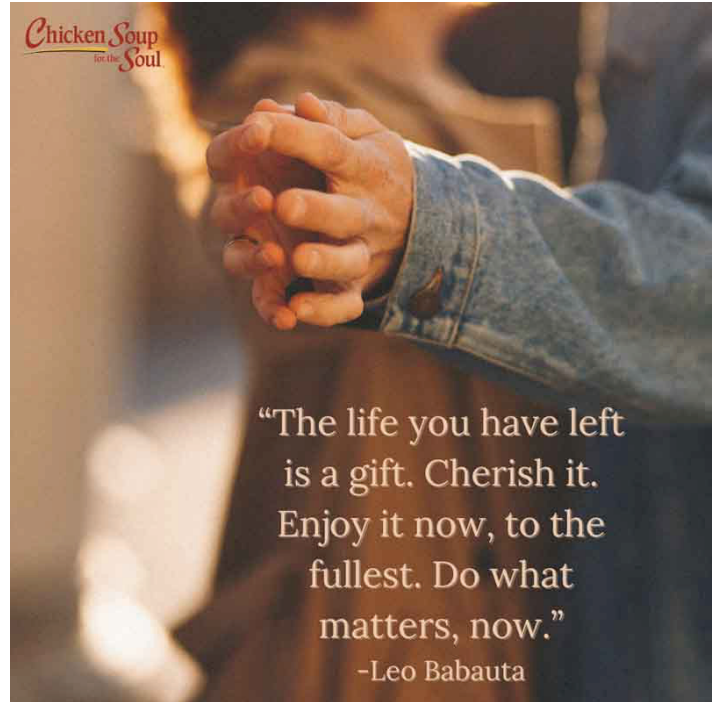


Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 1 of 51

- [1- Service Notice: Joyce Bawek](#)
- [2- Covid-19 Update by Marie Miller](#)
- [5- Groton Prairie Mixed](#)
- [6- South Dakota has lowest COVID-19 re-production rate](#)
- [7- Groton Area Covid-19 report](#)
- [8- Area COVID-19 Cases](#)
- [9- November 26th-27th COVID-19 UP-DATE](#)
- [13- South Dakota COVID-19 Numbers](#)
- [14- Brown County COVID-19 Numbers](#)
- [15- Day County COVID-19 Numbers](#)
- [16- Yesterday's Groton Weather](#)
- [17- Weather Pages](#)
- [21- Daily Devotional](#)
- [22- 2020 Groton Events](#)
- [23- News from the Associated Press](#)



Service Notice: Joyce Bawek

Private family Mass of Christian Burial for Joyce Bawek, 90, of Conde will be 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, December 1st at Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton. Father Tom Hartman will officiate. Inurnment will follow in St. John's Catholic Cemetery, Conde under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held for one hour prior to services on Tuesday.

Joyce passed away peacefully on November 25, 2020 at her home.

The service will be broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM and will also be broadcast on GDIRADIO at 89.3 FM, available within 1 mile of Groton.



OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.

#278 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Big numbers today, but as we discussed last night, I'm not sure what we should make of it. Could be this is just catch-up from the non-reporting states from yesterday so things aren't so bad after all, or maybe too many states are still not reporting today and testing was also limited over this holiday week, in which case things are likely much worse. More likely, there's a combination of artificially high numbers from catch-up and artificially low numbers from non-reporting and low testing which makes it impossible to know whether real new case numbers are increasing or decreasing. As I indicated yesterday, we're not going to draw too many conclusions, just report what we see and let it sit for a few days until things smooth out again after the weekend.

So there were 200,300 new cases reported today. This is a whole lot of cases, our second-worst day ever. And we are, indeed, over 13 million with 13,150,500 total cases, 1.5% more than yesterday. It took us just six days to add a million this time, which is a tie for the fastest million yet. Here's the history:

April 28 – 1 million – 98 days
June 11 – 2 million – 44 days
July 8 – 3 million – 27 days
July 23 – 4 million – 15 days
August 9 – 5 million – 17 days
August 31 – 6 million – 22 days
September 24 – 7 million – 24 days
October 15 – 8 million – 21 days
October 29 – 9 million – 14 days
November 8 – 10 million – 10 days
November 15 – 11 million – 7 days
November 21 – 12 million – 6 days
November 26 – 13 million – 6 days

Hospitalizations were at record levels for the 17th consecutive day, topping 90,000 for the first time. Today, 90,481 people were hospitalized with Covid-19. Our seven-day average is 43% higher than it was two weeks ago. According to the New York Times, "Despite months of planning, many of the nation's hospital systems have no available beds and are seeing widening shortages of nurses and doctors. And rising coronavirus infection rates among nurses and other frontline workers have doubled the patient load on those left standing."

Dr. Michael Osterholm, member of President-elect Joseph Biden's Covid-19 advisory council, says health care systems "are verging on the edge of breaking."

There were 1415 deaths reported today, putting us 0.5% over yesterday's total. We're at 264,709 deaths in the US.

There's been a fair amount of discussion on various shares of last night's Update, often around the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine trials, and I'm seeing some ideas floated that don't really fit the facts on the ground. For starters, nothing that has happened so far tells us whether this is a useful vaccine, and if you're drawing conclusions about that, you're running well ahead of the evidence. What the facts to date tell us is that we don't know how useful it is because the information on which to base a sound decision is not yet available. It might be highly useful even if it turns out it isn't as remarkably good as first thought. Remember that the FDA was prepared to approve anything with greater than 50% effectiveness, and it is looking like this vaccine is highly likely to exceed that standard. It's just going to take a little longer to figure that out. And a cheap, easily transported vaccine with moderate effectiveness which can be produced in the billions of doses within a year is nothing to scoff at; so it's far too soon to dismiss this candidate. Time will tell.

I'm also seeing folks drawing all kinds of conclusions from this episode about what's wrong with vaccine developers, the process, science, and clinical trials. This seems exactly wrong-headed to me. The

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 3 of 51

big takeaway here should be that the process works when you let it. You see, a bad vaccine—one that isn't safe or doesn't work as well as advertised—did NOT get on the market unchallenged. Instead, when folks who know things got a hold of the data, they were able to spot the errors that were made and alert the rest of us to them so that they could be rectified. Regulators picked up on the problem without any nudging from the public; this will slow the approval process until things are sorted out. This is exactly how science is supposed to work: Someone does a trial, generates data, releases those data. Then outside experts look the data over, spot flaws and point them out. The problems get fixed. This is not a bad thing; it's a good thing. It is what is supposed to happen. And it worked. This should give us more, not less, confidence in the process.

It appears many Americans heeded public health advice to hunker down at home for Thanksgiving, but many of us still were out and about. Overall travel was significantly less than prior years, but nonetheless, around 4.5 million have traveled by air since Sunday. Tens of millions were expected to drive to celebrations. That's not nothing,

A worrying paper from a group at the University of Pittsburgh is available in preprint (not yet peer-reviewed) which seems to show that, in persistent, long-term infections, mutation by deletion of the SARS-CoV-2 virus can result in the emergence of a genetic variant that is antigenically different enough to evade neutralizing antibodies in a host. There's a fair amount to unpack here, so let's do some review.

The instructions for building and operating a virus exist in its nucleic acid, which can be either DNA or RNA, both of which consist of a chain of strung-together pieces called nucleotides, identical to one another except for which of four available nitrogen bases is included. The virus that causes Covid-19 is an RNA virus, so each of its four possible nucleotides will include one of the bases, adenine (A), cytosine (C), guanine (G), or uracil (U). When proteins are made during the construction of a new viral particle, these bases are "read" in sets of three, called codons, by the cellular machinery to specify one of 21 amino acids for each codon; and the sequence of these amino acids which is encoded in the RNA determines the structure of the proteins incorporated into the new virus.

So if a codon in the RNA strand is AAC, the amino acid inserted into the protein at this point will be asparagine, and if the next one is UAC, we'll attach a tyrosine to it. This whole process is critical to assembling functional proteins because protein function depends on its shape, and shape is dependent on amino acid sequence. When there's a substitution of one nucleotide for another, it can change which amino acid is incorporated, and a single amino acid substitution can produce a protein with the wrong shape, which means it's not going to work, or it's going to work very differently. So if we substitute a G for a C and that AAC which is supposed to specify arginine becomes AAG, we're going to see lysine inserted in the place of asparagine, and the resulting protein might bend this way instead of that or fold upward instead of downward, which can cause trouble for the new virus—or occasionally for the virus's host.

Now a whole lot of mutations that substitute one nucleotide for another this way turn out to be fairly unimportant: They don't have any—or much—effect on the shape of the protein they yield, and so everything just keeps going along about the same way it did before. In those cases, the genetic variants they produce are detectable if you sequence the entire genome of the virus, but they are not detectable when you look at how the virus operates. RNA viruses are more susceptible to mutation than DNA viruses, but this particular virus has a built-in proofreading mechanism so that, when substitution mistakes are made in producing new copies of RNA for replicated offspring, they're usually caught and corrected. Some of the time, a substitution mutation results in a virus so damaged it can't survive or infect host cells at all; those die off and are never detected because they don't last long enough to be sampled. And that's how a virus circulates through tens of millions of people worldwide, replicating tens of millions of times in each one of those people, without producing huge numbers of viable variants that cause large amounts of trouble: Most of the time, a mutation doesn't have much effect, it gets fixed, or it kills the virus entirely.

But there is another kind of mutation, not a substitution, but a deletion. This is where a single nucleotide is simply omitted during replication. Think of how much difference it will make if a sequence like CCU AAC UCA GUC GAU, which specifies proline-asparagine-serine-valine-aspartic acid has a deletion of the second

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 4 of 51

nucleotide (C), causing what's called a frame-shift mutation because it shifts the "reading frame" of the protein-making process one nucleotide to the right, yielding the sequence CUA ACU CAG UCG AU. . . . Now, not just one amino acid is changed, but every one of them is because of this reading frame shift, and the sequence specifies the amino acids leucine-threonine-glutamic acid-serine. There's a big difference for you. This kind of mutation is much more likely to get past the replication step in this particular RNA virus because it turns out its proofreading mechanism doesn't catch deletions, only substitutions. Now, it's highly likely a change this profound in a protein is going to yield a virus which is nonfunctional—it's just too different from the original model to work at all; so most of the time the effect of a deletion mutation in the real world is nil.

But genetics is a game of chance, and out of all the billions of billions of times a virus circulating like this one replicates itself, the odds are that, sooner or later, a variant emerges from a process like deletion which isn't less likely to survive, but somehow better suited to the environment in which it finds itself. The more pressure there is on a virus in terms of survival, the more likely a variant like that is to shine. So if everything's going along swimmingly—no troubles and no challenges to survival—the extraordinarily rare variant that makes the virus better at surviving doesn't matter that much. Life is good, so that weird ability to survive in adverse conditions doesn't really confer much survival advantage.

Let's consider, for example, a human who emerges from a mutagenic event perfectly equipped to thrive on half the dietary calories a human adult needs today; that human is no more likely to survive in the US today than one of us old models who needs more calories. (In fact, it might be less likely to survive, given our propensity to consume excess calories to our detriment.) This is because our environment doesn't really exert much nutritional selection pressure on us: There are plenty of calories available to almost every man, woman, and child in the country so that someone equipped to survive on less doesn't really have any advantage over the rest of us. On the other hand, if that same mutation emerged on a desert island with very little plant and animal life available to serve as food, such a mutation would be vastly more successful and would be many times more likely to survive than the old models who need more calories—because now there is selection pressure. So it turns out the selection pressure exerted by the environment plays a big role in which mutations might confer a competitive advantage and therefore survive to reproduce and make more copies of themselves.

Now, let's place a coronavirus in a human who is infected for the short term. The virus replicates for a while, making the person sick; and then the person makes antibodies which attack and destroy the virus. Then he/she gets better. There is selection pressure—those B cells all focused on making the virus go away—but not much time for the virus to mutate and produce an adapted version that might confer a competitive advantage. This is what happens the vast majority of the time; and either the virus beats the immune system to the draw and is successful in making you sick or the immune system wins out and the virus goes away.

Long-term infections are different. Here, because neither the virus nor the immune system is able to make short work of the other, they're exposed to one another for a longer period of time, maybe weeks or even a month. Many more generations of virus have the opportunity to replicate and replicate and replicate. All along, the immune response builds, creating selection pressure on the virus to come up with a game plan for evading those antibodies. This does not increase the likelihood there will be a mutation which is successful at evading antibodies; but it does increase the likelihood a mutation that happens to emerge survives.

And this is what appears to have happened. Remember that the antigenic component of this coronavirus targeted by antibodies which are most successful in neutralizing the threat is in the spike (S) protein, the business end of the virus which binds to and invades host cells. If you produce an antibody against the binding site on that spike, chances are the virus will not be able to attach to and invade your cells. Let's look back (after all this discussion) at the original statement I made about this mutation that has emerged: In persistent, long-term infections, a deletion mutation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus can result (one in a zillion times) in the emergence of a genetic variant that can survive and is antigenically different enough

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 5 of 51

to evade neutralizing antibodies in a host. The mutation has to result in a still-functional S protein (long shot) which is able to bind to those ACE-2 receptors on the host cell and invade cells (longer shot), but is incompatible to the antibodies produced in response to its original-version predecessor (super unlikely). You're sick long enough, you make antibodies; but these aren't successful at ridding you of the virus. Then the virus and you set up a longer-term relationship in which your antibodies exert selection pressure on the virus AND the virus manages to produce a chance mutation which enables it to evade your antibodies. That means the new viral variant can replicate unchecked by your antibodies, and you get damned sick. Also there are now myriad copies of this new variant you can transmit to other folks. So what we're describing here is that off-in-the-cosmos, one-in-ten-zillion chance event that mutation can present, a deletion that somehow alters S protein radically enough to make it unrecognizable to antibodies, but not radically enough that the protein no longer binds to host cells. I don't know how you define miraculous events, but this comes close enough for me.

So what does this all mean to us? It means viral variants seem to be emerging which will not respond well to either immunity developed in response to previous infections or to vaccines developed against the standard-model variants. These are the hallmarks of a virus on its way to becoming endemic in the population. That means it could become persistent, always present at some low level and always ready to result in small outbreaks here and there across the world. It means we need to stay alert to antigenic changes in the virus, much as we do for influenza, so that vaccines can be adapted over time And it means we're probably not going to ever be entirely rid of this thing. Not a great place to be.

Akyra has been in foster care for over 10 years, roughly since she was seven years old—3739 days in all. She has been through 24 foster placements, bounced from family to family, apparently never a year in any one home. That has to take a toll on a kid.

Despite that, her latest foster mom, Katie Holstein, says, "The thing I love about her most is how resilient she is. Even though she's been in foster care so long only to be disappointed, she took a chance on me and my family and letting herself be loved again." She came to Holstein almost two years ago in March, 2019, for respite care, then was back this March. This time she stayed. And stayed.

Holstein started the adoption process for Akyra, saying, "She'd been here for a couple months at that point and I couldn't imagine her not be here." That was apparently true as well for a baby named Thomas, who Holstein adopted on the same day she made it official with Akyra who graduates from high school at the end of this extremely weird school year. She has plans for her future, however weird her senior year. Who can wish either of these two people anything but the best?

Holstein is not rich or extraordinary or famous; she is simply a good person who saw a way to help and took the opportunity to do so. I see inspiration in that. Surely we all have the capacity to offer some sort of an assist to the world at large. Let's do that.

Take care. We'll talk again.

Groton Prairie Mixed

Team Standings: Shih Tzus 12, Cheetahs 10, Jackelopes 6, Chipmunks 4

Men's High Games: Tony Waage 200, Brad Waage 194, Tony Madsen 179

Women's High Games: Michelle Johnson 207, Nicole Kassube 175, 162, Sue Stanley 158

Men's High Series: Brad Waage 525, Ron Belden 506, Tony Waage 474

Women's High Series: Michelle Johnson 477, Nicole Kassube 458, Sue Stanley 417

South Dakota has lowest COVID-19 reproduction rate

by Gabrielle Masson, Becker's Hospital Review

New Hampshire has the highest COVID-19 reproduction rate, while South Dakota has the lowest, according to rt.live.

Rt.live is a website that calculates the rate at which the virus is spreading. Measured by the average number of people who become sick from an infectious person, the site tracks the effective reproduction rate (Rt) of COVID-19 infections. If the value is less than one, the spread of the disease is slowing. The higher the Rt number, the worse the spread.

Editor's note: This list contains ties and is based on data last updated Nov. 26.

11 states with fastest spread of COVID-19

1. New Hampshire — 1.30
2. New Mexico — 1.26
3. Washington — 1.24
4. California — 1.19
Oregon — 1.19
5. Maine — 1.16
6. Arizona — 1.15
Kentucky — 1.15
Louisiana — 1.15
7. Alaska — 1.14
- Wyoming — 1.14

11 states with slowest spread of COVID-19

1. South Dakota — 0.92
2. Illinois — 0.93
3. Iowa — 0.94
4. Mississippi — 0.95
5. North Dakota — 0.96
6. Montana — 0.97
Nebraska — 0.97
7. South Carolina — 0.99
8. Georgia — 1
Minnesota — 1
Wisconsin — 1

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 7 of 51

Groton Area School COVID-19 Report

Groton Area School District

Active COVID-19 Cases

Updated November 23, 2020; 12:03 PM

| JK | KG | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Staff | Total |
|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-------|-------|
| 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 |

Updated November 24, 2020; 12:59 PM

| JK | KG | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Staff | Total |
|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-------|-------|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 |

Updated November 25, 2020; 4:21 PM

| JK | KG | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Staff | Total |
|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-------|-------|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 14 |

Updated November 27, 2020; 8:41 AM

| JK | KG | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | Staff | Total |
|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|-------|-------|
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 9 |

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 8 of 51

Area COVID-19 Cases

| | Nov. 18 | Nov. 19 | Nov. 20 | Nov. 21 | Nov. 22 | Nov. 23 | Nov. 24 |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Minnesota | 236,949 | 242,043 | 249,906 | 256,700 | 262,952 | 270,157 | 276,500 |
| Nebraska | 103,805 | 106,617 | 109,280 | 111,661 | 113,029 | 114,061 | 115,921 |
| Montana | 49,398 | 50,582 | 51,818 | 53,293 | 54,542 | 55,580 | 56,381 |
| Colorado | 172,044 | 176,694 | 182,801 | 188,566 | 194,679 | 198,600 | 202,289 |
| Wyoming | 21,047 | 21,750 | 22,489 | 23,347 | 23,567 | 24,309 | 25,560 |
| North Dakota | 65,967 | 67,230 | 68,612 | 70,016 | 71,540 | 72,683 | 73,397 |
| South Dakota | 67,284 | 68,671 | 69,742 | 71,070 | 72,214 | 73,065 | 73,848 |
| United States | 11,360,125 | 11,530,345 | 11,718,867 | 11,913,945 | 12,090,469 | 12,247,487 | 12,421,216 |
| US Deaths | 248,707 | 250,548 | 252,564 | 254,424 | 255,905 | 256,783 | 257,707 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Minnesota | +5,931 | +5,094 | +7,863 | +6,794 | +6,252 | +7,205 | +6,343 |
| Nebraska | +2,204 | +2,812 | +2,663 | +2,381 | +1,368 | +1,032 | +1,860 |
| Montana | +1,371 | +1,184 | +1,236 | +1,475 | +1,249 | +1,038 | +801 |
| Colorado | +4,331 | +4,650 | +6,107 | +5,765 | +6,113 | +3,921 | +3,689 |
| Wyoming | +1,162 | +703 | +739 | +858 | +220 | +742 | +1,251 |
| North Dakota | +1,082 | 1,263 | +1,382 | +1,404 | +1,524 | +1,143 | +714 |
| South Dakota | +1,006 | +1,387 | +1,071 | +1,328 | +1,144 | +851 | +783 |
| United States | +154,640 | +170,220 | +188,522 | +195,078 | +176,524 | +157,018 | +173,729 |
| US Deaths | +1,487 | +1,841 | +2,016 | +1,860 | +1,481 | +878 | +924 |

| | Nov. 25 | Nov. 26 | Nov. 28 |
|---------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Minnesota | 282,916 | 289,303 | 295,001 |
| Nebraska | 117,682 | 120,076 | 124,066 |
| Montana | 57,504 | 58,565 | 59,796 |
| Colorado | 206,439 | 210,630 | 220,953 |
| Wyoming | 25,975 | 26,677 | 27,597 |
| North Dakota | 74,401 | 75,478 | 77,232 |
| South Dakota | 74,859 | 76,142 | 78,280 |
| United States | 12,597,333 | 12,780,410 | 13,092,661 |
| US Deaths | 259,962 | 262,282 | 264,866 |

| | | | |
|---------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Minnesota | +6,416 | +6,387 | +5,698 |
| Nebraska | +1,761 | +2,294 | +2,990 |
| Montana | +1,123 | +1,061 | +1,231 |
| Colorado | +4,150 | +4,191 | +10,323 |
| Wyoming | +415 | +702 | +920 |
| North Dakota | +1,004 | +1,077 | +1,754 |
| South Dakota | +1,011 | +1,283 | +2,138 |
| United States | +176,117 | +183,077 | +312,251 |
| US Deaths | +2,255 | +2,320 | +2,584 |

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 9 of 51

November 26th-27th COVID-19 UPDATE

Groton Daily Independent from State Health Lab Reports

Hope you all had a great Thanksgiving. The SDDOH took a well-deserved day of yesterday, so today's figures reflect two days worth of data.

