heavily damage the Florida Keys, the cities at the southern tip of Florida's mainland, Florida City and Homestead,

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parts of Miami and Miami Beach, and other Atlantic coast cities, said Brian Haus, a professor of ocean sciences at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science.

The AP analysis shows that the number of flood insurance policies sold in the Keys, Miami, Miami Beach and Homestead has stayed basically steady since 2012, but tiny Florida City has seen a drop of 31 percent. Miami-Dade County overall has seen a 7 percent drop in policies sold, falling from 371,000 in 2012 to 342,000 today.

Just to the north in Broward County, home to Fort Lauderdale, the state has seen its biggest drop among major counties, falling 44 percent from 372,000 policies five years ago to 207,000 today. County officials say they don't track the flood insurance program, leaving that to the cities.

If Irma's eye moves instead up Florida's west coast, that would put Tampa, St. Petersburg and other Gulf cities in danger to significant storm surge, Haus said. St. Petersburg has seen an almost 10 percent drop in federal flood policies written in the last five years, while Tampa has seen a 3.5 percent drop, according to the AP analysis.

Hoyer reported from Washington. Associated Press Science Writer Seth Borenstein in Washington contributed to this report.

No Rafa vs. Roger at US Open: del Potro beats Federer in QF

By HOWARD FENDRICH, AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — So much for the first U.S. Open matchup between Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal. Federer failed to live up to his end of the bargain.

Hours after Nadal did his part with an easy-as-can-be victory to get to the semifinals at Flushing Meadows, Federer was unable to join him for what would have been the most-anticipated showdown of the entire two weeks, wasting chances to take control and missing shots he normally makes in a 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (8), 6-4 loss to 2009 champion Juan Martin del Potro on Wednesday night.

"He came up with the goods when he needed to," Federer said, "and I helped him a little bit sometimes, too, maybe."

Federer described himself as too "edgy" and said "that little magic was missing."

He also insisted that, unlike just about everyone else, he did not spend any time at all pondering a possible matchup with Nadal at the only Grand Slam tournament where they've never met. Their wonderful rivalry has included 37 matches, and at least two finals at each of the other majors.

"I had struggled too much throughout the tournament," Federer said, "to think too far ahead."

Given that he is 36, and Nadal is 31, perhaps it is time for the tennis world to concede that Roger vs. Rafa at the U.S. Open just will never happen.

This is the sixth occasion when they were a round away from playing in New York, but one or the other lost — including eight years ago, when del Potro beat Nadal in the semifinals, then Federer in the final to end the Swiss star's run of five consecutive titles at the tournament.

This time, Federer entered the quarterfinals 18-0 in Grand Slam play this season, including titles at the Australian Open and Wimbledon to raise his record count to 19 major championships.

But he tweaked his back at a tournament last month, curtailing his preparation for the U.S. Open, and he was not quite at his best for stretches. He needed five sets to win each of his first two matches — and Wednesday, he succumbed to the del Potro's familiar formula of massive forehands and booming serves.

Before the U.S. Open began, Nadal was honest as can be when asked whether he hoped to face Federer. The answer, the No. 1-seeded Nadal said earnestly, was no — because he'd rather go up against someone easier to beat.

Well, as it turns out, he'll face the 24th-seeded del Potro on Friday. It is the first major semifinal for del Potro since 2013; he missed two years' worth of Grand Slam tournaments until Wimbledon in 2016 because of three operations on his left wrist.

The other semifinal features two men who have never been this far at any major: No. 12 Pablo Carreno

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Busta of Spain vs. No. 28 Kevin Anderson of South Africa.

The women's semifinals are both all-American matchups, the first time that's happened at the U.S. Open in 36 years : No. 9 Venus Williams vs. unseeded Sloane Stephens, and No. 15 Madison Keys vs. No. 20 CoCo Vandeweghe.

Nadal, who won two of his 15 Grand Slam trophies in New York, overwhelmed 19-year-old Russian Andrey Rublev 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 in the quarterfinals, then had to wait hours to see what Federer would do under the lights against del Potro.

Arthur Ashe Stadium was packed, and both men had loud groups of supporters. Federer's fans cheered del Potro's faults, considered bad etiquette in tennis. Del Potro's faction broke into raucous, soccer-style songs of "Ole, ole, ole, ole! Del-po! Del-po!"

There was some sublime shotmaking by each player, but also some real shakiness from the 36-year-old Federer, whose forehand in particular was problematic: 22 of his 41 unforced errors came on that stroke.

The turning point was the third-set tiebreaker, which Federer was a single point from winning on four occasions.

