

Groton Daily Independent

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"Anything I've ever done that ultimately was worthwhile... initially scared me to death."

-Betty Bender





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Britton



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OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, June 27, 2021

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Tuesday, June 29, 2021

Bible Study 10:00 AM

Wednesday, June 30, 2021

Community Coffee Hour 9:30 AM

Sunday, July 4, 2021

Communion in Worship
Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, June 27, 2021

9 a.m.: Worship

Monday, June 28, 2021

6:30am: Bible Study

Thursday, July 1, 2021

2 p.m.: Nigeria Circle

Sunday, July 4, 2021

9 a.m.: Worship w/ Pastor Jacobson/ Communion

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton &

St. Joseph Catholic

Groton and Turton

Weekend Mass Schedule

Saturday 4:30pm Groton
Sunday 8:30am Groton & 11:00am Turton

Weekday

Tues 5:00pm Turton, W-F 8:30am Groton
Sat 10am Newman Center

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Each morning before Weekday Mass at 7:15am
Tues 3:45pm Turton

Confessions:

Sat. 3:45-4:15pm & Sun. 7:45am to 8:15am (G)
Sun. 10:30-10:45am (T)

St. John's Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, June 27, 2021

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's Worship
11 a.m.: Zion's Worship

Sunday, July 4, 2021

8 a.m.: Bible Study
Worship with Communion
9 a.m.: St. John's Worship
11 a.m.: Zion's Worship

To submit your monthly or weekly church calendar, email to
news@grotonsd.net

Groton Jr. Teeners Takes High-Scoring Game From Cyclones SF Cyclones 13U Blue 13U, 10-9

The base paths were crowded today for both offenses in a high-scoring game where Groton Jr. Teeners came out on top against Cyclones SF Cyclones 13U Blue 13U, 10-9.

Groton Jr. Teeners got on the board in the first inning when Korbin Kucker singled on a 2-2 count, scoring one run.

Gavin Englund earned the win for Groton Jr. Teeners. Englund surrendered zero runs on one hit over one inning, striking out two and walking one.

Nick Riedemann took the loss for Cyclones SF Cyclones 13U Blue 13U. Riedemann lasted one and one-third innings, allowing two hits and two runs while striking out three and walking one.

Lawson Hensley started the game for Cyclones SF Cyclones 13U Blue 13U. The bulldog allowed nine hits and eight runs over three and a third innings, striking out five and walking one. Brevin Fliehs started the game for Groton Jr. Teeners. The pitcher surrendered nine runs on eight hits over four innings, striking out four.

Groton Jr. Teeners collected 11 hits. Braxton Imrie, Teylor Diegel, and Kucker all had multiple hits for Groton Jr. Teeners. Diegel and Imrie each collected three hits to lead Groton Jr. Teeners. Imrie led Groton Jr. Teeners with two stolen bases, as they ran wild on the base paths with five stolen bases.

Jakob Steen went 2-for-3 at the plate to lead Cyclones SF Cyclones 13U Blue 13U in hits. Cyclones SF Cyclones 13U Blue 13U tore up the base paths, as three players stole at least two bases. Steen led the way with three.

Watertown Runs Away With Early Lead In Victory

Groton Jr. Teeners fell behind early and couldn't come back in an 8-0 loss to Watertown on Saturday. Watertown scored on a single by Talan Jurgrns, a single by Nash Berg, and a walk by Nathan Briggs in the first inning.

The Groton Jr. Teeners struggled to contain the high-powered offense of Watertown, giving up eight runs.

Watertown got things moving in the first inning, when Jurgrns singled on a 0-1 count, scoring one run. A single by Korbin Kucker in the fourth inning was a positive for Groton Jr. Teeners.

Spencer Wienties was credited with the victory for Watertown. The fireballer went four innings, allowing zero runs on one hit, striking out one and walking one.

Kellen Antonsen took the loss for Groton Jr. Teeners. The righty allowed one hit and zero runs.

Kucker went 1-for-2 at the plate to lead Groton Jr. Teeners in hits.

Watertown racked up four hits on the day. Berg and Jurgrns each collected multiple hits for Watertown. Watertown didn't commit a single error in the field. Mitch Olson had five chances in the field, the most on the team.