Sanford Aberdeen saw an increase of 3 ICU patients and Avera St. Luke's had 2 more ICU patients.

There were 39 deaths recorded in South Dakota the past two days.

Deaths by county: Beadle-3, Brown-2, Clay-1, Codington-4, Corson-1, Davison-2, Day-2, Fall River-1, Grant-1, Gregory-1, Hughes-1, Hutchinson-1, Kingsbury-1, Lincoln-2, McCook-4, Minnehaha-3, Oglala La-kota-1, Pennington-2, Spink-2, Turner-4. There were 20 females and 19 males. Age groups: 40s=1, 60s=6, 70s=12, 80+=20.

Glacial Lakes hospital beds being occupied by COVID-19 patients as well as Minnehaha and Pennington counties: Walworth: 6 (+5) Occupied Beds; Potter: 2 (+0) Occupied Beds; Hughes: 13 (-4) Occupied Beds, 4 (-1) ICU Beds, 3 (+0) Ventilation; Hand: 3 (-0) Occupied Beds; Faulk: 1 (-0) Occupied Beds; Edmunds: 2 (+1) Occupied Bed; McPherson: 1 (+1) Occupied Bed; Brown: 36 (+3) Occupied Beds, 6 (+5) ICU, 1 (-0) Ventilation; Spink: 3 (-1) Occupied Beds; Day: 2 (+1) Occupied Beds; Marshall: 1 (+0) Occupied Beds; Grant: 1 (-2) Occupied Beds; Codington: 7 (-1) Occupied Beds, 1 (-0) ICU, 1 (-0) Ventilation; None (some

counties have no hospitals): Clark, Hyde, Stanley, Sully, Campbell, Roberts; Minnehaha: 285 (+7) Occupied Beds, 64 (-1) ICU, 47 (+10) Ventilation; Pennington: 79 (+0) Occupied Beds, 14 (+1) ICU, 10 (+3) Ventilation.

Brown County:

Total Positive: +120 (3544) Positivity Rate: 15.9%

Total Tests: +595 (27,087)

Total Individuals Tested: +175 (13,620)

Recovered: +41 (2,801)

Active Cases: +77 (723)

Ever Hospitalized: +7 (204)

Deaths: +2 (20)

Percent Recovered: 79.0%

Hospital Reports:

Avera St. Luke's: Covid-19 Occupied 27 (+1); ICU 2 (+2), Ventilation 0 (0).

Sanford Aberdeen: Covid-19 Occupied 9 (+2); ICU 4 (+3), Ventilation 1 (-0)

Sanford Webster: Covid-19 Occupied 2 (+1).

Marshall County Healthcare: Covid-19 Occupied: 2 (+1).

South Dakota:

Positive: +2138 (78,280 total) Positivity Rate: 16.4%

Total Tests: 12,965 (595,909 total)

Total Individuals Tested: 5130 (323,484)

Hospitalized: +110 (4353 total). 569 currently hospitalized -1)

Deaths: +39 (888 total)

Recovered: +1029 (61,010 total)

Active Cases: +1070 (16,382)

Percent Recovered: 77.9%

Total COVID-19 Occupied Beds: 569 (-1), Black Hills Region 119 (-7), Glacial Lakes Region 78 (+1) Sioux Empire Region 304 (+8), South Central Plains 68 (-3).

ICU Units: Total 104 (+3), BH 16 (+1), GL 11 (+4), SE 64 (-1), SCP 13 (-1).

Ventilation: Total 63 (+14), BH 10 (+3), GL 5 (-0), SE 47 (+10), SCP 1 (+1).

Staffed Hospital Bed Capacity: 20% Covid, 45% Non-Covid, 34% Available

ICU Bed Capacity: 47% Covid, 38% non-covid, 15% available.

Staffed Adult + Pediatric ICU Bed Capacity: 72% Occupied, 28% Available

Ventilator Capacity: 15% Covid, 14% Non-Covid, 71% Available

Beadle (28) +37 positive, +32 recovered (475 active cases)

Brookings (16) +71 positive, +22 recovered (430 active cases)

Brown (20): +120 positive, +41 recovered (723 active cases)

Clark (1): +6 positive, +4 recovered (64 active cases)

Clay (10): +42 positive, +16 recovered (269 active cases)

Codington (46): +63 positive, +27 recovered (477 active cases)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 10 of 51

Davison (32): +62 positive, +41 recovered (641 active cases)

Day (7): +24 positive, +7 recovered (115 active cases)

Edmunds (2): +10 positive, +2 recovered (44 active cases)

Faulk (8): +1 positive, +0 recovered (26 active cases)

Grant (11): +22 positive, +4 recovered (153 active cases)

Hanson (1): +19 positive, +1 recovered (82 active cases)

Hughes (18): +39 positive, +20 recovered (344 active cases)

Lawrence (22): +59 positive, +35 recovered (381 active cases)

Lincoln (49): +139 positive, +76 recovered (1075 active cases)

Marshall (3): +6 positive, +3 recovered (56 active cases)

McCook (15): +9 positive, +4 recovered (135 active cases)

McPherson (1): +6 positive, +2 recovery (46 active case)

Minnehaha (172): +552 positive, +225 recovered (3901 active cases)

Pennington (73): +253 positive, +189 recovered (1763 active cases)

Potter (1): +4 positive, +1 recovered (66 active cases)

Roberts (17): +11 positive, +5 recovered (155 active cases)

Spink (14): +14 positive, +6 recovered (116 active cases)

Walworth (11): +11 positive, +4 recovered (119 active cases)

NORTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Daily Report, Nov. 27:

- 13.8% rolling 14-day positivity
- 797 new positives
- 7,302 susceptible test encounters
- 309 currently hospitalized (+7)
- 8,226 active cases (-119)
- 902 total deaths (+5)

Thursday

Global Cases

60,559,702

12,780,410 US

9,266,705 India

6,166,606 Brazil

2,221,874 France

2,169,424 Russia

1,605,066 Spain

1,560,872 United Kingdom

1,480,874 Italy

1,390,388 Argentina

1,270,991 Colombia

1,070,487 Mexico

995,879 Germany

Today

Global Cases

61,765,098

13,092,661 US

9,351,109 India

6,238,350 Brazil

2,248,209 France

2,223,500 Russia

1,628,208 Spain

1,593,260 United Kingdom

1,538,217 Italy

1,407,277 Argentina

1,290,510 Colombia

1,078,594 Mexico

1,038,649 Germany

973,593 Poland

956,347 Peru

Global Deaths

1,424,470

262,282 deaths
US

170,769 deaths
Brazil

135,223 deaths
India

103,597 deaths
Mexico

56,630 deaths
United Kingdom

52,028 deaths
Italy

50,700 deaths
France

46,689 deaths
Iran

Global Deaths

1,445,154

264,866 deaths
US

171,974 deaths
Brazil

136,200 deaths
India

104,242 deaths
Mexico

57,648 deaths
United Kingdom

53,677 deaths
Italy

51,999 deaths
France

47,486 deaths
Iran

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 11 of 51

| County | Positive Cases | Recovered Cases | Negative Persons | Deceased | Community Spread | % RT-PCR Test Positivity Rate (Weekly) |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------|------------------|--|
| Aurora | 352 | 260 | 728 | 3 | Substantial | 29.41% |
| Beadle | 2242 | 1739 | 4623 | 28 | Substantial | 31.43% |
| Bennett | 312 | 259 | 1035 | 5 | Substantial | 20.33% |
| Bon Homme | 1349 | 1195 | 1726 | 14 | Substantial | 38.50% |
| Brookings | 2382 | 1936 | 8637 | 16 | Substantial | 15.98% |
| Brown | 3544 | 2801 | 10076 | 20 | Substantial | 20.21% |
| Brule | 556 | 448 | 1584 | 5 | Substantial | 20.99% |
| Buffalo | 375 | 322 | 815 | 6 | Substantial | 32.61% |
| Butte | 706 | 585 | 2499 | 13 | Substantial | 10.58% |
| Campbell | 103 | 91 | 184 | 1 | Moderate | 28.57% |
| Charles Mix | 827 | 574 | 3315 | 4 | Substantial | 28.29% |
| Clark | 247 | 182 | 766 | 1 | Substantial | 21.02% |
| Clay | 1338 | 1059 | 4062 | 10 | Substantial | 24.87% |
| Codington | 2611 | 2088 | 7477 | 46 | Substantial | 22.71% |
| Corson | 371 | 308 | 831 | 5 | Substantial | 49.23% |
| Custer | 524 | 409 | 2008 | 7 | Substantial | 14.55% |
| Davison | 2354 | 1681 | 5231 | 32 | Substantial | 35.89% |
| Day | 360 | 238 | 1375 | 7 | Substantial | 20.65% |
| Deuel | 297 | 233 | 903 | 2 | Substantial | 25.00% |
| Dewey | 823 | 508 | 3378 | 3 | Substantial | 33.82% |
| Douglas | 289 | 228 | 744 | 5 | Substantial | 18.58% |
| Edmunds | 242 | 196 | 837 | 2 | Substantial | 9.14% |
| Fall River | 357 | 288 | 2074 | 9 | Substantial | 7.02% |
| Faulk | 276 | 242 | 553 | 8 | Substantial | 10.53% |
| Grant | 598 | 434 | 1748 | 11 | Substantial | 31.12% |
| Gregory | 433 | 331 | 956 | 19 | Substantial | 24.58% |
| Haakon | 140 | 117 | 457 | 3 | Substantial | 8.51% |
| Hamlin | 458 | 308 | 1358 | 3 | Substantial | 20.69% |
| Hand | 280 | 209 | 649 | 1 | Substantial | 31.96% |
| Hanson | 254 | 171 | 529 | 1 | Substantial | 46.15% |
| Harding | 71 | 62 | 132 | 0 | Minimal | 14.29% |
| Hughes | 1624 | 1262 | 4857 | 18 | Substantial | 14.50% |
| Hutchinson | 551 | 381 | 1834 | 7 | Substantial | 23.81% |

Groton Daily Independent

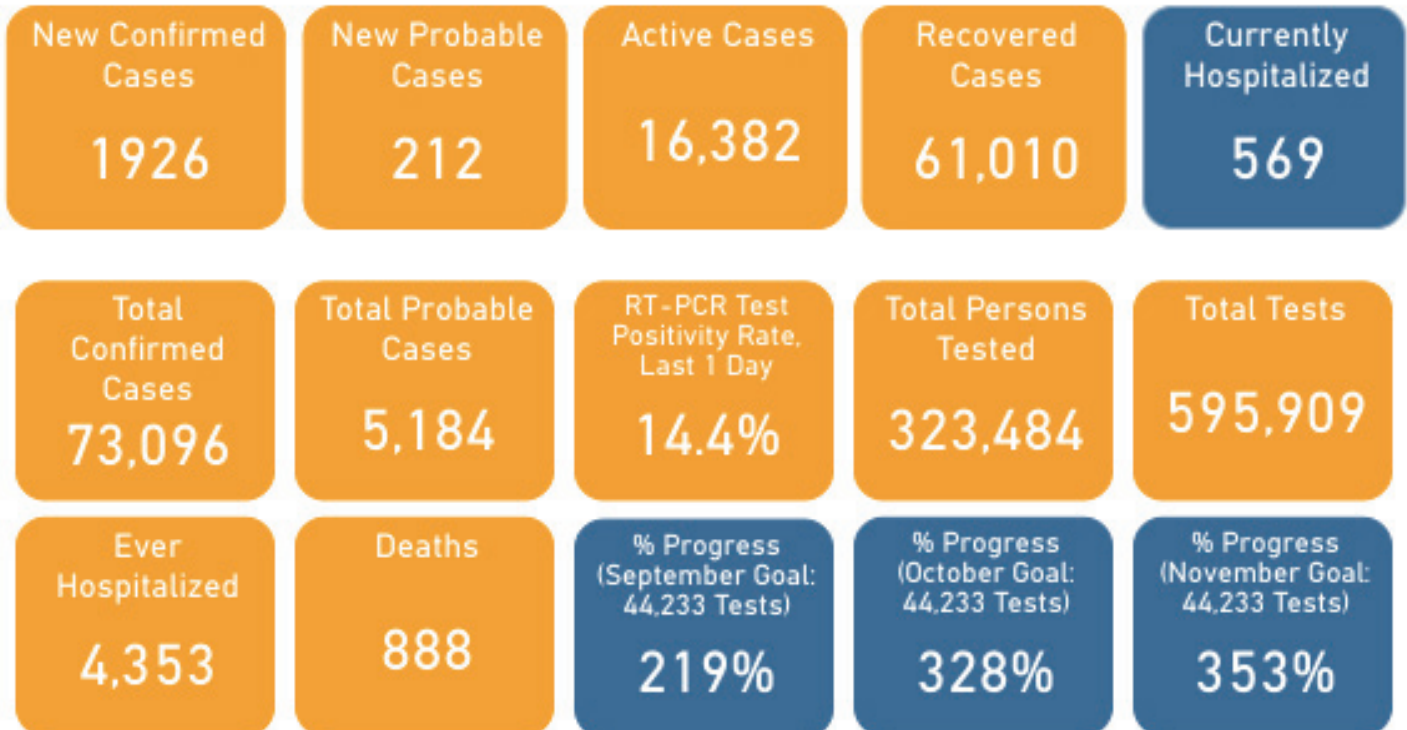
Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 12 of 51

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------------|--------|
| Hyde | 124 | 82 | 338 | 0 | Substantial | 25.53% |
| Jackson | 196 | 156 | 816 | 6 | Substantial | 11.90% |
| Jerauld | 236 | 187 | 436 | 13 | Substantial | 20.69% |
| Jones | 61 | 46 | 150 | 0 | Moderate | 30.30% |
| Kingsbury | 429 | 311 | 1239 | 9 | Substantial | 18.72% |
| Lake | 844 | 632 | 2512 | 10 | Substantial | 18.91% |
| Lawrence | 1966 | 1563 | 6603 | 22 | Substantial | 11.76% |
| Lincoln | 5321 | 4197 | 15453 | 49 | Substantial | 27.09% |
| Lyman | 445 | 355 | 1549 | 8 | Substantial | 24.17% |
| Marshall | 170 | 111 | 894 | 3 | Substantial | 25.78% |
| McCook | 583 | 433 | 1258 | 15 | Substantial | 33.12% |
| McPherson | 146 | 99 | 463 | 1 | Substantial | 12.64% |
| Meade | 1698 | 1354 | 5988 | 13 | Substantial | 13.69% |
| Mellette | 170 | 134 | 618 | 1 | Substantial | 54.55% |
| Miner | 187 | 152 | 463 | 5 | Moderate | 8.82% |
| Minnehaha | 20045 | 15972 | 60627 | 172 | Substantial | 24.52% |
| Moody | 408 | 298 | 1475 | 10 | Substantial | 32.50% |
| Oglala Lakota | 1610 | 1272 | 5925 | 21 | Substantial | 25.95% |
| Pennington | 8375 | 6539 | 29637 | 73 | Substantial | 16.13% |
| Perkins | 186 | 112 | 547 | 2 | Substantial | 49.07% |
| Potter | 260 | 193 | 650 | 1 | Substantial | 12.98% |
| Roberts | 686 | 514 | 3578 | 17 | Substantial | 22.38% |
| Sanborn | 268 | 171 | 540 | 1 | Substantial | 37.25% |
| Spink | 545 | 415 | 1737 | 14 | Substantial | 16.82% |
| Stanley | 226 | 165 | 675 | 0 | Substantial | 19.68% |
| Sully | 91 | 68 | 202 | 3 | Substantial | 23.40% |
| Todd | 924 | 690 | 3596 | 12 | Substantial | 61.54% |
| Tripp | 501 | 373 | 1237 | 2 | Substantial | 33.91% |
| Turner | 772 | 615 | 2108 | 40 | Substantial | 17.80% |
| Union | 1217 | 967 | 4771 | 23 | Substantial | 25.64% |
| Walworth | 466 | 336 | 1443 | 11 | Substantial | 27.57% |
| Yankton | 1706 | 1232 | 7478 | 9 | Substantial | 16.65% |
| Ziebach | 172 | 121 | 600 | 7 | Substantial | 27.27% |
| Unassigned | 0 | 0 | 1617 | 0 | | |

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 13 of 51

South Dakota



AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Age Range | # of Cases | # of Deaths |
|-------------|------------|-------------|
| 0-9 years | 2694 | 0 |
| 10-19 years | 8511 | 0 |
| 20-29 years | 14860 | 2 |
| 30-39 years | 13112 | 9 |
| 40-49 years | 11204 | 17 |
| 50-59 years | 11112 | 53 |
| 60-69 years | 8740 | 113 |
| 70-79 years | 4526 | 189 |
| 80+ years | 3521 | 505 |

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

| Sex | # of Cases | # of Deaths |
|--------|------------|-------------|
| Female | 40856 | 440 |
| Male | 37424 | 448 |

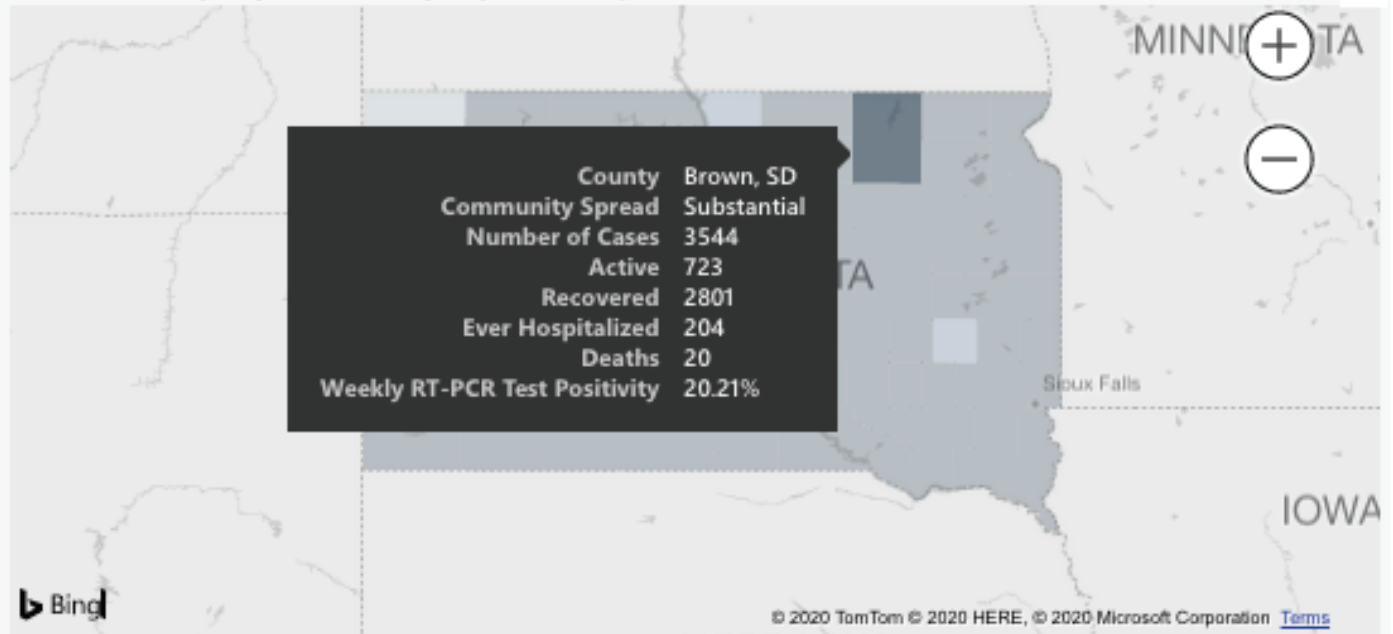
Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 14 of 51