At 6-4, del Potro hammered a good return that caught Federer off-guard, resulting in a forehand into the net. At 6-5, del Potro delivered a service winner. At 7-6 — set up by a double-fault from del Potro — Federer missed a backhand, and his wife, Mirka, put her hands to her temples, before standing to offer encouragement. At 8-7, Federer's fourth and last set point, del Potro hit a huge forehand winner.

That began a run of three points in a row for del Potro to claim that set, the last when Federer pushed a backhand volley long.

The suspense in the fourth set was brief: At 2-all, Federer dumped an overhead into the bottom of the net to gift del Potro a third break point in that game. It was converted with a stinging cross-court backhand return winner.

"I did everything well. I served so good. I hit my forehand as hard as I can," del Potro said. "And I think we played a great match and I deserved to win at the end."

He showed no residual effects from his 3 1/2-hour, five-set comeback victory in the fourth round — or the illness that had the 6-foot-6 (1.98-meter) Argentine coughing into a towel in the second set Wednesday. One of his many powerful and precise forehands stood out: a reflex passing shot struck so hard and so close to the at-the-net Federer's head that he ducked out of the way.

Uncharacteristically off at times, Federer shanked a very bad forehand volley to set up del Potro's match point.

"It was one of those matches where, if I ran into a good guy, I was going to lose, I felt. I don't want to say I was in a negative mindset, but I knew going in that I'm not in a safe place," Federer said. "Rightfully so, I'm out of this tournament, because I wasn't good enough — in my mind, in my body, and in my game. ... If you're missing all three, it's going to be tough."

Follow Howard Fendrich on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/HowardFendrich>

More AP tennis coverage: <https://apnews.com/tag/apf-Tennis>

Pope kicks off visit to Colombia aimed at building bridges

By NICOLE WINFIELD and JOSHUA GOODMAN, Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Pope Francis opens the first full day in his Colombia visit on Thursday with messages to political leaders and citizens alike encouraging all to rally behind a peace process seeking an end for Latin America's longest-running conflict and to address the inequalities that fueled it.

Francis will kick off the day with a meeting with President Juan Manuel Santos at the presidential palace, where he is likely to call for a building of bridges among elites bitterly divided by last year's peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC.

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It will be followed in the afternoon by an outdoor Mass in Simon Bolivar Park that is expected to be attended by hundreds of thousands of worshippers in one of Latin America's most-fervently Roman Catholic nations.

In between, he is to meet with bishops from around the region, including his first encounter with clergy from neighboring Venezuela, who are looking for the pope to demand accountability from their country's socialist government and deliver a message of hope to a nation torn by political and economic turmoil.

His 20th trip abroad as pope, Francis' five-day visit to Colombia is a highly emotional one, fulfilling a promise he made to government and FARC negotiators when he visited Cuba in 2015 as negotiations between the two dragged on in Havana.

Back then, he appealed to both sides not to let the historic opportunity for peace slip by. But now that the deal is signed, the guns silenced and 7,000 rebels are transitioning back to civilian life, Colombians face the even more difficult challenge of coming together and eradicating the social disparities at the root of the half-century conflict.

Santos, the winner last year of the Nobel Peace Prize, offered thanks on Wednesday for Pope Francis pushing negotiators during difficult moments of the four-year talks. He expressed hope the pontiff's visit will inspire Colombians to take the next step and definitively put behind them the long decades of political violence that left 220,000 dead and 7 million internally displaced.

"Peace needs a solid foundation, and reconciliation is one of those pillars that we hopefully we will not only plant but also strengthen," Santos told reporters.

The theme of reconciliation wasn't far from Francis' mind from the moment he arrived in Bogota late Wednesday afternoon to great fanfare.

In a gesture likely to mark the deep symbolism of the trip, he was presented on the tarmac with a commemorative peace dove by a youth who was born in a jungle camp to a guerrilla father and a politician mother after she was taken captive by FARC rebels in 2002. Clara Rojas, now a congresswoman, did not see her son again until she was rescued in 2008 when he was 3.

Francis then made his way in the popemobile past thousands of people who had stood for hours waiting to catch a glimpse of the wildly popular pontiff along the 15-kilometer (9-mile) route from the airport to the Vatican's embassy.

With no police line in sight, Francis was practically mobbed by well-wishers, though he seemed to revel in the outpouring of emotion from people showering him with flowers, red-yellow-and-blue Colombian flags and shouts of "Viva Francisco." He even gave a few high-fives to some youths who got a little too close.

Once at the Nunciature in Bogota, where Francis will sleep every night, he delivered his first public remarks to a group of young people battling drug addiction, urging them not to ever lose "happiness and hope."