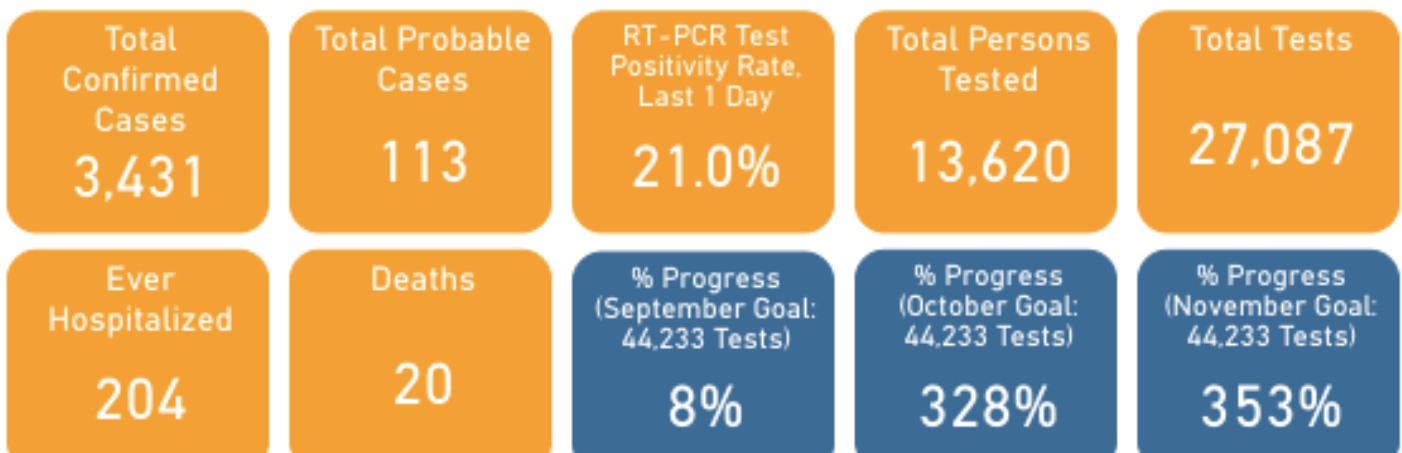
Brown County



Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



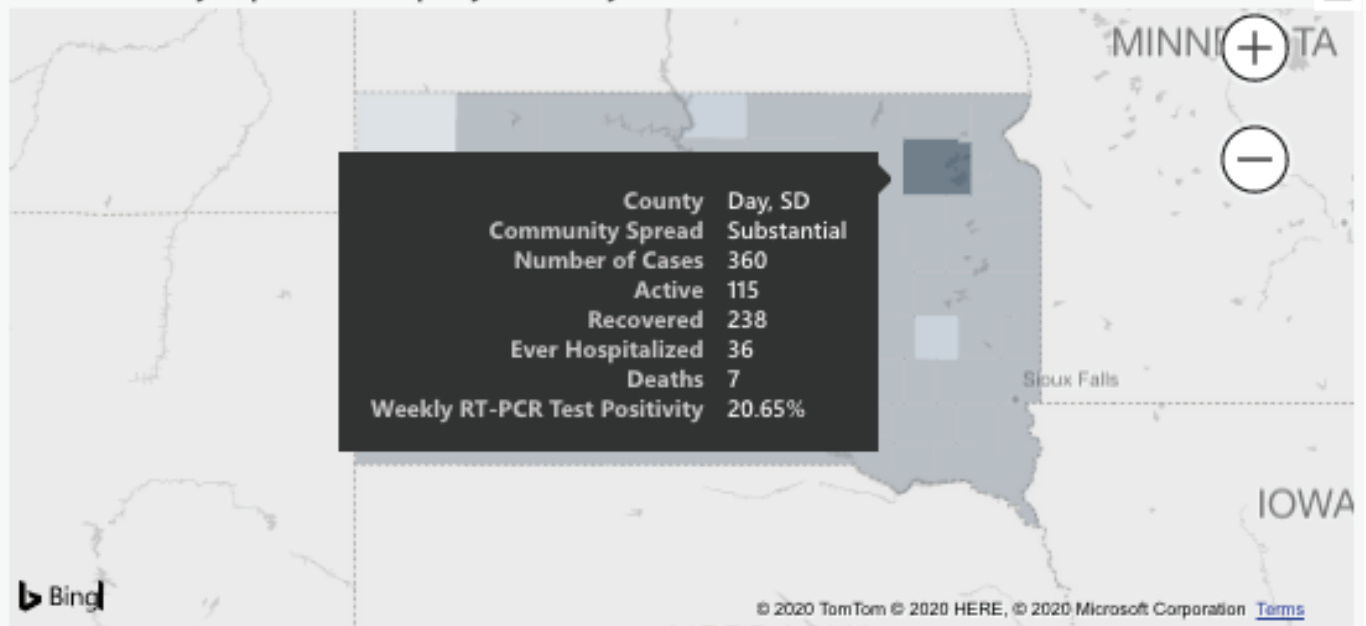
Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 15 of 51

Day County

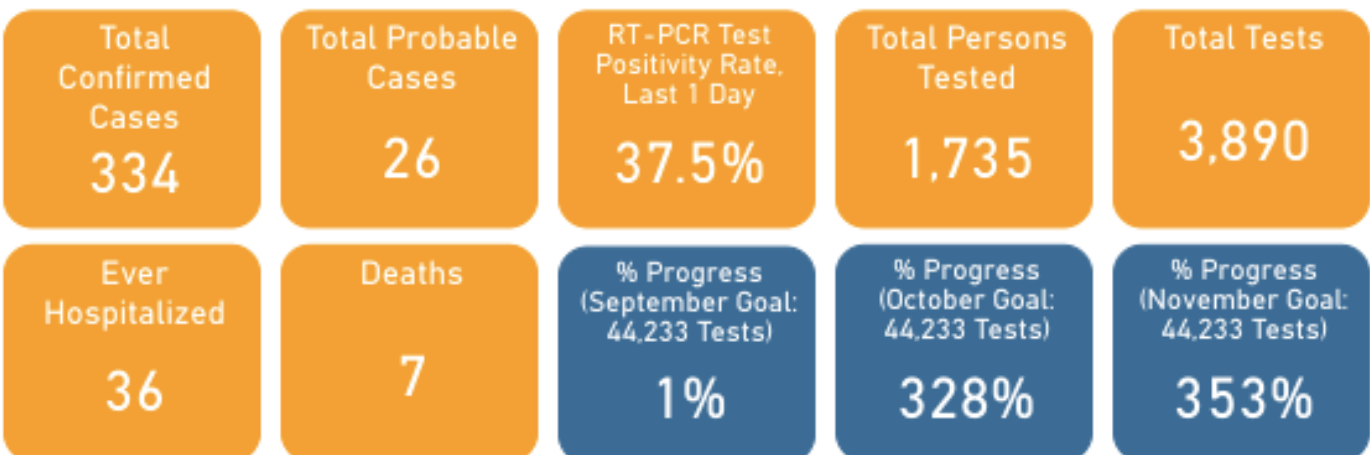


Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Minimal ● Moderate ● Substantial

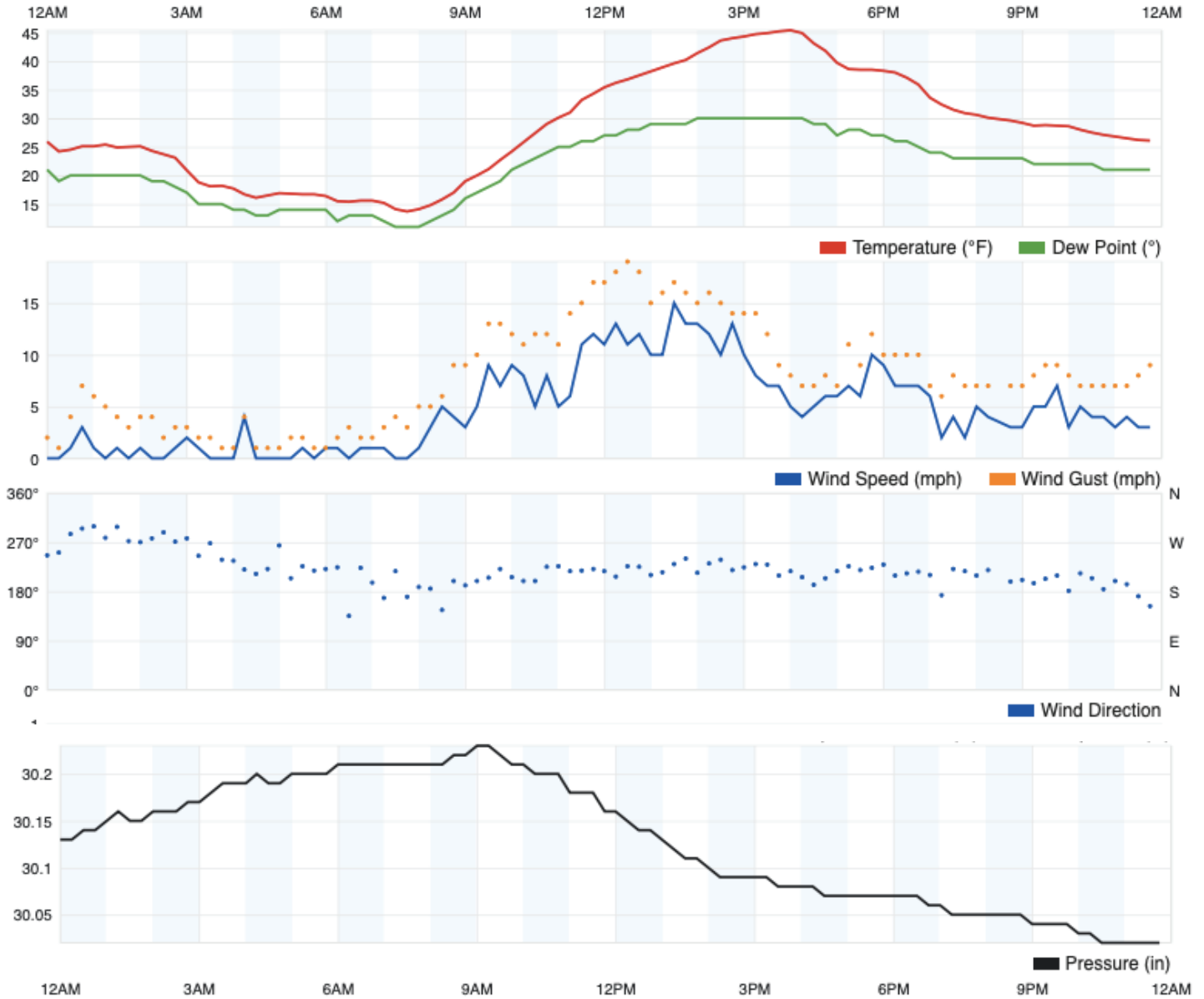
Hover over a county to see its details, or click county to update the orange boxes.



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 16 of 51

Yesterday's Groton Weather



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 17 of 51

Today

Tonight

Sunday

Sunday
Night

Monday



Sunny



Mostly Cloudy
then
Decreasing
Clouds and
Blustery



Sunny and
Breezy



Mostly Clear



Sunny

High: 56 °F

Low: 24 °F

High: 34 °F

Low: 13 °F

High: 37 °F

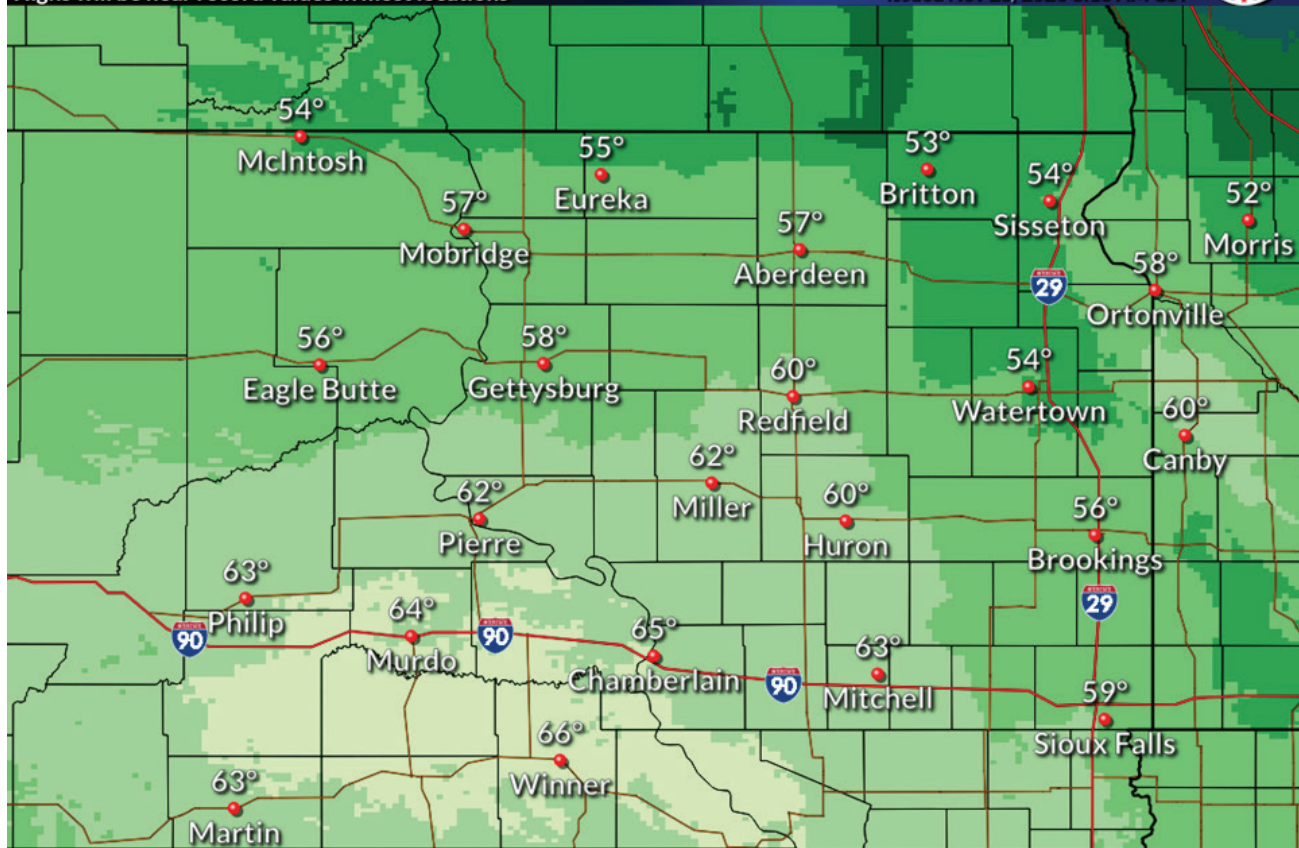
Very Warm Temperatures For This Time of Year

Weather Forecast Office

Aberdeen, SD

Highs will be near record values in most locations

Issued Nov 28, 2020 3:13 AM CST



f t NWSAberdeen

weather.gov/abr

Well above average temperatures remain the norm through Saturday before a cold front drops temperatures to around average for Sunday. Dry conditions remain on tap through the weekend and into early next week. For today, breezy to windy conditions are expected for most of the area.

Groton Daily Independent

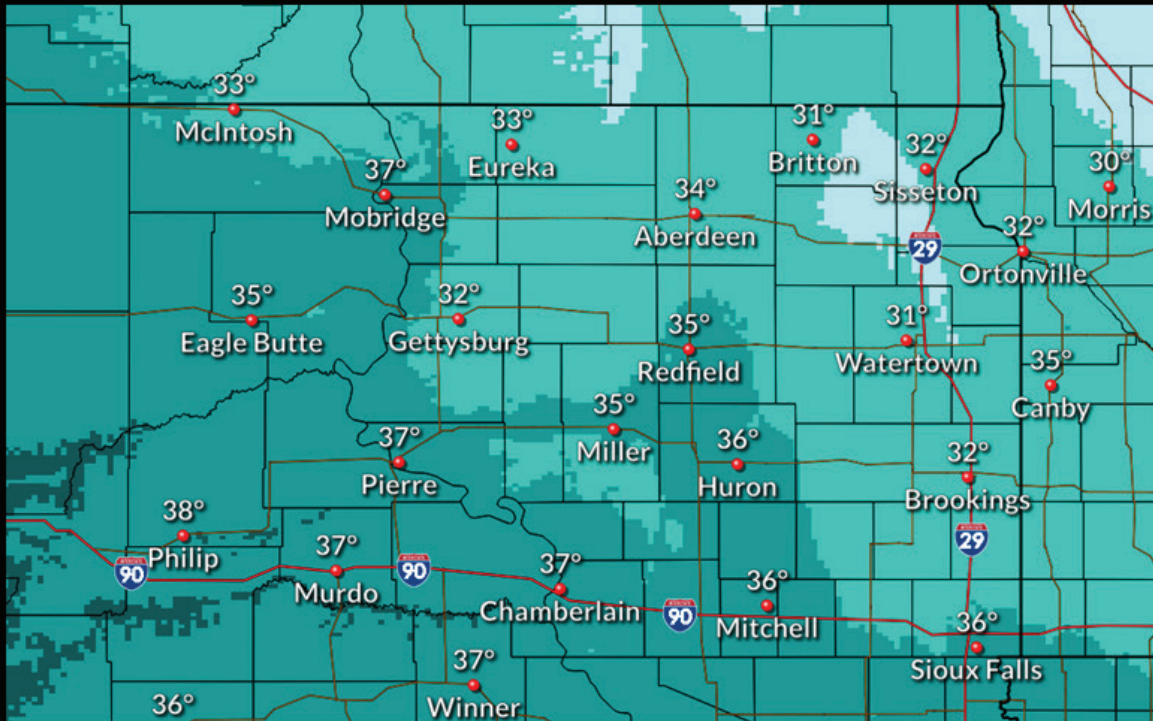
Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 18 of 51

Turning Colder on Sunday Gusty Northwesterly Winds

National Weather Service

 Aberdeen, SD

Updated: 11/27/2020 6:39 PM CT



After a warm Saturday with highs in the 50s and low 60s, a cold front will sweep across the region, dropping temperatures back to seasonal averages.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 19 of 51

Today in Weather History

November 28, 2000: Heavy snow of 6 to 9 inches fell across parts of northeast South Dakota, causing travel difficulties and school closings. Some snowfall amounts included 6 inches at Britton, Roy Lake, Webster, Waubay, Summit, and Wilmot; 8 inches at Columbia and south of Bristol; and 9 inches at Houghton.

November 28, 2005: A significant winter storm visited the region on November 27-29, 2005, producing a wide range of wintry precipitation across the area. Snow and blizzard conditions occurred across central and north central South Dakota, while freezing rain and ice accumulations took front stage in northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota. Across most of central and north central South Dakota, snow began in the late afternoon and early evening hours of the 27th, with significant snowfall accumulations occurring by the time the snow ended later in the day on the 28th. Snowfall accumulations ranged from as little as two inches to as much as 20 inches. Strong northwest winds of 30 to 50 mph, with gusts to 70 mph, caused widespread blizzard conditions from the early morning until the late afternoon hours of the 28th. Visibilities were reduced to zero many times across the area with snowdrifts of 5 to 10 feet in some places. Some power lines were also brought down in the Pierre and Fort Pierre area due to snow accumulation and high winds. Many roads, including Interstate 90, were closed due to the treacherous travel conditions. Several accidents occurred during the storm, and many motorists were also stranded. Several people had to be rescued. Schools, businesses, government offices, and many other organizations were closed. FEMA, state officials, and the governor surveyed the storm damage. Some of the significant snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Eureka, 8 inches at Onaka, 10 inches at Onida and Fort Thompson, 11 inches near Presho, 16 inches at Highmore, and 21 inches at Kennebec. To the east of this heavy snow and blizzard area, widespread freezing rain began during the morning to early afternoon of the 27th, creating significant ice accumulations of 1 to over 2 inches. The freezing rain changed to snow on the 28th, and northwest winds increased to 30 to 40 mph, gusting to 60 mph. The high winds and heavy ice accumulations caused several thousand power poles (some steel), along with several thousand miles of power lines, to come down, resulting in widespread power outages. The ice and winds also damaged several hundred miles of high-voltage power lines and towers. Some power substations were also shut down by the ice and wind. Thousands of trees were also either damaged or downed due to the heavy ice accumulations and the wind. Many of the fallen trees and branches caused damage to homes and vehicles. The radio station in Milbank went off the air due to its collapsing radio tower. Tens of thousands of people in many communities and rural areas were without power for several days, with some people without power for as long as two weeks. Telephone and cellular phone service was also down for several days. Countless schools, businesses, government offices, and other organizations were closed for several days. FEMA, state officials, and the governor also toured this damaged area, resulting in a presidential disaster declaration. Hundreds of utility workers from South Dakota, Minnesota, and nine other surrounding states worked 14- to 18-hour days in cold conditions to bring power back to the area. The National Guard also helped with getting generators, cots, blankets, and meals to storm shelters. Generators supplied power to many communities and rural areas, while others continued without power. Shelters were set up for those who did not have generator power or another place to go. There were also problems with livestock with the water supplies cut off for some time. One electric cooperative stated that repairs to the infrastructure would continue for months and years to restore a system that took decades to build. Roads were treacherous with many accidents and rollovers, some resulting in injuries. Due to the icy road conditions, many roads were closed, including Interstate 29. Around noon on the 27th, on US Highway 212 two miles west of Zell in Faulk County, a 59-year old man was killed when his car spun out of control and hit an oncoming pickup truck. Around 1:30pm on the 28th, on Day County Road One about two miles south of Waubay, a 17-year old girl was killed and three others were injured when one vehicle spun out of control and struck a truck in the oncoming lane. Air traffic was also brought to a halt across much of the area. This was one of the largest ice storms in the region's history. One electric cooperative said it was the most damage they had in their 65 years of existence. After the icing came snowfall of 2 to 12 inches, which combined with the high winds to bring blizzard conditions and low wind chills to northeast South Dakota and west central Minnesota from the morning of the 28th until the early morning of the 29th. Some of the significant snowfall amounts included 7 inches at Watertown, 8 inches at Waubay, 10 inches at Redfield, and 12 inches at Sisseton.

Groton Daily Independent

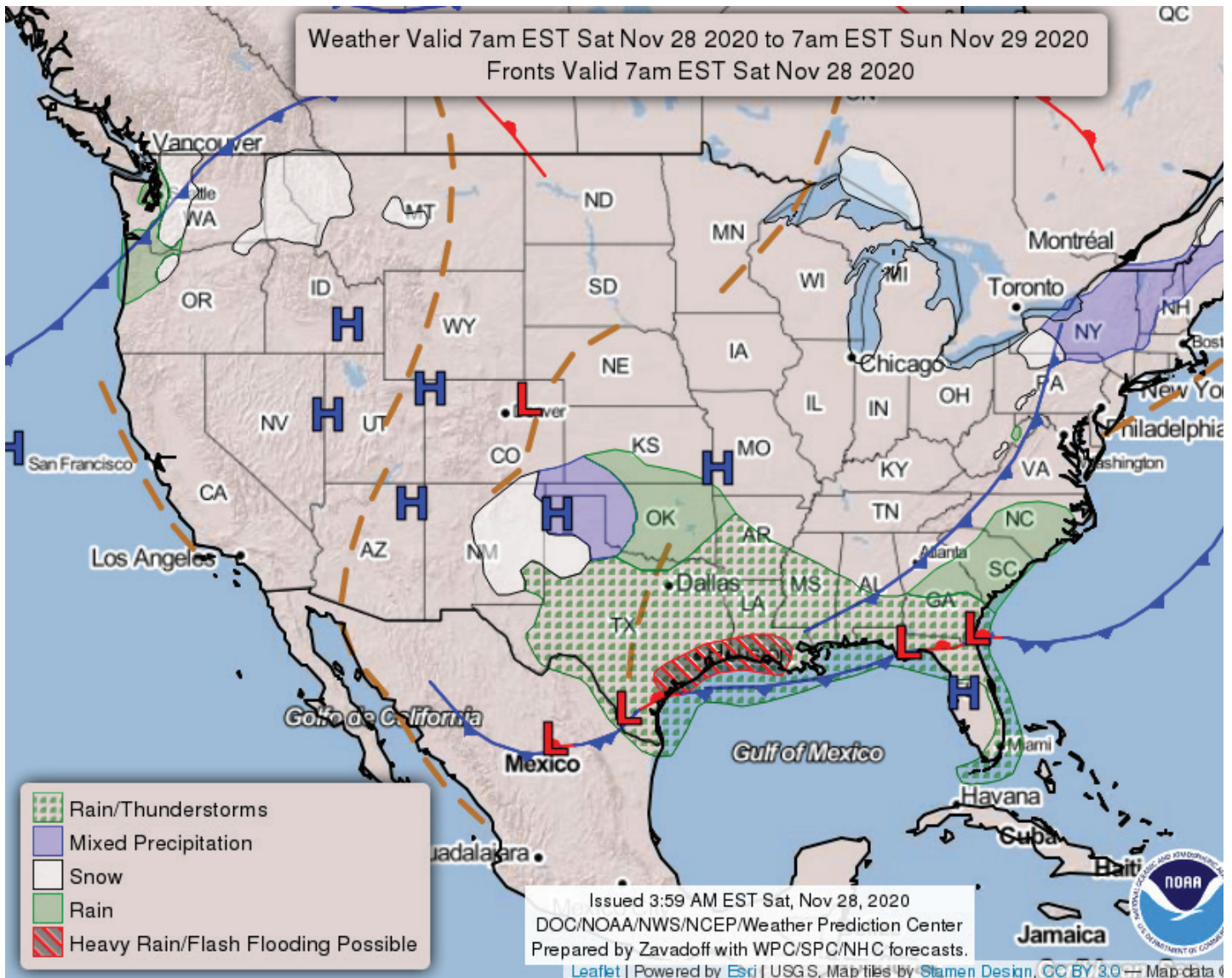
Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 20 of 51

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 45 °F at 3:58 PM
Low Temp: 14 °F at 7:42 AM
Wind: 19 mph at 12:26 PM
Precip: .00

Today's Info

Record High: 59° in 1949
Record Low: -21° in 1985
Average High: 32°F
Average Low: 13°F
Average Precip in Nov.: 0.68
Precip to date in Nov.: 0.18
Average Precip to date: 21.15
Precip Year to Date: 16.52
Sunset Tonight: 4:53 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:52 a.m.



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 21 of 51



WAITING FOR WISDOM

"You know," he said stroking his beard, "I have a problem learning from my past sins."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Most people say they learn from previous experiences - including sins."

"Well," he said with confidence, "I can prove them all wrong."

"How can you do that?" I asked.

"Well," he said, stroking his beard once again. "It's easy. Have you ever committed the same sin twice?"

"Unfortunately, I have," I replied.

And before I could explain what I was talking about, he said with great confidence, "I rest my case."

Repeating the same sin more than once is common in the lives of many Christians. Others often lose sight of what living the Christian life is all about and are not even aware of their sins. Some become careless about their responsibility to live in obedience to God's laws and are unconcerned about their lifestyle. We forget that we are accountable to God for everything we have and do. Perhaps it would be helpful if we took some time to do an inventory of the sins we know we frequently commit. To reflect on our past and its problems may keep us close to God and avoid repeating our sins!

The children of Israel had this problem. Listen to the Psalmist: "But they soon forgot what He had done and did not wait for His counsel." If we focus on the great things God has done for us, and if we seek His counsel and wait for His guidance, we can avoid repeating our sins.

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the great things you have done for us! We want to live a life that honors You and is free from sin. May we look to You for Your power to resist temptation and falling into sin. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: But they soon forgot what He had done and did not wait for His counsel. Psalm 106:13

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 22 of 51

2020 Groton SD Community Events

- **CANCELLED** Groton Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt - City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
- **CANCELLED** Dueling Piano's Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion
- **CANCELLED** Fireman's Fun Night (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- **POSTPONED** Front Porch 605 Rural Route Road Trip
- **CANCELLED** Father/Daughter dance.
- **CANCELLED** Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales, (1st Saturday in May)
- **CANCELLED** Girls High School Golf Meet at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 05/25/2020 Groton American Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services
- 07/04/2020 Firecracker Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/12/2020 Summer Fest/Car Show
- 07/16/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Pro Am Golf Tourney
- 07/24/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Ferney Open Golf Tourney
- 07/25/2020 City-Wide Rummage Sales
- **CANCELLED** State American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
- 08/07/2020 Wine on Nine Event at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 09/12-13/2020 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In at the Groton Airport north of Groton
- 09/12/2020 Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales (1st Sat. after Labor Day)
- 09/13/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Couples Sunflower Classic
- 10/09/2020 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
- 10/10/2020 Pumpkin Fest (Saturday before Columbus Day)
- 10/30/2020 Downtown Trick or Treat
- 10/30/2020 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat
- **CANCELLED** Groton Legion Annual Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
- 11/26/2020 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center
- 12/05/2020 Olive Grove Golf Course Tour of Homes & Holiday Party
- 12/05/2020 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services
- 01/--/2021 83rd Annual Carnival of Silver Skates

News from the Associated Press

Pandemic forces missionaries to do their work at home

By TRENT ABREGO Aberdeen American News

ABERDEEN, S.D. (AP) — Missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints typically serve across the globe, but COVID-19 has thrown up obstacles and forced relocations of missionaries.

Since the pandemic began, missionaries who were serving in different countries were forced to return to their home country. In total, the church had more than 75,000 missionaries across 407 missions.

Once COVID-19 caused relocations, missionaries were given the opportunity to opt out, end their missionary work and wait a year. In total, there were about 25,000 missionaries that took the opportunity, according to North Dakota Bismarck Mission President Scott Howell.

During missionary assignments, the elders and sisters both work in communities. The brothers serve for two years, while the sisters serve for 18 months, the Aberdeen American News reported.

"It's been a unique time for these young people, they are all volunteers. They put aside their education, their girlfriends or boyfriends, everything for two years." Lori Howell, Scott's wife said. "I just thought it was wonderful to see so many who want to come back out and serve."

In the North Dakota Bismarck Mission, which serves North Dakota, South Dakota and parts of Minnesota, Montana and Nebraska, there are currently 122 missionaries on 80 different missions.

Of those in the North Dakota Bismarck Mission, 43 missionaries are from different countries and 23 languages are spoken among the group.

In Aberdeen, there are six missionaries from across the United States from California to Kentucky. Before the relocation, the missionaries served in New Zealand, Mexico, Samoa, Honduras and Brazil.

In a typical year, Aberdeen usually has one or two missionaries, according to Elder Zachary Matthews, the North Dakota Bismarck Mission Communication Specialist.

Community service projects have been a big part of the Aberdeen missionaries.

"We've volunteered at thrift stores, both Salvation Army and Kids Against Hunger," Sister Baldwin, a missionary in Aberdeen said. "We have also had the opportunity to work with the local Girl Scouts group and other miscellaneous service projects such as painting and yard work."

Since COVID-19, missionaries are unable to go door-to-door to spread their word, so they had to get creative.

"We've been spending a lot of our time doing service in the communities, working with the food banks, doing services for individuals and even making masks," Matthews said.

Missionaries are also working on a family history project and are posting pictures of graves onto a website database, billiongraves.com, so people can discover their genealogy. Currently, the missionaries have taken pictures of upwards to 200,000 graves, according to Scott Howell.

Missionaries have also been active in the Dickinson, North Dakota area – where they help ranchers and farmers and even guide pheasant hunters.

There has also been an increase in social media use by getting their word out through platforms like Facebook, Instagram and even Twitter.

"We're learning there's a lot more effective means (social media) of finding those who are ready to hear this message," Matthews said. "Here in North Dakota or South Dakota, we're able to find the people we need to find through social media."

While COVID-19 has changed how the Church of Latter-Day Saints operates, it doesn't mean they are doing less work – in fact, they are busier.

"We're actually starting to be busier than we were before COVID-19, as we're learning new ways to do missionary work," Matthews said.

It doesn't show signs of slowing down anytime soon, either.

"We're getting brand new missionaries that we're going to have to train in the Dakotas, and hopefully

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 24 of 51

next year they can eventually go to the countries that they were assigned," Howell said.

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

PIERRE, S.D. (AP) — These South Dakota lotteries were drawn Friday:

Mega Millions

04-10-27-35-58, Mega Ball: 10, Megaplier: 2

(four, ten, twenty-seven, thirty-five, fifty-eight; Mega Ball: ten; Megaplier: two)

Estimated jackpot: \$214 million

Powerball

Estimated jackpot: \$216 million

Williams, Curry help VCU beat cold-shooting Memphis 70-59

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Vince Williams Jr. scored 15 points, KeShawn Curry added 12, and VCU beat cold-shooting Memphis 70-59 on Friday night to finish third at the Bad Boy Mowers Crossover Classic.

Williams, who made just 6 of 30 from 3-point range last season, hit 3 of 5 from behind the arc. He is 6 of 13 from deep this season. Nah'Shon Hyland scored 12 points — all in the second half — for VCU (2-1) and sophomore Hason Ward had nine points, a career-high seven rebounds and two blocks.

Williams sandwiched a pair of 3-pointers around a layup and a dunk by Ward in a 10-0 run that gave VCU a 16-point lead with 11 minutes to play. The Tigers responded by scoring 10 of the next 12 points trim their deficit to 55-47 when Boogie Ellis hit a 3 with 8:11 remaining but they got no closer.

D.J. Jeffries led Memphis (1-2) with 17 points on 6-of-15 shooting. Lester Quinones added 11 points and Ellis scored 10.

The Rams had nine steals and scored 25 points off 19 Memphis turnovers.

The Tigers shot just 35% (20 of 57) from the field and hit just 6 of 23 from 3-point range.

It was the third game in as many days for both teams.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Ducas lifts Saint Mary's (Cal) over S. Dakota St. 72-59

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Alex Ducas had a career-high 25 points as Saint Mary's got past South Dakota State 72-59 on Friday at the Bad Boy Mowers Crossover Classic.

Jabe Mullins had 15 points for Saint Mary's (2-1). Matthias Tass added 10 points. Tommy Kuhse had seven assists.

Noah Freidel had 22 points for the Jackrabbits (1-2). Alex Arians added 11 points and seven rebounds. Douglas Wilson had eight rebounds.

Baylor Scheierman, whose 19.0 points per game entering the contest led the Jackrabbits, had six points on 3-of-10 shooting.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

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Culver leads No. 15 West Virginia past Western Kentucky

STIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — West Virginia rallied from a 10-point second-half deficit against Western Ken-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 25 of 51

tucky and had to hold off a frenzied rally down the stretch to win the Bad Boy Mowers Crossover Classic.

The 15th-ranked Mountaineers (3-0) led 66-57 with just under three minutes to play before Western Kentucky (2-1) cut it to four in the final minute. It looked like the Hilltoppers would get the ball back, down four, after a scramble for a rebound out of bounds was given to Western Kentucky. The call was reversed after a replay review and West Virginia made free throws down the stretch to seal the win.

Derek Culver, who was named MVP of the tournament, scored 15 points to lead West Virginia. Miles McBride had 14 points and Taz Sherman scored 12.

McBride finished the tournament as West Virginia's leading scorer at 16.3 points per game during wins over South Dakota State, VCU and Western Kentucky. He also finished with 10 assists over the three games.

"I'm really just trying to let the game come to me and just hoping the shots come," McBride said. "Coach tells me to shoot them, and I shoot with a lot of confidence. If the shot's there, I'm going to take it."

Charles Bassey scored 15 points to lead Western Kentucky, which led by three at halftime and used a quick 9-2 run to start the second half to build the 10-point lead. Taveion Hollingsworth scored five points during the run and finished with 13.

Following a basket by Bassey to make it 45-35, West Virginia coach Bob Huggins called timeout. Culver then converted a three-point play, and after Western Kentucky battled back for a 50-41 lead, West Virginia went on a 23-5 run.

"I think we took some things for granted and didn't play as hard," Huggins said. "We talked to them at halftime about how much harder we have to play and how much better we need to execute what we're doing."

The first half featured six ties and 12 lead changes.

BIG PICTURE

West Virginia once again had the advantage on the glass. The Mountaineers won the rebounding battle 36-30, including 11 offensive boards. Over the three-day tournament, West Virginia outrebounded its opponents 126-103, including a 51-38 edge on the offensive end.

HE SAID IT

"There's not a team in the country on that back line that's as physical, and as big, and as strong as West Virginia," Western Kentucky coach Rick Stansbury said. "They present so many problems for 40 minutes of the game."

STAR WATCH

Bassey had a big second half after getting into foul trouble early. He picked up his second foul just four minutes into the game and sat for the remainder of the half. He had 13 points on 6-of-10 shooting and seven rebounds in the second half.

UP NEXT

Western Kentucky: At Louisville on Tuesday.

West Virginia: Plays No. 1 Gonzaga at the Jimmy V Classic in Indianapolis on Wednesday.

More AP college basketball: <https://apnews.com/hub/college-basketball> and https://twitter.com/AP_Top25

Yesufu scores 14 to carry Drake over South Dakota 69-53

MANHATTAN, Kan. (AP) — Joseph Yesufu had 14 points off the bench to lead Drake to a 69-53 win over South Dakota on Friday in the Little Apple Classic

Shanquan Hemphill and Garrett Sturtz added 13 points apiece for Drake (2-0), which knocked off Kansas State by 10 in its opener.

A.J. Plitzuweit had 14 points for the Coyotes (0-2). Stanley Umude added 10 points and six rebounds. Nikola Zizic had eight rebounds.

Drake takes on Loyola of Chicago on the road next Wednesday. South Dakota plays Nebraska on the road on Tuesday.

For more AP college basketball coverage: <https://apnews.com/Collegebasketball> and http://twitter.com/AP_Top25

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South Dakota reports 39 virus deaths from 2-day stretch

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota on Friday reported 39 deaths from COVID-19, pushing the state to record more deaths in November than all other months of the pandemic combined.

The state's tally of COVID-19 deaths stands at 888 after the Department of Health reported the death records from a two-day period stretching over the Thanksgiving holiday. The total number of deaths has more than doubled since November began, with 463 reported this month.

The state currently has a death rate of about 100.7 deaths per 100,000 people. As of Friday morning, the state's death toll was the 41st highest in the country overall, but the 11th highest per capita, according to Johns Hopkins.

Health officials also reported that 2,138 people have tested positive for the coronavirus since Wednesday. The state has seen a downward tick in new cases over the last two weeks, but health officials are concerned that holiday gatherings could lead to a renewed surge in infections.

The state has already reported the nation's third-highest number of new cases per capita in the last two weeks. One in every 138 people in the state tested positive in the past week.

Hospitalizations from the virus remained mostly steady over the holiday, with 569 people in the state's hospitals.

Man charged in fatal Rapid City shooting of 19-year-old

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — A Rapid City man has been charged in a fatal shooting at a mobile home in the city.

The Rapid City Journal reports 43-year-old Jason Ray Sharp is charged with second-degree murder in the shooting death of 19-year-old Ocean Sun Eberlein of Rapid City.

The Pennington County Sheriff's Office said the shooting occurred Tuesday at a mobile home on Highway 16.

Authorities said the shooting was reported around 10:37 p.m. on Tuesday by a neighbor who heard gunfire.

Authorities said Eberlein was taken to a hospital, where he died. Deputies found Sharp at the scene.

It's unclear whether the suspect and victim knew each other.

Sharp is scheduled for an initial court appearance Monday morning. No attorney is listed for him. Court documents have not to be filed.

Iran's supreme leader vows revenge over slain scientist

By AMIR VAHDAT and JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Iran's supreme leader on Saturday called for the "definitive punishment" of those behind the killing of a scientist linked to Tehran's disbanded military nuclear program, a slaying the Islamic Republic has blamed on Israel.