It was a message that resonated with Angie Albanil, who spent part of her teenage years on the streets of Bogota but now is getting back on her feet as part of a church-backed group that performed rap and traditional cumbia music for the pontiff.

"The ills that have spread in society, we're the ones who have to overcome them with respect for people who think differently," she said in a prepared remarks read to the pope upon his arrival. "We're the ones who have to build a society in which we all fit."

Associated Press writers Cesar Garcia and Juan Zamorano contributed to this report.

Top Florida home insurer could face big hit from Irma

By BERNARD CONDON and GARY FINEOUT, Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — A decade-long lucky streak of decent weather that helped rescue one of Florida's biggest home insurers from collapse could come to a wet, violent end if predictions about Hurricane Irma prove true.

The state-run Citizens Property Insurance Corp. is strong enough to absorb the blow from the monster storm, industry experts say, but all the new claims could punch a hole in its finances, possibly leading to

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higher premiums in future years.

"Irma will threaten the part of the state where Citizens' market share is the greatest, directly on the coastline," said Robert Hartwig, an economist and insurance expert at the University of South Carolina. "Premiums will rise."

Once a shaky, underfunded company, Citizens has transformed into a model of discipline, flush with money patiently built up over the years.

The company has 218,000 policies in Broward, Palm Beach and Miami-Dade counties, according to a March financial report, areas that could get hit hard by Irma. That is 15 percent of total policies in those counties, down from 41 percent just six years ago.

Still, Irma is likely to cost Citizens big money.

Citizens CEO Barry Gilway told his board on Wednesday that despite the insurer being dramatically less exposed, it could still wind up having 100,000 claims after the storm passes. Asked by The Associated Press on Wednesday for a dollar estimate of possible losses, a Citizens spokesman would not give a figure.

Hartwig cited estimates that if all homes insured by Citizens was destroyed, an extreme and unlikely case, the insurer would have to pay out \$50 billion to allow owners to rebuild.

Jack Nicholson, director of the Florida Catastrophic Storm Risk Management Center at Florida State University, said the storm could wind up costing \$100 billion in insured and uninsured damage for homes and other buildings in Florida. He said he has never seen a storm so powerful.

"We always talk about the big one, a matter of not if but when," Nicholson said. "This has the potential to be the big one."

Irma is already ranked as the most powerful Atlantic Ocean hurricane in recorded history. As it moved across the Caribbean toward Florida on Wednesday, the Category 5 storm ripped open rooftops, flooded streets and knocked out electricity. Meteorologists said Irma could hit the Miami area by early Sunday, then pummel the length of the state as it pushes into the Carolinas.

Florida's last spate of bad storms came in quick succession in 2004 and 2005, ending with Hurricane Wilma. The insurance industry reeled from the hits. Many private insurers fled the Sunshine State, leaving Citizens to take over their policies.

By 2006, Citizens had a \$1.7 billion deficit, meaning it was unable to cover policyholder claims. That was the largest deficit of any U.S. state-run insurer, said USC's Hartwig. Even a normal hurricane season could have toppled the company, he said, forcing the state to borrow heavily to pay out on policies.

But something unexpected happened as the next few years unfolded. The weather cooperated.

"Mother Nature basically left the state alone for a decade," said Hartwig, co-director of the Center for Risk and Uncertainty Management at USC's Darla Moore School of Business.

Spared big payouts, Citizens has been able to hold onto its cash from premiums collected from property owners and to build up a surplus of \$7.5 billion. The company has also managed to transfer much of its coverage to many new private insurers.

Citizens now has 453,000 policies, down from a peak 1.5 million in 2012.

Rates were already heading up for many Citizens policyholders, thanks to water damage and lawsuits.

Last month, CEO Gilway said homeowners in Miami-Dade and Broward counties were likely to see 10 percent increases this year. For policyholder in Miami-Dade, Gilway estimated average premiums would rise to \$3,219 from \$2,926. Broward premiums were set to rise to \$2,926 from \$2,390.

Insurance expert Lynne McChristian said the Irma forecasts keep changing and that makes it difficult to predict any likely losses to Citizens. But even if Citizens manages to dodge the worst, she noted, the danger remains high given hurricane season still has three months left. Already Hurricane Jose has formed in the Atlantic behind Irma.

"Citizens has money to manage one storm, but what happens if we have another one right after that?" said McChristian, Florida spokeswoman for the Insurance Information Institute, a trade group. "We're in peak season right now."

Fineout reported from Tallahassee, Florida.