Israel, long suspected of killing scientists a decade ago amid tensions over Tehran's nuclear program, has yet to comment on the killing Friday of Mohsen Fakhrazadeh. However, the attack bore the hallmarks of a carefully planned, military-style ambush.

The slaying threatens to renew tensions between the U.S. and Iran in the waning days of President Donald Trump's term, just as President-elect Joe Biden has suggested his administration could return to Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers from which Trump earlier withdrew. The Pentagon announced early Saturday that it sent the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier back into the Mideast.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 27 of 51

In a statement, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called Fakhrizadeh "the country's prominent and distinguished nuclear and defensive scientist."

Khamenei said Iran's first priority after the killing was the "definitive punishment of the perpetrators and those who ordered it." He did not elaborate.

Speaking to a meeting of his government's coronavirus task force earlier Saturday, President Hassan Rouhani blamed Israel for the killing.

Rouhani said that Fakhrizadeh's death would not stop its nuclear program, something Khamenei said as well. Iran's civilian nuclear program has continued its experiments and now enriches uranium up to 4.5%, far below weapons-grade levels of 90%.

But analysts have compared Fakhrizadeh to being on a par with Robert Oppenheimer, the scientist who led the U.S.' Manhattan Project in World War II that created the atom bomb.

"We will respond to the assassination of Martyr Fakhrizadeh in a proper time," Rouhani said.

He added: "The Iranian nation is smarter than falling into the trap of the Zionists. They are thinking to create chaos."

Friday's attack happened in Absard, a village just east of the capital that is a retreat for the Iranian elite. Iranian state television said an old truck with explosives hidden under a load of wood blew up near a sedan carrying Fakhrizadeh.

As Fakhrizadeh's sedan stopped, at least five gunmen emerged and raked the car with rapid fire, the semiofficial Tasnim news agency said.

Fakhrizadeh died at a hospital after doctors and paramedics couldn't revive him. Others wounded included Fakhrizadeh's bodyguards. Photos and video shared online showed a Nissan sedan with bullet holes in the windshield and blood pooled on the road.

Hours after the attack, the Pentagon announced it had brought the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier back into the Middle East, an unusual move as the carrier already spent months in the region. It cited the drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq as the reason for the decision, saying "it was prudent to have additional defensive capabilities in the region to meet any contingency."

The attack comes just days before the 10-year anniversary of the killing of Iranian nuclear scientist Majid Shahriari that Tehran also blamed on Israel. That and other targeted killings happened at the time that the so-called Stuxnet virus, believed to be an Israeli and American creation, destroyed Iranian centrifuges.

Those assaults occurred at the height of Western fears over Iran's nuclear program. Tehran long has insisted its program is peaceful. However, Fakhrizadeh led Iran's so-called AMAD program that Israel and the West have alleged was a military operation looking at the feasibility of building a nuclear weapon. The International Atomic Energy Agency says that "structured program" ended in 2003.

IAEA inspectors monitor Iranian nuclear sites as part of the now-unraveling nuclear deal with world powers, which saw Tehran limit its enrichment of uranium in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

After Trump's 2018 withdrawal from the deal, Iran has abandoned all those limits. Experts now believe Iran has enough low-enriched uranium to make at least two nuclear weapons if it chose to pursue the bomb. Meanwhile, an advanced centrifuge assembly plant at Iran's Natanz nuclear facility exploded in July in what Tehran now calls a sabotage attack.

Fakhrizadeh, born in 1958, had been sanctioned by the U.N. Security Council and the U.S. for his work on AMAD. Iran always described him as a university physics professor. A member of the Revolutionary Guard, Fakhrizadeh had been seen in pictures in meetings attended by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a sign of his importance in Iran's theocracy.

In recent years, U.S. sanctions lists name him as heading Iran's Organization for Defensive Innovation and Research. The State Department described that organization last year as working on "dual-use research and development activities, of which aspects are potentially useful for nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons delivery systems."

Iran's mission to the U.N., meanwhile, described Fakhrizadeh's recent work as "development of the first indigenous COVID-19 test kit" and overseeing Tehran's efforts at making a possible coronavirus vaccine.

Gambrell reported from Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Iran scientist linked to military nuclear program killed

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — An Iranian scientist named by the West as the leader of the Islamic Republic's disbanded military nuclear program was killed Friday in an ambush on the outskirts of Tehran, authorities said.

Iran's foreign minister alleged the killing of Mohsen Fakhrizadeh bore "serious indications" of an Israeli role, but did not elaborate. Israel, long suspected of killing several Iranian nuclear scientists a decade ago, declined to immediately comment. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu once told the public to "remember that name" when talking about Fakhrizadeh.

The killing risks further raising tensions across the Mideast, nearly a year after Iran and the U.S. stood on the brink of war when an American drone strike killed a top Iranian general in Baghdad. It comes just as President-elect Joe Biden stands poised to be inaugurated in January and will likely complicate his efforts to return America to a pact aimed at ensuring Iran does not have enough highly enriched uranium to make a nuclear weapon.

That deal, which saw Iran limit its uranium enrichment in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions, has entirely unraveled after President Donald Trump withdrew from the accord in 2018.

Trump himself retweeted a posting from Israeli journalist Yossi Melman, an expert on the Israeli Mossad intelligence service, about the killing. Melman's tweet called the killing a "major psychological and professional blow for Iran."

Details about the slaying remained slim in the hours after the attack, which happened in Absard, a village just east of the capital that is a retreat for the Iranian elite. Iranian state television said an old truck with explosives hidden under a load of wood blew up near a sedan carrying Fakhrizadeh.

As Fakhrizadeh's sedan stopped, at least five gunmen emerged and raked the car with rapid fire, the semiofficial Tasnim news agency said.

Fakhrizadeh died at a hospital after doctors and paramedics couldn't revive him. Others wounded included Fakhrizadeh's bodyguards. Photos and video shared online showed a Nissan sedan with bullet holes in the windshield and blood pooled on the road.

While no one claimed responsibility for the attack, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif pointed the finger at Israel, calling the killing an act of "state terror."

"Terrorists murdered an eminent Iranian scientist today. This cowardice — with serious indications of Israeli role — shows desperate warmongering of perpetrators," Zarif wrote on Twitter.

Hossein Dehghan, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader and a presidential candidate in Iran's 2021 election, also blamed Israel — and issued a warning.

"In the last days of their gambling ally's political life, the Zionists seek to intensify and increase pressure on Iran to wage a full-blown war," Dehghan wrote, appearing to refer to Trump's last days in office. "We will descend like lightning on the killers of this oppressed martyr and we will make them regret their actions!"

Hours after the attack, the Pentagon announced it already had brought the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier back into the Middle East, an unusual move as the carrier already spent months in the region. It cited the drawdown of U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Iraq as the reason for the decision, saying "it was prudent to have additional defensive capabilities in the region to meet any contingency."

The attack comes just days before the 10-year anniversary of the killing of Iranian nuclear scientist Majid Shahriari that Tehran also blamed on Israel. That and other targeted killings happened at the time that the so-called Stuxnet virus, believed to be an Israeli and American creation, destroyed Iranian centrifuges.

The area around Absard, which has a view of Mount Damavand, the country's highest peak, is filled with vacation villas. Roads on Friday, part of the Iranian weekend, were emptier than normal due to a lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic, offering his attackers a chance to strike with fewer people around.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 29 of 51

Fakhrizadeh led Iran's so-called AMAD program that Israel and the West have alleged was a military operation looking at the feasibility of building a nuclear weapon. Tehran long has maintained its nuclear program is only for civilian purposes.

The International Atomic Energy Agency says Iran "carried out activities relevant to the development of a nuclear explosive device" in a "structured program" through the end of 2003. That was the AMAD program, which included work on the carefully timed high explosives needed to detonate an implosion-style nuclear bomb.

Iran also "conducted computer modeling of a nuclear explosive device" before 2005 and between 2005 and 2009, the IAEA has said. The agency said, however, that those calculations were "incomplete and fragmented."

IAEA inspectors now monitor Iranian nuclear sites as part of the now-unraveling nuclear deal with world powers. Experts believe Iran has enough low-enriched uranium to make at least two nuclear weapons if it chose to pursue the bomb. Meanwhile, an advanced centrifuge assembly plant at Iran's Natanz nuclear facility exploded in July in what Tehran now calls a sabotage attack.

Fakhrizadeh, born in 1958, had been sanctioned by the U.N. Security Council and the U.S. for his work on AMAD. Iran always described him as a university physics professor. A member of the Revolutionary Guard, Fakhrizadeh had been seen in pictures in meetings attended by Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a sign of his power.

In recent years, U.S. sanctions lists name him as heading Iran's Organization for Defensive Innovation and Research. The State Department described that organization last year as working on "dual-use research and development activities, of which aspects are potentially useful for nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons delivery systems."

Iran's mission to the U.N., meanwhile, described Fakhrizadeh's recent work as "development of the first indigenous COVID-19 test kit" and overseeing Tehran's efforts at making a possible coronavirus vaccine.

In 2018, Netanyahu gave a presentation in which he unveiled what he described as material stolen by Israel from an Iranian nuclear archive.

"A key part of the plan was to form new organizations to continue the work," Netanyahu alleged. "This is how Dr. Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, head of Project AMAD, put it. Remember that name, Fakhrizadeh."

Associated Press writers Amir Vahdat and Mohammad Nasiri in Tehran, Iran, and Deb Riechmann in Washington contributed to this report.

Los Angeles orders more restrictions as coronavirus surges

By BRIAN MELLEY Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Los Angeles County announced a new stay-home order Friday as coronavirus cases surged out of control in the nation's most populous county, banning most gatherings but stopping short of a full shutdown on retail stores and other non-essential businesses.

The three-week "safer at home" order takes effect Monday. It came as the county of 10 million residents confirmed 24 new deaths and 4,544 new confirmed cases of COVID-19.

The county had set a threshold for issuing the stay-home order: an average of 4,500 cases a day over a five-day period, but hadn't expected to reach that level until next month.

However, the five-day average of new cases reported Friday was 4,751.

"We know we are asking a lot from so many who have been sacrificing for months on end," Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer said. "Acting with collective urgency right now is essential if we want to put a stop to this surge."

The order advises residents to stay home "as much as possible" and to wear a face covering when they go out. It bans people from gathering with others who aren't in their households, whether publicly or privately.

However, exceptions are made for church services and protests, "which are constitutionally protected

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 30 of 51

rights," the county Department of Public Health said in a statement.

Indoor retail businesses, which make much of their profits during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday seasons, are allowed to remain open but with just 20% of capacity, including nail salons and other personal care services.

Stores considered essential will be allowed 35% capacity. Outdoor fitness centers, museums and outdoor amusements such as mini-golf can operate at 50% of capacity.

Restaurants in the county already were recently barred from in-person dining. They can still offer pickup, delivery and takeout services.

Beaches, trails, and parks will remain open, with safety requirements.

Schools and day camps can remain open except for those that have three or more COVID-19 cases over 14 days. Those should close for 14 days, the order said.

The order, which runs through Dec. 20, is more modest than a statewide closure order issued by Gov. Gavin Newsom in mid-March. That order closed schools and most businesses and severely restricted movement except for essential workers or to perform essential chores such as buying groceries or picking up medications.

The restrictions are said to have slowed the spread of COVID-19 and some restrictions were eased but the caseload picked up again in summer and in recent weeks has surged to record levels throughout most of the state — as well as throughout most states in the country.

Daily cases numbers in California have set records in recent days. Hospitalizations statewide have increased more than 80% in the last two weeks. Nearly 2,000 people in the county are now hospitalized and the new order is part of an effort to prevent the county's health system from being overwhelmed.

Meanwhile, public health officials are bracing for a wave of cases that could follow gatherings at Thanksgiving. Officials say it usually takes two to three weeks for such serious cases to show but about 12% of those infected could wind up hospitalized.

Despite its reputation for sprawl, Los Angeles has some of the densest neighborhoods in the U.S. Many of those areas have multi-generational households where workers who don't have the luxury to telecommute are exposed to the virus at work or on public transportation and spread it to family members.

Case numbers in those communities have been higher and the virus has disproportionately affected more Latinos and Black people.

With infections out of control, the other options for public officials to take are even more onerous and unlikely to be enacted in the U.S., said Dr. George Rutherford, an epidemiologist at the University of California, San Francisco.

China, for example, tested millions of people and enforced quarantines. Italy brought in the military to enforce a shutdown.

"It's hard to imagine how much further you can go in a society like we have," he said. "It's a balancing act, right? You want people to obey it but you don't want to make it so draconian that people are trying to figure out ways around it all the time."

Virus keeps Black Friday crowds thin, shoppers shift online

By ALEXANDRA OLSON, ANNE D'INNOCENZIO and JOSEPH PISANI AP Retail Writers

NEW YORK (AP) — The raging coronavirus pandemic kept crowds thin at malls and stores across the country on Black Friday, but a surge in online shopping offered a beacon of hope for struggling retailers after months of slumping sales and businesses toppling into bankruptcy.

In normal times, Black Friday is the busiest shopping day of the year, drawing millions of people eager to get started on their holiday spending.

But these are not normal times: A spike in coronavirus cases is threatening the economy's fitful recovery from the sudden plunge in the spring. Crowds at stores were dramatically diminished as shoppers shifted online.

Game consoles, cookware, robotic vacuum cleaners, slippers and pajamas were popular among shoppers

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 31 of 51

preparing to spend a lot of time indoors this winter. Many were still eager to get into the holiday spirit and delight their loved ones after a tough year.

Eric Kelly, a boxing gym owner, camped outside a store on Black Friday for the first time in his life, trying to score a PlayStation 5 for his 13-year-old twin sons as a reward for persevering through remote learning during the pandemic.

"They've been away from their friends," said Kelly, who failed to get the console at a GameStop in New York City's Union Square but said he would keep trying online. "They've done everything they had to do in school and outside of school, so I have to award them for being exceptional kids."

Before Black Friday, GameStop teased that it would have a limited supply of the new \$500 PlayStation 5 game console for sale only at its stores, in contrast to other retailers that sold it only online.

Kelly said "people were on top of each other" in the line. At a Garden State Plaza mall in Paramus, New Jersey, police monitored a crowd outside a GameStop, but few people kept their distance.

GameStop said it was taking several safety precautions, including contactless pickup.

Many retailers beefed up their safety protocols to reassure wary customers about coming in on Black Friday. But stores also catered to those shopping digitally by moving their doorbuster deals online and ramping up curbside pickup options.

"We have been intentional to try to not create the frenzy, the doorbusters, the long lines and the crowds you typically see on a Black Friday," said Stephen Lebovitz, CEO of CBL, which operates about 100 malls and filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in November.

Several hundred shoppers lined up ahead of opening at Mall of America in Bloomington, Minnesota, which normally attracts several thousand on Black Friday. The mall spread out the Black Friday deals over eight days, and many retail tenants pivoted more to online and curbside pickup, said Jill Renslow, Mall of America's senior vice president of business development.

"It feels good, and it's the right thing to do to keep everybody safe," Renslow said "Everyone is shopping a little differently but that's OK."

Only a trickle of shoppers showed up at Macy's Herald Square in New York an hour after it opened, offering 50% off handbags and 60% off women's and men's coats. Workers sanitized door knobs and windows.

A Christmas tree towered over the largely empty streets around The Domain, the most popular outdoor mall in Austin, Texas. Store employees counted masked shoppers trickling in to stay within the state's 75% capacity limit.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has labeled shopping in crowded stores during the holidays a "higher risk" activity and says people should limit any in-person shopping.

The National Retail Federation, the nation's largest retail trade group, predicted that shoppers will be looking for reasons to celebrate. The trade group expects sales for the November and December period to increase between 3.6% and 5.2% over 2019, compared with a 4% increase the year before. Holiday sales have averaged gains of 3.5% over the past five years.

"We think there's going to be a psychological factor that they owe it to themselves and their families to have a better-than-normal holiday," said NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz.

Thanksgiving Day hit a new record online as spending reached \$5.1 billion, up 21.5% compared to a year ago, according to Adobe Analytics, which measures sales at 80 of the top 100 U.S. online retailers. Among the most popular items were Lego sets, Barbie toys, and kid scooters, HP laptops, and Apple Watches, according to Adobe. The popularity of Netflix's "Queen's Gambit" has boosted sales for chess-related items.

Walmart, which spread out its Black Friday deals over several weekends, said its most popular deals included this year's new gaming consoles, wireless headphones, home appliances like the Edify Robotic Vacuum.

Black Friday is projected to generate \$10 billion in online sales, a 39% bump from the year ago period, according to Adobe. And Cyber Monday, the Monday after Thanksgiving, will remain the biggest online shopping day of the year with \$12.7 billion in sales, a 35% jump.

Big box stores like Walmart and Target, which were allowed to stay open during the spring lockdowns,

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 32 of 51

have enjoyed further gains from ramping up their online services, analysts say.

But stores deemed non-essential that were forced to close have struggled to recover. More than 40 chains, including J.C. Penney and J.Crew, filed for bankruptcy.

"Is there going to be a surge in apparel gifting, footwear gifting to help out any of the specialty retailers and do they have the digital presence to actually capture the attention of the consumers?" said Sonia Lapinsky, managing director in AlixPartners' retail practice. "That remains to be seen, and I think it will be more on the grim side."

There are also fewer deals to be had this year. Non-essential retailers were forced to halt production at the onset of the pandemic, leading to lower inventory. As a result, holiday promotions are tracking below last year's levels for clothing, consumer electronics, power and hand tools and home goods, according to Numerator, a market research firm.

Erika Mendez usually heads to the mall every Black Friday to shop at clothing brands Zara, H&M or Forever 21. But this year, the New Jersey journalist student ended up shopping on Amazon, scoring a Nike track suit for 25% off, as well as Nike sneakers that were 20% off.

"It's just easier ordering online than going out," says Mendez.

And Black Friday was the last thing on the minds of some hurt the most by the pandemic. At a popular shopping area in St. Petersburg, Florida, several storefronts were empty, and the only line was at a plasma donation center.

Leonard Chester, 58, said he hoped to get at least \$55 for the donation, saying that he needed to eat. When reminded that it was Black Friday, he let out a laugh and pointed to the line around him.

"This says that people are hurting. The economy's bad," said Chester, who was laid off from his job as a bouncer at a strip club two months ago.

AP Staff Writers Tamara Lush in St. Petersburg, Florida, Acacia Coronado in Austin, Texas, and Desiree Mathurin in New York contributed to this report.

Appeals court rejects Trump challenge of Pennsylvania race

By MARYCLAIRE DALE Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — President Donald Trump's legal team suffered yet another defeat in court Friday as a federal appeals court in Philadelphia roundly rejected the campaign's latest effort to challenge the state's election results.

Trump's lawyers vowed to appeal to the Supreme Court despite the judges' assessment that the "campaign's claims have no merit."

"Free, fair elections are the lifeblood of our democracy. Charges of unfairness are serious. But calling an election unfair does not make it so. Charges require specific allegations and then proof. We have neither here," 3rd Circuit Judge Stephanos Bibas, a Trump appointee, wrote for the three-judge panel, all appointed by Republican presidents.

The case had been argued last week in a lower court by Trump lawyer Rudy Giuliani, who insisted during five hours of oral arguments that the 2020 presidential election had been marred by widespread fraud in Pennsylvania. However, Giuliani failed to offer any tangible proof of that in court.

U.S. District Judge Matthew Brann, another Republican, had said the campaign's error-filled complaint, "like Frankenstein's Monster, has been haphazardly stitched together" and denied Giuliani the right to amend it for a second time.

The 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals called any revisions "futile." Chief Judge D. Brooks Smith and Judge Michael Chagares were on the panel with Bibas, a former University of Pennsylvania law professor. Trump's sister, Judge Maryanne Trump Barry, sat on the court for 20 years, retiring in 2019.

"Voters, not lawyers, choose the president. Ballots, not briefs, decide elections," Bibas said in the opinion, which also denied the campaign's request to stop the state from certifying its results, a demand he called "breathtaking."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 33 of 51

In fact, Pennsylvania officials had announced Tuesday that they had certified their vote count for President-elect Joe Biden, who defeated Trump by more than 80,000 votes in the state. Nationally, Biden and running mate Kamala Harris garnered nearly 80 million votes, a record in U.S. presidential elections.

Trump has said he hopes the Supreme Court will intervene in the race as it did in 2000, when its decision to stop the recount in Florida gave the election to Republican George W. Bush. On Nov. 5, as the vote count continued, Trump posted a tweet saying the "U.S. Supreme Court should decide!"

Ever since, Trump and his surrogates have attacked the election as flawed and filed a flurry of lawsuits to try to block the results in six battleground states. But they've found little sympathy from judges, nearly all of whom dismissed their complaints about the security of mail-in ballots, which millions of people used to vote from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trump perhaps hopes a Supreme Court he helped steer toward a conservative 6-3 majority would be more open to his pleas, especially since the high court upheld Pennsylvania's decision to accept mail-in ballots through Nov. 6 by only a 4-4 vote last month. Since then, Trump nominee Amy Coney Barrett has joined the court.

"The activist judicial machinery in Pennsylvania continues to cover up the allegations of massive fraud," Trump lawyer Jenna Ellis tweeted after Friday's ruling. "On to SCOTUS!"

In the case at hand, the Trump campaign asked to disenfranchise the state's 6.8 million voters or at least "cherry-pick" the 1.5 million who voted by mail in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and other Democratic-leaning areas, the appeals court said.

"One might expect that when seeking such a startling outcome, a plaintiff would come formidably armed with compelling legal arguments and factual proof of rampant corruption," Brann, a member of the conservative Federalist Society, wrote in his scathing ruling on Nov. 21. "That has not happened."

A separate Republican challenge that reached the Pennsylvania Supreme Court this week seeks to stop the state from further certifying any races on the ballot. Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf's administration is fighting that effort, saying it would prevent the state's legislature and congressional delegation from being seated in the coming weeks.

On Thursday, Trump said the Nov. 3 election was still far from over. Yet he said for the first time he would leave the White House on Jan. 20 if the Electoral College formalizes Biden's win.

"Certainly I will. But you know that," Trump said at the White House, taking questions from reporters for the first time since Election Day.

On Twitter Friday, however, he continued to baselessly attack Detroit, Atlanta and other Democratic cities with large Black populations as the source of "massive voter fraud." And he claimed, without evidence, that a Pennsylvania poll watcher had uncovered computer memory drives that "gave Biden 50,000 votes" apiece.

All 50 states must certify their results before the Electoral College meets on Dec. 14, and any challenge to the results must be resolved by Dec. 8. Biden won both the Electoral College and popular vote by wide margins.

Follow Maryclaire Dale on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/Maryclairedale>

Experts: Virus numbers could be erratic after Thanksgiving

By DANIELLA PETERS Associated Press

MILWAUKEE (AP) — The coronavirus testing numbers that have guided much of the nation's response to the pandemic are likely to be erratic over the next week or so, experts said Friday, as fewer people get tested during the Thanksgiving holiday weekend and testing sites observe shorter hours.

The result could be potential dips in reported infections that offer the illusion that the spread of the virus is easing when, in fact, the numbers say little about where the nation stands in fighting COVID-19. The number of Americans who have tested positive passed 13 million Friday, according to Johns Hopkins University.

"I just hope that people don't misinterpret the numbers and think that there wasn't a major surge as a

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 34 of 51

result of Thanksgiving, and then end up making Christmas and Hanukkah and other travel plans," said Dr. Leana Wen, a professor at George Washington University and an emergency physician.

A similar pattern unfolds on many weekends. Because some testing centers, labs and state offices are closed on Saturdays and Sundays, COVID case numbers often drop each Sunday and Monday, only to peak on Tuesday.

Dr. Mark Rupp, professor and chief of infectious diseases at the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha, said the effect of Thanksgiving is likely to be a magnified version of the weekend figures. The Thursday holiday will exacerbate the record-keeping discrepancies over the long weekend, artificially depressing the reported numbers for four or five days before spiking as test results catch up.

Johns Hopkins University reported a high of more than 2 million tests a few days before Thanksgiving as people prepared to travel, but that number had dropped to less than 1.2 million tests on Thanksgiving Day. The latter number, as well as positive case numbers, which had dropped by about a third Friday, could be adjusted as more results are returned.

In several state and cities, officials reported sharp drops in testing Friday and reminded people not to read improvements into them. Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson said the drop means that residents might not know for weeks how much their efforts to slow the spread affected the state's rate of positive tests.

While testing was down Thursday and Friday, health officials said they anecdotally saw a jump in people getting tested before deciding to travel or gather for Thanksgiving meals. They warned that the tests are often a snapshot, not a complete assurance that someone has not been exposed to the virus.

"I think it can be kind of a false sense of security for some people," Rupp said, predicting that the holiday will be followed within weeks by another surge "because people have continued to travel, they've continued to have gatherings outside their immediate family."

Experts worry how people might interpret the situation after the long weekend, especially if it takes a few weeks for Thanksgiving exposures to show up in testing data.

Cities and states generally use hospitalization and intensive care numbers, which lag behind virus case reporting, to determine when to increase or ease public health restrictions and recommendations. But the public is more likely to look at testing numbers or case counts, which might be misleading, Wen said, and waiting until hospitals are overwhelmed is risky.

"Where we are now is a completely unsustainable place. I think it's extremely frustrating to those of us in health care to see our calls are not being heeded," Wen said. "And the level of alarm that we have is not reflected in individuals' behavior."

Associated Press writers Desiree Mathurin in Bay Shore, N.Y., and Claudia Lauer in Philadelphia contributed to this report.

VIRUS TODAY: Black Friday shoppers stay home

By The Associated Press undefined

Here's what's happening Friday with the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S.:

THREE THINGS TO KNOW TODAY

— The coronavirus pandemic kept crowds thin at malls and stores across the country on Black Friday, but a surge in online shopping offered a small beacon of hope for struggling retailers after months of slumping sales and businesses toppling into bankruptcy.

— Some colleges and universities are rethinking plans for next semester as coronavirus cases surge around the country. A growing number of campuses will offer only virtual learning, but others are assessing how they would bring students back, which might mean adjusting testing protocols, introducing new screening systems and eliminating spring breaks to discourage students from traveling to help keep campuses open.

— The Walt Disney Co. has announced plans to lay off 4,000 more workers at its theme parks in California and Florida due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The company has been limiting attendance at its parks

and changing protocols to allow for social distancing.

THE NUMBERS: The number of Americans who have been diagnosed with the coronavirus passed 13 million Friday, and more than 263,500 deaths have been attributed to the virus since the start of the pandemic. The country is averaging more than 1,650 deaths per day, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

QUOTABLE: "My biggest concern is probably that people will become more relaxed with their individual social distancing/quarantining measures over winter break," University of Vermont President Suresh Gari-mella said by email. "I can only hope that people will remember how important these safety measures are, and will continue to practice them for the sake of their health and for the sake of our education."

ICYMI: Letters pouring by the tens of thousands into Santa's mailbox offer a glimpse into the worries and hopes of children awaiting a pandemic Christmas. The postal sorting office in France's Bordeaux region has been handling his mail since 1962, but this year, along with usual pleas for toys and gadgets, kids are asking for vaccines, for visits from grandparents, for life to return to the way it was.

ON THE HORIZON: Christmas tree growers who have faced increased interest in artificial trees in recent years say demand for fresh-cut evergreens is strong this season. Wholesale growers and small farms alike say customers are showing up earlier than normal and there are more of them. More Americans are staying home for the holidays amid virus restrictions and want a new — or renewed — tradition to end a dreary year on a happier note.

Find AP's full coverage of the coronavirus pandemic at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic>

Family of jailed oil exec asks for Venezuelan leader's mercy

By SCOTT SMITH Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — The family of a Houston-based Citgo oil executive convicted and ordered to prison in Venezuela alongside five others appealed directly to President Nicolás Maduro on Friday for mercy.

In an open letter, relatives of José Pereira, 63, wrote to Maduro that he has a long list of health problems that need medical attention.

They ask for Maduro to free him — and the other five — so they can return home to their families in the United States.

"Our purpose for this letter is not to enter into legal tirades about the case," the letter says. "We only want to implore to your humanitarian and compassionate side."

The letter came a day after the Thanksgiving Day verdict finding all six guilty of corruption charges. They've been held for three years in Venezuela.

The so-called Citgo 6 are employees of Houston-based Citgo refining company, which is owned by Venezuela's state oil company, PDVSA. They had been lured to Venezuela in November 2017 for a business meeting and were arrested.

In addition to Pereira, the others convicted were Gustavo Cárdenas, Jorge Toledo, brothers Jose Luis Zambrano and Alirio Zambrano, and Tomeu Vadell — all now U.S. citizens. The judge sentenced them to 8 years, 10 months.

Jose Pereira, a permanent U.S. resident, had been promoted to interim Citgo president shortly before the arrest. He received the longest sentence of 13 years.

Relatives say the men were wrongly convicted, and the defense lawyers vowed to appeal verdicts.

Venezuela's Supreme Tribunal of Justice announced the verdicts and prison sentences, but officials in Maduro's government have not commented on the trial's outcome.

Their arrest launched a corruption purge by Maduro's government of PDVSA and at a time when relations between Caracas and Washington were crumbling as Venezuela plummeted into economic and social crisis.

They were also charged with financial crimes stemming from a never-executed proposal to refinance some \$4 billion in Citgo bonds by offering a 50% stake in the company as collateral. Maduro at the time accused them of "treason." They all pleaded innocence.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 36 of 51

News media and rights groups were denied access to the trial in Caracas. Judge Lorena Cornielles, who oversaw the trial, did not respond to a letter from The Associated Press seeking permission to observe.

Former New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson, who has negotiated the release of other Americans held by hostile governments, traveled to Caracas in July and met with Maduro. Days later two of them — Cárdenas and Toledo — were put in house detention and two weeks later the trial began.

Venezuela has been in a yearslong crisis that critics of Maduro blame on failed economic policies and growing authoritarian rule that has led at least 5 million Venezuelans to leave the country.

Trump aggressively pressed to remove Maduro through sweeping financial sanctions and the U.S. Justice Department has indicted Maduro as a "narcoterrorist," offering a \$15 million reward for his arrest.

It is yet to be seen how President-elect Joe Biden will approach Venezuela. Maduro has expressed his desire to improve relations with Washington.

Pereira's family said in the letter that he suffers from at least seven chronic health problems including diabetes and back trouble that requires surgery.

"We ask solemnly and respectfully that you intercede in our case," they asked Maduro. "So we can achieve freedom for these six men and allow them to return home to their loved ones."

Scott Smith on Twitter: @ScottSmithAP

New rule could allow gas, firing squads for US executions

By MICHAEL BALSAMO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Justice Department is quietly amending its execution protocols, no longer requiring federal death sentences to be carried out by lethal injection and clearing the way to use other methods like firing squads and poison gas.

The amended rule, published Friday in the Federal Register, allows the U.S. government to conduct executions by lethal injection or use "any other manner prescribed by the law of the state in which the sentence was imposed." A number of states allow other methods of execution, including electrocution, inhaling nitrogen gas or death by firing squad.

It remains unclear whether the Justice Department will seek to use any methods other than lethal injection for executions in the future. The rule — which goes into effect on Dec. 24 — comes as the Justice Department has scheduled five executions during the lame-duck period, including three just days before President-elect Joe Biden takes office.

A Justice Department official said the change was made to account for the fact the Federal Death Penalty Act requires sentences be carried out in the "in the manner prescribed by the law of the state in which the sentence is imposed," and some of those states use methods other than lethal injection.

The official told the AP the federal government "will never execute an inmate by firing squad or electrocution unless the relevant state has itself authorized that method of execution."

The official said two executions scheduled in December would be done by lethal injection but didn't provide information about three others scheduled in January. The official spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity in order to discuss the internal department protocols.

The change is likely to set off intense criticism from Democrats and anti-death penalty advocates, as the Trump administration tries to push through a number of rule changes before Trump leaves office. A spokesperson for Biden told the AP earlier this month that the president-elect "opposes the death penalty now and in the future" and would work to end its use. But he did not say whether executions would be paused immediately once Biden takes office.

Attorney General William Barr restarted federal executions this year after a 17-year hiatus. This year, the Justice Department has put to death more people than during the previous half-century, despite waning public support from both Democrats and Republicans for its use.

All states that use the death penalty allow lethal injection — and that is the primary method in all states where other methods are allowed, according to data compiled by the nonprofit Death Penalty Information

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 37 of 51

Center. As lethal injection drugs become difficult to obtain, some states have begun looking at alternative methods for carrying out death sentences. Alabama joined Oklahoma and Mississippi in 2018 approving the use of nitrogen gas to execute prisoners, allowing the state to asphyxiate condemned inmates with the gas in some cases.

In some states, inmates can choose the method of their execution. In Florida, for example, an inmate can specifically ask to be put to death by electrocution and in Washington state, inmates can ask to be put to death by hanging. In Utah, prisoners sentenced before May 2004 can choose to be killed by a firing squad. The state law there also authorizes the use of a firing squad if lethal injection drugs aren't available.

In 2014, following a botched state execution in Oklahoma, President Barack Obama directed the Justice Department to conduct a broad review of capital punishment and issues surrounding lethal injection drugs.

Barr said in July 2019 that the review had been completed, allowing executions to resume and approved a new procedure for lethal injections that replaced the three-drug combination previously used in federal executions with one drug, pentobarbital. The one-drug protocol is similar to the procedure used in several states, including Georgia, Missouri and Texas.

Before the Trump administration resumed executions this year, the federal government had put only three inmates to death since 1988. Though there hadn't been a federal execution since 2003, until July, the Justice Department has continued to approve death penalty prosecutions, and federal courts had continued sentencing defendants to death.

Trump has spoken often about capital punishment and his belief that executions serve as an effective deterrent and an appropriate punishment for some crimes, including mass shootings and the killings of police officers.

US women beat Netherlands 2-0 in World Cup rematch

BREDA, Netherlands (AP) — Rose Lavelle scored against the Netherlands again, Kristie Mewis scored in her first appearance for the United States in six years and the U.S. women won a rematch of last year's World Cup final by the same score, 2-0, on Friday.

The older sister of starter Sam Mewis came in as a second-half substitute and scored in the 70th minute. It was Kristie Mewis' second goal for the team, after her first in 2013. The 2,722 days between her goals was the longest stretch in team history.

"I just had to just re-watch it, actually, because I think I blacked out on what actually happened," Kristie Mewis said about her goal.

The United States hadn't played in 261 days because of the coronavirus pandemic. The top-ranked Americans have won all nine matches they've played this year. They're 11-0-0 under coach Vlatko Andonovski, who took over after Jill Ellis stepped down last year.

"A lot of things changed in 2020. But one thing that didn't change and one thing that will never change with this team is the heart and the mind," Andonovski said. "And I was so proud of these players, the way they stepped up and handled the game, considering that some of them didn't have a chance to train properly before this camp."

Lavelle also scored when the United States beat the Netherlands in Lyon, France, last year for the team's second straight World Cup title.

Nine of the 11 U.S. starters for the final were in the starting lineup on Friday. Notably missing was Alex Morgan, who came in as a second-half substitute for her 170th appearance with the team.

Morgan, currently playing for Tottenham, had not played for the United States since the World Cup final because she was pregnant with and gave birth to daughter Charlie.

Netherlands coach Sarina Wiegman was not with the team because of a personal matter that was not related to COVID-19. Wiegman, a former Dutch midfielder who has coached the team since 2017, will take over as England's national team coach next September, succeeding Phil Neville.

Lavelle struck a left-footed goal on a break in the 41st minute.

Kristie Mewis subbed in to join her younger sister on the field and scored nine minutes later. Sam Mewis

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 38 of 51

was among the first to embrace her sister in celebration.

"I was I was so nervous to shoot it, but I just wound up and gave it the best I could. And then turning around and just realizing what had just happened and seeing Sam and Alex running towards me was so special. It's a very surreal moment for me," Kristie Mewis said. "It kind of hasn't really sunk in yet."

Mewis played well in the National Women's Soccer League's Challenge Cup and fall series with the Houston Dash, earning her a call-up to the national team.

The U.S. was without Lindsey Horan, who contracted COVID-19 and did not travel to Europe for the match.

The teams held a moment of silence before the game for Diego Maradona, the legendary Argentinian player who died earlier this week.

The U.S. team wore warmups before the game that included the message "Black Lives Matter" across the front. Nine players knelt during the national anthem.

The players issued a statement before kickoff that said, in part: "Today, we wear Black Lives Matter to affirm human decency. We protest against racial injustice and police brutality against Black people. We protest against the racist infrastructures that do not provide equal opportunity for Black and brown people to fulfill their dreams, including playing on this team."

More AP soccer: <https://apnews.com/Soccer> and https://twitter.com/AP_Sports

US colleges mull new virus protocols for students' return

By LISA RATHKE Associated Press

COLCHESTER, Vt. (AP) — St. Michael's College managed to keep coronavirus cases at bay for almost two months this fall with students tested upon arrival and once every three weeks.

But in mid-October, cases at the small Vermont school started to climb. The outbreak was linked to an ice rink more than 40 miles (64 kilometers) away. The liberal arts college shifted to all-remote learning and closed the campus to visitors. By November, a total of 76 of the roughly 1,400 students on campus had tested positive, the school said.

"It was very concerning to experience the spike in cases that we did after so many weeks of surveillance tests with no positives," President Lorraine Sterritt said by email.

When students come back for the spring semester, St. Michael's will begin testing them weekly. The college may also require students to move to a separate residence hall when they are told to quarantine.

The coronavirus presented huge challenges for the fall semester for U.S. colleges that opened the academic year with in-person learning, including some that took a battering from outbreaks. Those not joining the growing number that will offer only virtual learning are assessing how they would bring students back after the winter holidays while the country faces crushing rates of virus infections.

Schools that are bringing students back are adjusting testing protocols, introducing new screenings, and eliminating spring breaks to discourage students from traveling to help keep campuses open.

Other schools big and small think it's still possible to keep a pandemic-era residential college experience.

California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo plans to add saliva testing in the winter quarter that will be processed on campus and will allow it "to test many more people much more quickly — our current estimate is 4,000 tests per day by mid-January," President Jeffrey Armstrong said in a campus-wide message this month.

In the spring semester, Colby College in Maine wants to add some rapid antigen tests to twice-weekly tests for students, faculty and staff. It also did away with the one-week spring break replacing it with two mini-breaks in March and April.

"We'll program stuff for the campus so people get a break," Chief Financial Officer Douglas Terp said.

More schools are expected to require students get tested before they come to campus rather than when they arrive, as some institutions did before the fall semester, said Barbara Mistick, president of the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Institutions like Syracuse University in New York abandoned in-person learning earlier than planned this

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 39 of 51

fall but are planning on a resumption of campus life next semester.

But a growing number of schools will stick with virtual instruction through the spring.

"We are seeing a rapid rise in colleges and universities announcing they will move to remote learning for the remainder of this semester and for the spring," said Lynn Pasquerella, president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

George Washington University in Washington, D.C., for one, announced early last month it will continue most of its classes virtually.

Student cooperation with protocols helped to keep the number of coronavirus cases low at the University of Vermont's campus in the small city of Burlington, President Suresh Garimella said.

On a recent day, students wearing masks streamed through a tent outside the student center where they are required to be tested weekly. They stayed apart, stopped at a station to sanitize their hands and blow their nose and then proceeded into the indoor testing center.

"It's part of my routine," said sophomore Brian Boyle of the testing.

The school received federal coronavirus relief funding for virus-related expenses like testing, but Garimella estimates it will spend an additional \$10 million to \$15 million.

There are also a lot of precautions in place, rules for social distancing and the maximum number of people in a group, Boyle said. It's harder to get together with people socially, but he said students can find ways to go about it and still follow the rules and be safe.

"You know being outside in small groups and stuff," he said.

As cases rose in Vermont and at UVM in November, though, he said he was becoming a bit concerned about whether the spring semester will be in-person.

"My biggest concern is probably that people will become more relaxed with their individual social distancing/quarantining measures over winter break," he said by email. "I can only hope that people will remember how important these safety measures are, and will continue to practice them for the sake of their health and for the sake of our education."

AP writer Michael Casey contributed to this report from Boston.