AP Exclusive: Most Florida flood zone property not insured

By **TERRY SPENCER** and **MEGHAN HOYER**, Associated Press

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (AP) — As Hurricane Irma bears down on Florida, an Associated Press analysis shows a steep drop in flood insurance across the state, including the areas most endangered by what could be a devastating storm surge.

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The latest forecasts suggest Irma's most destructive winds could carve up much of Florida's priciest real estate, damaging properties from the Florida Keys through Jacksonville as it swirls north.

"This could easily be the most costly storm in U.S. history, which is saying a lot considering what just happened two weeks ago," said University of Miami hurricane researcher Brian McNoldy.

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cent. Miami-Dade County overall has seen a 7 percent drop in policies sold, falling from 371,000 in 2012 to 342,000 today.

Just to the north in Broward County, home to Fort Lauderdale, the state has seen its biggest drop among major counties, falling 44 percent from 372,000 policies five years ago to 207,000 today. County officials say they don't track the flood insurance program, leaving that to the cities.

If Irma's eye moves instead up Florida's west coast, that would put Tampa, St. Petersburg and other Gulf cities in danger to significant storm surge, Haus said. St. Petersburg has seen an almost 10 percent drop in federal flood policies written in the last five years, while Tampa has seen a 3.5 percent drop, according to the AP analysis.

Hoyer reported from Washington. Associated Press Science Writer Seth Borenstein in Washington contributed to this report.

Asian shares rise as US debt deal gives investors relief

By KELVIN CHAN, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG (AP) — Asian stocks rose Thursday after President Donald Trump cut a deal with Democrats to extend borrowing limits to buy more time for the U.S. government, giving investors much needed relief.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 rose 0.4 percent to 19,431.58 and South Korea's Kospi jumped 1.1 percent to 2,345.58. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index added 0.4 percent to 27,736.13 but the Shanghai Composite dipped 0.2 percent to 3,379.93. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 advanced 0.3 percent to 5,706.70.

DEBT DEAL: Trump came to a deal with congressional Democrats to raise America's debt limit for three months, overruling Republicans in the process. The immediate goal was ensuring money for storm relief as Trump sought to help speed the \$7.9 billion aid bill for Hurricane Harvey victims, but the move also helps keep the government operating, removing some short-term uncertainty for investors.

FED IN FLUX: In a surprise announcement, the Federal Reserve said Vice Chairman Stanley Fischer will resign next month for personal reasons, leaving a fourth vacancy on the U.S. central bank's seven-member governing board. The unexpected departure of Fischer, a widely-respected economist, adds to a leadership vacuum at the top of the Fed as it navigates a difficult path. It plans to slowly raise interest rates as the U.S. economy grows and unemployment falls, even as inflation remains below target, complicating its future course.

NUCLEAR TENSIONS: North Korea's nuclear program remains in the headlines, though investor concerns have faded somewhat as the U.S. seeks the toughest-ever U.N. sanctions on the country in a resolution that would go to a vote Monday. Meanwhile, the U.S. military completed placing more launchers for the high-tech U.S. missile-defense system installed in South Korea to better cope against Pyongyang's threats.

QUOTEWORTHY: "Surprises galore are greeting Asia traders as we digest the astonishing overnight headlines," said Stephen Innes, head of Asia trading at OANDA. Fischer's resignation, the debt deal and an unexpected rate hike by Canada's central bank on strong economic growth "all caught market watchers by surprise," he said.

WALL STREET: Major U.S. benchmarks ended higher. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 0.3 percent to 2,465.54. The Dow Jones industrial average added 0.3 percent to 21,807.64. The Nasdaq composite gained 0.3 percent to 6,393.31.

ENERGY: The rally in oil futures fizzled out. Benchmark U.S. crude dipped 6 cents to \$49.10 a barrel in electronic trading on the New York Mercantile Exchange. The contract gained 50 cents, or 1 percent, to settle at \$49.16 a barrel Wednesday. Brent crude, used to price international oils, slipped 10 cents to \$54.10 a barrel in London.

CURRENCIES: The dollar rose weakened to 109.08 yen from 109.23 yen Wednesday. The euro rose to \$1.1925 from \$1.1918.

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Today in History By The Associated Press

Today in History

Today is Thursday, Sept. 7, the 250th day of 2017. There are 115 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On September 7, 1927, American television pioneer Philo T. Farnsworth, 21, succeeded in transmitting the image of a line through purely electronic means with a device called an "image dissector" at his San Francisco laboratory.

On this date:

In 1892, James J. Corbett knocked out John L. Sullivan to win the world heavyweight crown in New Orleans in a fight conducted under the Marquess of Queensberry rules.

In 1916, the Federal Employees Compensation Act, providing financial assistance to federal workers who suffer job-related injuries, was signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson.