This story has been corrected to show the name of the university in San Luis Obispo is California Polytechnic State University, not California Polytechnical University.

Stocks rise on Wall Street as S&P 500 hits record high

By The Associated Press undefined

NEW YORK (AP) — The S&P 500 rose to a record high Friday as investors continue to look forward to the distribution of a COVID-19 vaccine and relief for the global economy.

The benchmark index rose 8.70 points, or 0.2%, led by gains in technology companies, and closed at an all-time high of 3,638.35. The Nasdaq also closed at a record helped by gains in Apple, Tesla, Zoom and other tech companies.

Positive developments on the vaccine front have driven double-digit gains in the major indexes this month as investors look forward to progress in gaining control over the pandemic that plunged the global economy into its deepest slump since the 1930s. That optimism persisted this week even as one vaccine candidate suffered a setback and cases of coronavirus remain at elevated levels.

Meanwhile, retailers were hoping that their slumping sales get a boost from shoppers on Black Friday but early indications are that store traffic was light.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average, which earlier this week crossed 30,000 for the first time, rose 37.90 points, or 0.1%, to 29,910.37. The Nasdaq gained 111.44, or 0.9%, to 12,205.85.

U.S. markets closed at 1 p.m. Eastern after being shut for the Thanksgiving holiday.

Health care companies also posted solid gains. Moderna jumped 16.4% and Pfizer rose 1.9%. The two companies earlier this month released results showing their COVID-19 vaccine candidates were highly ef-

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 40 of 51

fective in tests. The shares got a boost Friday after a competing vaccine suffered a setback.

The University of Oxford and AstraZeneca also this week released positive test results about their vaccine. But researchers have questioned how Oxford and AstraZeneca calculated the effectiveness of their vaccine. The AstraZeneca CEO said the company might conduct another trial. AstraZeneca shares were flat.

Still, hopes for a vaccine have offset concerns about spiking coronavirus cases in the U.S. and other parts of the world. U.S. states and European governments are re-imposing controls on business and travel as infection rates surge.

The disease has killed more than 1.4 million people worldwide and there are 61 million confirmed cases, according to data gathered by Johns Hopkins University.

The pandemic has brought significant changes to the traditional Black Friday shopping holiday. Many retailers are beefing up their safety protocols, moving their doorbuster deals online and curbside pickup options as a last grasp at sales before the year ends.

Retailers need a boost from Black Friday and holiday shopping altogether to try and recoup sales lost to the pandemic. Early indications are that people are staying home and choosing to do any shopping online.

Macy's shares fell 1.4% while shares of Walmart showed a slight decline. Shares of the online marketplace Etsy, meanwhile, rose 10.7%.

Tech shares have led the market's climb back from its plunge in March as investors bet giants such as Apple and Microsoft will keep raking in the profits whether Americans are forced to stay home or the economy begins to return to something resembling normalcy. Apple rose 0.5%.

Tesla rose 2.1% and Zoom Video Communications gained 6.3%. The two stocks have been market darlings so far this year with gains of 600% or more.

European markets rose. Germany's DAX gained 0.4% and the CAC 40 in France rose 0.6%. Asia markets also rose Friday. The Hang Seng index in Hong Kong gained 0.8%.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury slipped to 0.84% from 0.87% Wednesday.

Cher in Pakistan for resettlement of 'loneliest elephant'

By KATHY GANNON Associated Press

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Iconic singer and actress Cher is in Pakistan to celebrate the departure of Kaavan, dubbed the "world's loneliest elephant," who will soon leave a Pakistani zoo for better conditions after years of lobbying by animal rights groups and activists.

Because of security concerns, Cher's schedule was not made public. However, she met Friday with Prime Minister Imran Khan and was expected to visit Kaavan later in the trip, according to the prime minister's office. Khan's office released a video of the singer sitting with the prime minister outside on the expansive grounds of Khan's residence.

Kaavan is set to leave for a sanctuary in Cambodia on Sunday, said Martin Bauer, spokesman for Four Paws International, a global animal welfare group that's led the charge to save Kaavan since 2016.

The animal has languished in the zoo for 35 years, most of those years in chains, and lost his partner in 2012. She died after an infection turned gangrenous and her body lay beside Kaavan for several days before being removed, said Dr. Amir Khalil, veterinarian with Four Paws. Khalil said Kaavan was heartbroken after his partner died.

Activists dubbed Kaavan the "world's loneliest elephant" after his plight gained international attention and the unhappy elephant was diagnosed as emotionally as well as physically damaged.

Khalil has treated the elephant's many wounds and ailments over the past three months. Kaavan has been diagnosed by veterinarians as both overweight and malnourished, and also suffers behavioral issues due to his isolation.

Cher took up Kaavan's cause and has been a loud voice advocating for his resettlement. Four Paws, which often carries out animal rescue missions, will accompany Kaavan to the sanctuary.

In a tweet following her meeting with Pakistan's prime minister, Cher said she thanked Khan "for making it possible for me to take Kaavan to Cambodia." She tweeted she was making a documentary on Kaavan

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 41 of 51

and said, "think documentary will be heartwarming."

Even after he's in Cambodia, Kaavan will require years of physical and even psychological assistance, Bauer said.

Because of the abysmal living conditions blamed on systemic negligence, Pakistan's high court in May ordered the closure of Marghazar Zoo in the capital of Islamabad, where Kaavan has lived for much of his life.

A medical examination in September showed Kaavan's nails were cracked and overgrown — the result of years of living in an improper enclosure with flooring that damaged his feet.

The elephant has also developed behaviors including shaking his head back and forth for hours, which the medical team of wildlife veterinarians and experts blamed on his utter boredom.

For the past three months, a Four Paws team including veterinarian Khalil and the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board have been readying Kaavan to leave.

Khalil first met Kaavan in 2016 and returned to the zoo in August, where he was saddened by the animal's condition. Khalil has spent the last three months trying to get him ready for his trip to Cambodia.

Kaavan was put on a diet of fruit and vegetables and has lost half a ton (450 kilograms), he said. Previously, Kaavan was eating 250 kilograms (550 pounds) of pure sugar cane every day, with an occasional fruit and vegetable.

The veterinarian said this was the first time in 30 years that he developed a strong emotional bond with a rescue animal. Now, the "world's loneliest elephant" comes lumbering over when he hears Khalil's voice.

"I was always moving, so never allowed myself to develop an emotional attachment," but with Kaavan he couldn't resist, Khalil said. He said he has pampered and protected him for the past three months, cajoling him into losing weight as well as being less fidgety and more relaxed so he can make the trip to Cambodia.

Khalil said there are many elephants at the sanctuary, but in particular three female elephants are awaiting Kaavan's arrival. Khalil joked that Kaavan might just find a girlfriend there.

Bauer lauded the powerful impact celebrity voices can have for animal rights.

"Celebrities lending their voices to good causes are always welcomed, as they help starting public discourse and raising pressure on responsible authorities," he said.

Trump administration moves ahead on gutting bird protections

By ELLEN KNICKMEYER and MATTHEW BROWN Associated Press

The Trump administration moved forward Friday on gutting a longstanding federal protection for the nation's birds, over objections from former federal officials and many scientists that billions more birds will likely perish as a result.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published its take on the proposed rollback in the Federal Register. It's a final step that means the change — greatly limiting federal authority to prosecute industries for practices that kill migratory birds — could be made official within 30 days.

The wildlife service acknowledged in its findings that the rollback would have a "negative" effect on the many bird species covered by the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which range from hawks and eagles to seabirds, storks, songbirds and sparrows.

The move scales back federal prosecution authority for the deadly threats migratory birds face from industry — from electrocution on power lines, to wind turbines that knock them from the air and oil field waste pits where landing birds perish in toxic water.

Industry operations kill an estimated 450 million to 1.1 billion birds annually, out of roughly 7 billion birds in North America, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and recent studies.

The Trump administration maintains that the Act should apply only to birds killed or harmed intentionally, and is putting that "clarifying" change into regulation. The change would "improve consistency and efficiency in enforcement," the Fish and Wildlife Service said.

The administration has continued to push the migratory bird regulation even after a federal judge in New York in August rejected the administration's legal rationale.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 42 of 51

Two days after news organizations announced President Donald Trump's defeat by Democrat Joe Biden, federal officials advanced the bird treaty changes to the White House, one of the final steps before adoption.

Trump was "in a frenzy to finalize his bird-killer policy," David Yarnold, president of the National Audubon Society, said in a statement Friday. "Reinstating this 100-year-old bedrock law must be a top conservation priority for the Biden-Harris Administration" and Congress.

Steve Holmer with the American Bird Conservancy said the change would accelerate bird population declines that have swept North America since the 1970s.

How the 1918 treaty gets enforced has sweeping ramifications for the construction of commercial buildings, electric transmission systems and other infrastructure, said Rachel Jones, vice president of the National Association of Manufacturers.

Jones said the changes under Trump would be needed to make sure the bird law wasn't used in an "abusive way." That's a longstanding complaint from industry lawyers despite federal officials' contention that they bring criminal charges only rarely.

It's part of a flurry of last-minute changes under the outgoing administration benefiting industry. Others would expand Arctic drilling, favor development over habitat protections for imperiled species and potentially hamstring future regulation of environmental and public health threats, among other rollbacks.

Pandemic pushes Peru's vital peasant farmers to the brink

By FRANKLIN BRICENO Associated Press

PISAC, Peru (AP) — Under a punishing Andean sun, Nazario Quispe digs his plow into the soil where he is growing dozens of different potato varieties — uncertain when he will be able to afford the seeds and supplies to sow them again.

Farmers like Quispe are responsible for the food that lands on 70% of Peruvian dinner tables, officials say, but months of pandemic lockdown and a souring economy have left many bankrupt and questioning whether to plant again.

"If my savings dry up, how will I sustain myself?" asked Quispe, a father of five who grows 150 types of the tuber native to Peru from the Sacred Valley highlands.

Across this South American nation an estimated 7 million peasants like the 51-year-old Quispe toil small plots of land to feed their families and earn a living. Strict quarantines early in the pandemic made transporting beans, potatoes and other crops to markets difficult. Prices plummeted as demand dropped.

Official data shows the price for potatoes dropped at least 30% between March and July. In rural Pampamarca in southern Peru, one kilo used to be worth about five loaves of bread. Now it sells for the equivalent of just one.

Not wanting to let the crops go to waste, farmers like Nemesio Quispe — no relation to Nazario Quispe — have opted to sell for whatever they could.

"The potato doesn't wait," said Nemesio Quispe, 50.

Peru has been severely battered by the pandemic, experiencing both a crushing economic contraction and one of the world's most lethal coronavirus outbreaks. For months Peru ranked first globally in per capita COVID-19 deaths. The International Monetary Fund projects a 14% decline in GDP this year.

Though peasants have been somewhat shielded by the virus since many live far from other families and major cities, the recession has been costly. Several farmers said they are not able to put certain foods like fruit on the table anymore, because they are too costly. Instead, many subsist on a diet of root vegetables.

Lucia Ylla, a 54-year-old mother seven, said her family eats mostly beans and potatoes, including a freeze-dried variety known as "chuño."

"Only that," she said. "And now we're running out."

Last May, a national survey by the Institute for Peruvian Studies said 90% of those living in rural areas were eating less food than usual. Fifty nine percent said that between March and April they had often gone hungry because they couldn't afford three daily meals. Many said what they did eat was of poorer quality.

Farmer Marcelino Bohorquez, 50, is trying to see the bright side of the situation, noting many families

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 43 of 51

that had been dispersed across Peru are reunited again because of the pandemic. "For me, it's a blessing," he said.

People living in cities have returned to family ancestral lands after losing jobs and being unable to afford rent. Some have gone back to planting their own food, hoping to grow at least enough to eat.

"The place of refuge for peasants has been the parcel of land that at least guarantees them access to food," said Giovanna Vásquez, a sociologist and manager of the National Convention for Peruvian Agriculture, a network of unions.

The government has provided millions in aid to large exporters — a tiny percentage of all producers — but experts said small farmers have been left out.

Carlos Paredes, an economist who directs Sierra Productiva, an initiative helping provide 50,000 farming families with technology, said that Peruvian laws, in practice, discourage business with peasants who are seen as "not profitable."

"The ministries of agriculture and economy have norms that indicate profitable agriculture is only that with at least 20 hectares (just under 50 acres) of land," Paredes said. "In Peru, that's only 3% of the producers that exist — the agricultural exporters."

Inequitable access to tax credits, water and favorable trade deals have long existed in Peru but are now exacerbated by the crisis.

"They've gotten leftovers or nothing," economist Eduardo Zegarra said of peasant farmers. "That is the central drama in Peru and we shouldn't lose sight of it."

Former President Martín Vizcarra, who was removed from office by Congress earlier this month, allotted \$42 million to various large agricultural companies. New President Francisco Sagasti has said he intends to support small farmers with access to land, technology and markets, though he hasn't shared any details.

"Hunger now is the result of the pandemic crisis and it's something we should combat," Sagasti said.

This year has also been unusually dry in some agricultural regions of Peru. The lack of rain, combined with frigid overnight temperatures, has many farmers worried their crops will go bad if the weather doesn't improve soon.

That could force the government to import food the country usually produces itself. Already, imports of basic foods like sugar, rice and powdered milk rose this year.

Miriam Trinidad, director of AgroPeru, a news site focusing on the agricultural industry, said that if credits aren't provided to farmers soon, many "will stop planting, food security will be put at risk and dependency on importing food stuffs will grow."

Many turn to real Christmas trees as bright spot amid virus

By GILLIAN FLACCUS Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Ani Sirois, a respiratory nurse, has spent months caring for coronavirus patients at a Portland, Oregon, hospital, and she's only getting busier as infections — and hospitalizations — surge before the holidays.

But on a recent sunny day, COVID-19 seemed far away as she, her husband and their 2-year-old daughter roamed a Christmas tree farm in search of the perfect evergreen for a holiday season unlike any other. The family was tree-shopping nearly a week before Thanksgiving and, for the first time, they were picking their own tree instead of buying a pre-cut one.

"It's nice to have home be a separate safe space away from the hospital, and whether we can have a gathering with family or not, I know we'll have our own little tree with the purple lights, and that'll be something small to look forward to," she said.

The real Christmas tree industry, which has been battling increased interest in artificial trees, is glad to see that more Americans appear to be flocking to fresh-cut evergreens this season, seeking a bright spot amid the virus's worsening toll.

It's early in the season, but both wholesale tree farmers and small cut-your-own lots are reporting strong demand, with many opening well before Thanksgiving. Businesses say they are seeing more people and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 44 of 51

earlier than ever.

At some pick-your-own-tree farms, for example, customers sneaked in well before Thanksgiving to tag the perfect tree to cut down once the business opened. As demand surges, big box stores are seeking fresh trees up to a week earlier than last year, and Walmart is offering free home delivery for the first time.

"The season is running approximately six to seven days ahead of what we've seen in the past. We've never seen the demand like we've had this year," said McKenzie Cook, who ships between 1.8 million and 2 million trees a year combined from McKenzie Farms in Oregon and Happy Holiday Christmas Trees in North Carolina.

A number of reasons are driving the uptick in interest. More Americans are staying home for the holidays amid pandemic restrictions and are realizing that for the first time in years — or maybe ever — they will be home to water a fresh-cut tree. With holiday parades and festivals canceled, stir-crazy families also are looking for a safe way to create special memories.

Plus, fresh-cut Christmas trees are largely displayed outside, where there's a lower risk of viral spread, said Marsha Gray, executive director of the Christmas Tree Promotion Board.

The national organization says industry research tells them many people who put up an artificial tree last year plan to buy a real tree this year, and most are citing the pandemic as the reason.

"Yes, it's a product, it's a decoration that you put in your home, but getting a real tree involves the choosing, the hunting for it, the family outing. It really is a memory maker, it's a day you spend together, and it really becomes much bigger than the tree itself," Gray said. "It's really making family memories and people really seem to gravitate to that right now."

The growing interest in real trees comes after the industry has struggled to attract new, younger customers in recent years as more Americans buy artificial trees.

Between 75% and 80% of Americans who have a Christmas tree now have an artificial one, and the \$1 billion market for fake trees has been growing by about 4% a year — despite them being reusable.

No one tracks annual sales of real trees because independent tree lots are so scattered, but those in the business estimate about 20 million trees or more are sold each year, most of them at big box stores such as Costco and Home Depot.

Oregon, the nation's No. 1 supplier of fresh-cut trees, expects to ship nearly 6 million evergreens this season to places as far away as Japan and China. Other top tree exporters are Washington state, North Carolina and Pennsylvania.

The fresh-cut tree industry in 2018 launched a social media campaign called "It's Christmas. Keep It Real!" to attract young families and media-savvy millennials.

This year, the Christmas Tree Promotion Board also asked Rob Kenney, creator of the "Dad, How Do I?" YouTube channel, to make an instructional video for newbies on how to shop for and put up a real tree, then keep it alive. It's gotten tens of thousands of views.

"We want to introduce real Christmas trees to young families and new buyers and create greater demand among those people who say, 'I'm a little nervous about just taking a tree and dragging it into my house,'" Gray said.

It appears that message is breaking through as Americans seek a happier way to close out a difficult year.

Lee Farms, a sixth-generation family farm in Tualatin, Oregon, opened for the season a week earlier than last year. It sold more than 100 trees in the first four hours and was seeing new faces at a business that normally welcomes the same customers each year.

"It's almost a new — or a renewed — experience for a lot of families this year," said Teagan Milera, co-owner of Lee Farms. "Having that real tree smells so good in your house, something to take care of and decorate together, that nothing beats that for the holiday season."

Follow Flaccus on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/gflaccus>.

Navajo school, students fight to overcome amid COVID-19

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 45 of 51

By ANTHONY J. WALLACE/Cronkite News undefined

PINON, Arizona (AP) — One student runs 85 feet up a hill every morning, just to get a cellphone signal so he can call in his attendance. Another moved to Phoenix by himself, after his only parent died of COVID-19, to work construction while going to school online.

Then there's the high school senior who spends six hours most days doing homework in a car next to a school bus turned Wi-Fi hotspot – the only way some kids on the Navajo Nation can get assignments to their teachers.

These kids share a dream: to graduate high school, find a way to go to college, get a degree, land a dream job – get out of their small town, succeed and soar.

Even in the best of times, that dream is harder for Native American students to attain. And now COVID-19 has brought one of the greatest challenges yet to these young people.

For them, it's about so much more than being separated from friends or having to figure out how to use Zoom. All that isolation and upheaval has been accompanied by death and great loss.

Across the Navajo reservation, victims of COVID-19 include parents and grandparents, sole guardians and providers, mentors and teachers. Without them, some students have lost their way or, quite literally, fallen off the map.

Said one district superintendent: "We have some kids that we just don't know where they are."

A SCHOOL DISTRICT FIGHTS TO SURVIVE

The drive from Flagstaff northeast to Piñon takes more than two hours over a two-lane highway and dirt road. Just a few hundred families live in this community, in modest houses scattered across hills roamed by horses and dotted with brush.

A single campus accommodates the elementary, middle and high schools.

Here, on a reservation the size of West Virginia, the COVID-19 death rate has been higher than that of any U.S. state. So even as some schools reopened for in-person learning this fall, those on the Navajo reservation did not.

Without the 300 students who normally fill its cafeteria, crowd its lockers and seek help in its counseling offices, Piñon High's cavernous hallways are unnaturally quiet. Do-not-disturb signs hang on classroom doors, indicating Zoom sessions in progress.

Inside one empty room, a carpentry teacher plays heavy metal music and bobs his head at his desk. In another, science teacher James Gustafson's lab tables are covered with surplus VHS videos that he's sorting through for hidden gems.

"Citizen Kane!" he says. "That makes it all worth it."

On Gustafson's desk are printed progress reports adhered to colorful construction paper. They identify students anonymously by a number, tracking their scores on weekly quizzes. He's preparing to hang them in the halls for other teachers to see.

The grades are far worse than what he saw last year.

"These are ungodly low compared to how they should be," he said, "because I've given the students who've turned nothing in – and there's a lot of them – I've given the students who've turned nothing in a zero."

Even before the pandemic, Native youth had the highest dropout rates in the U.S., leaving school at more than twice the rate of white children, according to federal statistics.

Likewise, the graduation rate for American Indian and Alaska Native children is the lowest in the country – 72%, compared with a national average of 85%.

"Distressing" is how a report from the National Caucus of Native American State Legislators described the state of education for K-12 schools for Native students. And the pandemic has only served to further spotlight disparities.

More than 600 of the Navajo reservation's 173,000 residents have died from COVID-19. Compare that rate of 347 for every 100,000 people to Maricopa County – Arizona's largest – where the death rate is 86

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 46 of 51

per 100,000 people.

The risk of returning to class is greater on the reservation, and the price of keeping schools closed is steeper.

Piñon High School Principal Timothy Nelson said COVID-19 has claimed at least six parents and two district staff members – a front office worker and a teaching assistant.

“Some people may think it’s a joke and it’s not a big deal,” Nelson said of the disease. “But when you’re living with it and you see it, it’s not so much a joke anymore.”

Darrick Franklin, an education program manager with the Department of Diné Education, spent months working with officials in New Mexico and Arizona to keep schools on the reservation closed as others around them reopened or went to hybrid learning.

The focus for Franklin’s department, he said, is to “protect the Navajo people” – a sentiment shared across Navajo leadership. In August, President Jonathan Nez issued a statement urging schools to remain virtual until at least 2021 to protect the safety of students, teachers and staff members.

“At this point in time, we have to protect our children, our families, our elderly,” Franklin said. “Especially our elderly, because they are the storytellers ... they are the heart of the Navajo Nation.”

Shaken by the personal impact of the pandemic, teachers, parents and students are overcoming uncommon obstacles to learn at a distance.

Chris Ostgaard, superintendent of the Piñon district, said only about 50% of students have some form of internet connection – whether it be broadband, a slow satellite connection or just a phone with a data plan.

Across the reservation, only a quarter of homes have broadband internet, and fewer than half even have a computer, according to census data.

Reaching those with no connection at all has been a colossal challenge. Ostgaard said enrollment across the three schools has decreased by about 100 kids from last year. Some, he said, have “disappeared, basically.”

Multiple times each week, the district sends out a fleet of buses filled with packets of paper schoolwork for students to pick up, complete and send back on the bus.

And thanks to money the district received as part of the federal COVID-19 relief package, 14 buses have been equipped with Wi-Fi. They travel up to an hour, often on bumpy, unpaved roads, and park where parents and students can drive up and use the internet to do homework or upload assignments.

“It’s creating a new normal,” said Nelson, the high school principal. “And as we all knew at the beginning of the school year, some things that we try are not going to work, some things are going to need to be tweaked, and some things will work.

“But we’ll just do it as we go along.”

MISSING FRIENDS - AND LAUGHS

About 20 miles from the district campus, one of those Wi-Fi buses sits in a dusty lot across the road from a gas station. Two cars, their engines idling, are parked beside it.

Inside, four sisters, ages 6 to 17, balance Chromebook computers on their laps and upload the day’s assignments as their parents patiently do what they can to help.

Math teacher Beverly Mix and construction worker Dekoven Begay have been out of work since COVID-19 began ravaging the Navajo Nation last spring. But it doesn’t mean the couple aren’t working.

“Making sure my kids get online is a job,” Mix said, “and making sure that they understand what they’re being taught – because sometimes the teacher only has like 20 minutes of class.”

The bus is usually in this spot every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, but at Mix’s request the driver came on a Thursday after a morning spent delivering meals to students’ homes.

Their girls – Chenoa, Sonora, Winona and Annabah – each have specially designed car-desks that Mix ordered from Hobby Lobby. Their laptops, provided by the school district, are emblazoned with a nametag and drawing of their choosing.

Chenoa, a high school senior and the eldest, has a panda on her computer. An ROTC team leader, she dreams of attending the University of Nevada, Las Vegas or Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University – and

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 47 of 51

hopes to eventually work for the FBI.

She's been trying to stay on track but said it's been hard to fill out college applications without being able to see her school adviser. English class is especially challenging at a distance, she said, and feedback on her work is harder to get.

"It causes a lot of stress because you don't know what you've done and how you can do better at it," she said.

Chenoa attends Chinle High School virtually, while her sisters and many members of her ROTC team are online in the Piñon district. She hasn't seen her friends in person for six months but talks to them by phone and FaceTime.

She said many of them, including her best friend, lack the support system her family provides.

"I call her my twin, because we were born on the same day," Chenoa said of her friend, who lives near a mountain and has no reliable internet connection. Chenoa had to persuade her to reenroll in school after she dropped out.

Chenoa's family has satellite internet at home, but it's too slow to download big files or stream videos simultaneously.

"Sometimes our internet will go down," her father said, "and they're stuck without going to school for a day or so."

So they spend about 20 hours a week parked by the school bus for a better connection.

On this Thursday, the bus leaves at 3:30 p.m. and the family of six head the mile back to their home, which has been transformed into a makeshift classroom. Just inside the door is a chalkboard with the girls' assignments. A single desk overflows with glue sticks, composition books, rulers.

When they aren't doing schoolwork in their parents' vehicles, the sisters usually sit around the kitchen table on their laptops together. Chenoa said she really only ever gets out of the house when she hikes or goes to see her orthodontist.

For the past six months, it's been the six of them here every day. On the TV is a crime show, the kind Chenoa said inspired her to pursue a career in investigation.

"Most of what they do is really predictable, just following a certain rule of patterns," she said of the criminals on the screen. "Some of them are hard to spot, and some of them are really easy to find. And I really love patterns."

Chenoa's favorite subject is math, and it's her little sisters' favorite, too.

Throughout the pandemic, she has tried to be a good role model for the girls, who are in first, second and fourth grade. The little ones share a small room packed with their favorite toys: dinosaurs for Winona, books and Pokémon cards for Sonora, and "Frozen" dolls for Annabah.

Despite all that's happening, Chenoa holds tightly to her dreams: "Everyone wants to go to university to get their degree and come back and help their people."

But for now, she and her sisters and parents lean on one another.

"The thing I miss most," she said, "is laughing with my friends."

REAL AND SURREAL

Unlike their students, Piñon High School's teachers report to work each day, careful to wear masks and social distance. Alone in his classroom, 11th-grade English teacher Robert LaBarge delivers lectures into a computer.

"The kids always tease me for laughing at my own jokes," he said, smiling. "But there's no one in class! Who's supposed to laugh at my jokes?"

In his room, chairs are stacked in a corner and books sit, unused, on shelves. LaBarge recently started sending dictionaries to students without Wi-Fi to help them with their vocabulary work.

"It's this very strange thing," he said, "going by these buildings and these playgrounds and these basketball courts, and there's no one out there. It just feels weird."

Like many of his colleagues, LaBarge makes himself available to his students however he can. He gets phone calls, texts, emails, Facebook messages, Instagram DMs. Sometimes, he said, they want to talk

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 48 of 51

about schoolwork; other times, they express their feelings about living in a pandemic.

One of his students is the grandson of the high school's teaching assistant, who died of COVID-19. She worked with kids with severe developmental disabilities and was "really funny," LaBarge recalled, once people got to know her.

"It takes someone with a very big heart to do that kind of work," he said.

After she died, LaBarge noticed a palpable change in her grandson.

"He's a kid who's always pretty upbeat and kind of sarcastic, and he's got an outgoing personality," he said. "So immediately you just sort of notice, that's kind of gone. He's feeling some pain."

In such a small and tight-knit community as Piñon, he said, every loss has ripple effects.

"It made it more real and surreal," he said of the deaths of his co-workers. "It's noticeable that there are two people missing."

As teachers inside take their lunches alone at their desks, vehicles full of families pull up to a tent at the back of the school. Nearly every driver wears a mask and holds up fingers through their windows, signaling how many meals they need. During the pandemic, the school has been putting together take-home breakfasts and lunches for district families.

Angelica Sandoval, who has an eighth-grade son at home alone, helps hand out trays of Salisbury steak, pineapple and milk. The previous day, she said, they gave out more than 100 meals.

Unable to be with her son during the day, she can only hope he's getting his homework done.

Life on the reservation during COVID-19, she said, is "stressful, depressing, scary."

STILL DREAMING

In May, research published by the Annenberg Institute at Brown University predicted that springtime school shutdowns would result in children returning for the fall semester with 63% to 68% of the typical gains in reading and 37% to 50% in math.

Unsurprisingly, the researchers noted that setbacks would likely be greater for children of color and those who live in poverty – especially those without reliable internet.

In Piñon, teachers and administrators didn't need a research paper to tell them that.

Principal Nelson mentioned one student in particular, who lost his only surviving parent to the virus and moved to Phoenix to work 10-hour days in construction while keeping up with online coursework. Feeling overwhelmed, he eventually returned to Piñon to live with extended family.

He isn't the only one in that type of situation, said Ostgaard, the superintendent.

"We have a few (students) that for different reasons, I guess you would almost consider homeless at this point," he said. "They're kind of bouncing from relative to relative, and they're in different places."

Gustafson, the science teacher, worries most about those students who can't get connected – noting that many, while still technically enrolled, have not been turning in schoolwork.

The divide between the kids with and without internet is "de facto segregation," he said.

"The students that don't have the net, and consequently don't have immediate feedback ... on material or whatever else, they aren't necessarily getting everything that students with the net are getting."

Still, for those they can reach, the school's online efforts have been so successful that the Arizona State Board of Education granted the district approval to use their approaches to virtual learning to open a fully online high school available to any Arizona student – the Piñon Eagles Online Academy.

"What we've tried to do here at Piñon High is try to take a negative and turn it into a positive," Nelson said.

And whenever the Piñon schools do reopen their doors, he added, it will be optional for students to return.

Despite all that they're facing, Piñon officials are still doing what they can to inspire their students about the future. Gustafson, a former radiological engineer who worked at nuclear power plants, spoke recently via Zoom to a group of ROTC students about his career.

It's motivation meant to remind them that their dreams still can be realized. Or, as Gustafson put it: "Get me to the university, get me to the city and something will happen."

He knows his students are dealing with a lot. One, he said, had three close family members die from COVID-19 – all within a month of each other.

Still, Gustafson has faith in their resilience.

“There are students that have the dream. By golly, they do,” he said. “They are making it work, regardless. They’re doing what they can.”

This article was provided to The Associated Press by the Arizona State University’s Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. For more stories from Cronkite News, visit cronkitenews.azpbs.org.

New cardinals quarantine in pope’s hotel ahead of ceremony

By NICOLE WINFIELD and TRISHA THOMAS Associated Press

ROME (AP) — The Vatican’s Santa Marta hotel was built to sequester cardinals during papal elections. It’s now sequestering soon-to-be cardinals in town for this weekend’s ceremony to get their red hats: A handful are in protective coronavirus quarantine, confined to their rooms on Vatican orders and getting meals delivered to their doors.

The 10-day quarantines, with COVID-19 tests administered at the start and finish, are just one example of how Saturday’s ceremony to elevate new cardinals is like nothing the Holy See has ever seen.

“They told me it would be like this but I didn’t think it would be so strict!” marveled Cardinal-designate Felipe Arizmendi Esquivel, the retired archbishop of Chiapas, Mexico.

During a Zoom call with The Associated Press from his hotel room, Esquivel said he had thought there might be some exceptions to the lockdown for new cardinals. “No! Here, it doesn’t matter if you’re a cardinal or a pope. The virus doesn’t respect anyone,” he said.

Pope Francis on Saturday will elevate 13 clerics to the College of Cardinals, the elite group of red-robed churchmen whose primary task is to elect a new pope. It’s the seventh time Francis has named a new batch of cardinals since his election in 2013, and his imprint is increasingly shifting the balance of power away from Europe and toward the developing world.

The Vatican has said two new cardinals won’t make it to Rome for the ceremony, known as a consistory, because of COVID-19 and travel concerns: The Vatican’s ambassador to Brunei, Cardinal-designate Cornelius Sim, and the archbishop of Capiz, Philippines, Cardinal-designate Jose Advincula.

The Vatican is arranging for them, and any of the cardinals who might not make it, to participate in the ceremony remotely from their homes. They’ll get their three-pointed “biretta” hats from a Vatican ambassador or another envoy.

For those who are participating in person, the public health crisis has posed an unusual set of challenges. Italy, where the pandemic erupted in late February, is currently in the throes of a second wave. The Vatican itself has returned to a modified lockdown in recent weeks, with the Vatican Museums shuttered and a dozen Swiss Guards testing positive.

Francis, 83, has been criticized for his rather lax mask usage, but he has abided by social distancing measures to a degree. He too lives at Santa Marta, where there has been at least one positive case reported in recent months.

Usually, consistories are full of parties and crowds: Cardinals come to town with family, friends and sometimes benefactors and parishioners who get to see the new “princes of the church” up close and then attend receptions and dinners in their honor. Under normal circumstances, the consistory would be followed by “courtesy visits,” where the new cardinals greet well-wishers and the general public from the grandeur of their own reception rooms in the Apostolic Palace or Vatican auditorium.

This year, there will be no courtesy visits, and each cardinal has a 10-person limit for guests. For Esquivel, no one other than his secretary traveled with him from Mexico, so he’s inviting some priests from the residence where Mexican clergy working or studying in Rome live.

“We don’t have contact with practically anyone. It’s total isolation, but it’s necessary,” he said.

Esquivel is one of four cardinals over age 80 who are joining the college as honorary members, named

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 50 of 51

by Francis to recognize their lifetime of service to the church. The other nine are under age 80 and eligible to vote in a conclave to eventually choose Francis' successor.

History's first Latin American pope has long sought to name cardinals from the "peripheries," to show the universal nature of the church and boost small communities, where Catholics are a minority, with high-profile leaders.

As of Saturday, there will be 128 voting-age cardinals, 42% from Europe. The Pew Research Center notes that in 2013 Europeans made up 52% of the voting-age block, evidence of Francis' effort to decrease the strength of Europeans as a voting bloc and give greater visibility to church leaders from Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Among the new voting age cardinals is the first African-American, Cardinal-designate Wilton Gregory, archbishop of Washington, D.C.

He too is concluding his quarantine in the Santa Marta hotel, where he said his meals are left on a tray outside his door. Gregory said that while he was unable to go out, at least his new red cassock was delivered from Rome's famous clerical haberdasher, Gammarelli.

In a Zoom call, Gregory explained that a U.S.-based ecclesiastical tailor took his measurements while he was still in Washington and sent them to Gammarelli, which then made the robes to order and sent them to Santa Marta.

"I have them now. They fit!" he said.

Fashion aside, Gregory said he was humbled by Francis' decision to make him a cardinal and said he would return to a United States still in the throes of the pandemic with hope that vaccines against the virus will soon work.

"I hope we can use them effectively to protect people and ... once this pandemic is brought under control, to face the future with hope," he said.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Nov. 28, the 333rd day of 2020. There are 33 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Nov. 28, 1520, Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan reached the Pacific Ocean after passing through the South American strait that now bears his name.

On this date:

In 1907, future movie producer Louis B. Mayer opened his first movie theater, in Haverhill, Massachusetts.

In 1922, Captain Cyril Turner of the Royal Air Force gave the first public skywriting exhibition, spelling out, "Hello USA. Call Vanderbilt 7200" over New York's Times Square; about 47,000 calls in less than three hours resulted.

In 1942, fire engulfed the Cocoanut Grove nightclub in Boston, killing 492 people in the deadliest nightclub blaze ever. (The cause of the rapidly-spreading fire, which began in the basement, is in dispute; one theory is that a busboy accidentally ignited an artificial palm tree while using a lighted match to fix a light bulb.)

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Josef Stalin began conferring in Tehran during World War II.

In 1961, Ernie Davis of Syracuse University became the first African-American to be named winner of the Heisman Trophy.

In 1964, the United States launched the space probe Mariner 4 on a course toward Mars, which it flew past in July 1965, sending back pictures of the red planet.

In 1975, President Ford nominated Federal Judge John Paul Stevens to the U-S Supreme Court seat vacated by William O. Douglas.

In 1979, an Air New Zealand DC-10 en route to the South Pole crashed into a mountain in Antarctica, killing all 257 people aboard.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, Nov. 28, 2020 ~ Vol. 29 - No. 148 ~ 51 of 51

In 1994, serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer was slain in a Wisconsin prison by a fellow inmate. Sixties war protester Jerry Rubin died in Los Angeles, two weeks after being hit by a car; he was 56.

In 2001, Enron Corp., once the world's largest energy trader, collapsed after would-be rescuer Dynegey Inc. backed out of an \$8.4 billion takeover deal. (Enron filed for bankruptcy protection four days later.)

In 2012, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie said his state would need nearly \$37 billion to recover and rebuild from Superstorm Sandy and that the state would seek federal aid to cover most of the expenses.

In 2018, Democrats overwhelmingly nominated Nancy Pelosi to become House speaker when Democrats took control of the House in January.

Ten years ago: European Union nations meeting in Brussels agreed to give 67.5 billion euros (\$89.4 billion) in bailout loans to Ireland to help it weather the cost of its massive banking crisis. WikiLeaks began disclosing over 250,000 private cables written by U.S. diplomats, divulging candid comments from world leaders and detailing occasional U.S. pressure tactics aimed at hot spots in Afghanistan, Iran and North Korea. Actor Leslie Nielsen died in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, at age 84. Samuel T. Cohen, the inventor of the neutron bomb, died in Los Angeles at age 89.

Five years ago: President Barack Obama kept up his holiday tradition of supporting small businesses, taking his daughters, Malia and Sasha, to a bookstore in Washington's Petworth neighborhood, where he bought nine books. Victor Mooney, a New Yorker who rowed across the Atlantic Ocean for AIDS awareness, arrived home in Brooklyn, ending a 21-month journey. Tyson Fury defeated Wladimir Klitschko by unanimous decision in Duesseldorf, Germany, to end the Ukrainian's nine-and-a-half-year reign as heavyweight champion and take his WBA, IBF, and WBO heavyweight titles. Marjorie Lord, 97, the Broadway and film actor who became a TV star on the sitcom "Make Room for Daddy," died in Beverly Hills, California.

One year ago: President Donald Trump paid a surprise Thanksgiving visit to Afghanistan, where he announced that the U.S. and the Taliban had been engaged in peace talks, and said he believed that the Taliban wanted a cease-fire. (The United States would sign a peace agreement with the Taliban in February 2020.) China reacted angrily to Trump's decision to sign two bills aimed at supporting human rights in China; Beijing summoned the U.S. ambassador to protest. Security and medical officials in Iraq said security forces had shot to death 40 anti-government protesters during 24 hours of spiraling violence in Baghdad and southern Iraq. Amid high winds that nearly grounded them, the balloons flew lower than usual at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York.

Today's Birthdays: Recording executive Berry Gordy Jr. is 91. Former Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., is 84. U.S. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross is 83. Singer-songwriter Bruce Channel is 80. Singer Randy Newman is 77. CBS News correspondent Susan Spencer is 74. Movie director Joe Dante is 73. Former "Late Show" orchestra leader Paul Shaffer is 71. Actor Ed Harris is 70. Former NASA astronaut Barbara Morgan is 69. Actor S. Epatha (eh-PAY'-thah) Merkerson is 68. Former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff is 67. Country singer Kristine Arnold (Sweethearts of the Rodeo) is 64. Actor Judd Nelson is 61. Movie director Alfonso Cuarón (kwahr-OHN') is 59. Rock musician Matt Cameron is 58. Actor Jane Sibbett is 58. Comedian Jon Stewart is 58. Actor Garcelle Beauvais (gar-SEHL' boh-VAY') is 54. Actor/comedian Stephnie (cq) Weir is 53. Rhythm-and-blues singer Dawn Robinson is 52. Actor Gina Tognoni is 47. Hip-hop musician apl.de.ap (Black Eyed Peas) is 46. Actor Malcolm Goodwin is 45. Actor Ryan Kwanten is 44. Actor Aimee Garcia is 42. Rapper Chamillionaire is 41. Actor Daniel Henney is 41. Rock musician Rostam Batmanglij (bot-man-GLEESH') is 37. Rock singer-keyboardist Tyler Glenn (Neon Trees) is 37. Actor Mary Elizabeth Winstead is 36. R&B singer Trey Songz is 36. NHL goalie Marc-Andre Fleury (marhk-ahn-dray FLOOR'-ee) is 36. Actor Scarlett Pomers is 32. Actor-rapper Bryshere Gray is 27.