In 1936, rock-and-roll legend Buddy Holly was born Charles Hardin Holley in Lubbock, Texas.

In 1940, Nazi Germany began its eight-month blitz of Britain during World War II with the first air attack on London.

In 1957, the original animated version of the NBC-TV peacock logo, used to denote programs "brought to you in living color," made its debut at the beginning of "Your Hit Parade."

In 1963, the National Professional Football Hall of Fame was dedicated in Canton, Ohio.

In 1964, the controversial "Daisy" commercial for President Lyndon Johnson's election campaign, featuring a girl plucking flower petals followed by a nuclear explosion, aired on NBC-TV.

In 1967, the situation comedy "The Flying Nun," starring Sally Field as a novice nun who finds that she can fly, debuted on ABC.

In 1977, the Panama Canal treaties, calling for the U.S. to eventually turn over control of the waterway to Panama, were signed in Washington by President Jimmy Carter and Panamanian leader Omar Torrijos (toh-REE'-hohs). Convicted Watergate conspirator G. Gordon Liddy was released from prison after more than four years.

In 1979, the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) made its cable TV debut.

In 1987, the syndicated TV talk show "Geraldo," hosted by Geraldo Rivera, began an 11-season run.

In 1996, rapper Tupac Shakur was shot and mortally wounded on the Las Vegas Strip; he died six days later.

Ten years ago: Osama bin Laden appeared in a video for the first time in three years, telling Americans they should convert to Islam if they wanted the war in Iraq to end. A federal judge ruled that Iran had to pay \$2.65 billion to the families of the 241 U.S. service members killed in the 1983 bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut. A jury in St. Francisville, Louisiana, acquitted Sal and Mabel Mangano, the owners of a nursing home where 35 patients died after Hurricane Katrina, of negligent homicide and cruelty charges. Shawn Johnson won the women's all-around title at the world gymnastics championships in Stuttgart, Germany; among the men, China's Yang Wei won his second straight title.

Five years ago: The Labor Department reported that employers added just 96,000 jobs in August 2012, down from 141,000 in July; the dismal finding prompted Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney to say, "We're going in the wrong direction," while President Barack Obama, fresh off his nomination for a second term in office, said: "We know it's not good enough." Twin earthquakes and a spate of aftershocks struck southwestern China, toppling thousands of houses and killing more than 80 people. Dorothy McGuire Williamson, 84, who teamed with sisters Christine and Phyllis as the popular McGuire Sisters, died in Paradise Valley, Arizona.

One year ago: In back-to-back appearances, Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton confronted their perceived weaknesses during a national security forum in New York, with Clinton, who went first, arguing that her email practices did not expose questionable judgment while Trump, who went second, defended his preparedness to be commander in chief. President Barack Obama, during a visit to Laos, pledged to help to clear away the 80 million unexploded bombs the U.S. dropped on the Southeast Asian country a

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generation ago.

Today's Birthdays: Jazz musician Sonny Rollins is 87. Actor Bruce Gray is 81. Singer Gloria Gaynor is 74. Singer Alfa Anderson (Chic) is 71. Actress Susan Blakely is 69. Rock musician Dennis Thompson (MC5) is 69. Actress Julie Kavner is 67. Rock singer Chrissie Hynde (The Pretenders) is 66. Rock musician Benmont Tench (Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers) is 64. Actor Corbin Bernsen is 63. Actor Michael Emerson is 63. Pianist Michael Feinstein is 61. Singer Margot Chapman is 60. Actress J. Smith-Cameron is 60. Actor W. Earl Brown is 54. Actor Toby Jones is 51. Actress-comedian Leslie Jones (TV: "Saturday Night Live") is 50. Model-actress Angie Everhart is 48. Actress Diane Farr is 48. Country singer Butter (Trailer Choir) is 47. Actress Monique Gabriela Curnen is 47. Actor Tom Everett Scott is 47. Rock musician Chad Sexton (311) is 47. Actress Shannon Elizabeth is 44. Actor Oliver Hudson is 41. Actor Devon Sawa (SAH'-wuh) is 39. Actor JD Pardo is 38. Actor Benjamin Hollingsworth (TV: "Code Black") is 33. Actress Alyssa Diaz (TV: "Ray Donovan"; "Zoo") is 32. Singer-musician Wes Willis (Rush of Fools) is 31. Actress Evan Rachel Wood is 30. Actor Ian Chen (TV: "Fresh Off the Boat") is 11.

Thought for Today: "Television has proved that people will look at anything rather than each other." — Ann Landers, American advice columnist (1918-2002).