Big First Inning Propels Groton Jr Legion Win Over WIN

11 runs in the first inning led Groton Jr Legion past WIN 16-2 on Saturday. Kaleb H, Tate L, Jordan B, Dillon A, Andrew M, and Braden A all moved runners across the plate with RBIs in the inning.

Ryan G earned the win for Groton Jr Legion. The ace lasted one and two-thirds innings, allowing three hits and two runs while striking out two. Colby D threw one and one-third innings in relief out of the bullpen. Colby recorded the last four outs to earn the save for Groton Jr Legion.

Gavin took the loss for WIN. The bulldog allowed ten hits and 15 runs over three innings, striking out two.

Groton Jr Legion collected ten hits. Dillon, Cade L, and Tate all collected multiple hits for Groton Jr Legion. Tate, Cade, and Dillon each collected two hits to lead Groton Jr Legion. Groton Jr Legion was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Cade made the most plays with three. Groton Jr Legion tore up the base paths, as four players stole at least two bases. Cole S led the way with seven.

Groton Jr Legion Takes The Game Over Frederick In A Blow-Out Victory, 14-3

Groton Jr Legion had no trouble on offense today, winning big over Frederick 14-3

Frederick fired up the offense in the first inning, when Jerico King singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring two runs.

Groton Jr Legion evened things up at two in the bottom of the first inning when Colby D singled on the first pitch of the at bat, scoring one run.

Groton Jr Legion pulled away for good with seven runs in the second inning. In the second Andrew M singled on a 1-2 count, scoring one run, Groton Jr Legion scored on a stolen base during Braden A's at bat. Then Braden doubled, driving in one, Colby doubled on a 2-0 count, scoring two runs, and Logan R singled on a 1-2 count, scoring one run.

Dillon A pitched Groton Jr Legion to victory. Dillon went five innings, allowing three runs on five hits and striking out six.

Darrel Yost was on the mound for Frederick. The pitcher allowed 14 hits and 14 runs over three innings, striking out one. Micah Kranzler threw one inning in relief.

Groton Jr Legion tallied 15 hits on the day. Andrew, Colby, Braden, and Tate L each collected multiple hits for Groton Jr Legion. Andrew led Groton Jr Legion with three hits in three at bats. Groton Jr Legion was sure-handed and didn't commit a single error. Cade L made the most plays with six.

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



Now to his surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. And the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he tore the lion apart as one would have torn apart a young goat, though he had nothing in his hand.

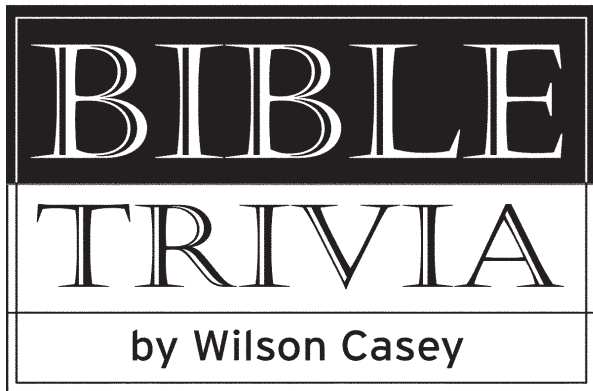
JUDGES 14: 5, 6

*Detail from "Samson and Delilah" series
by Robert Gibbings (1925)*

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"No...we cannot include free healthcare, free college tuition, free every-thing for everybody...because that is not what this country was founded on!"



1. Is the book of Jonah in the Old or New Testament or neither?

2. From 2 Samuel 11, who received a letter from David telling him to put Uriah into battle? *Gideon, Ahab, Isaac, Joab*

3. In Luke 12:27, what did Jesus say are better arrayed than King Solomon? *Lilies, Angles, Trees, Sheep*

4. Matthew, the tax collector, was known by what other name? *Levi, Felix, Reuben, Jehu*

5. Who was the baby born of Zacharias and Elizabeth? *Daniel, John the Baptist, Noah, David*

6. Which king of Judah had his eyes gouged out? *Uzziah, Ahaz, Jeconiah, Zedekiah*

ANSWERS: 1) Old; 2) Joab; 3) Lilies; 4) Levi; 5) John the Baptist; 6) Zedekiah

Sharpen your understanding of scripture with Wilson's Casey's latest book, "Test Your Bible Knowledge," available in bookstores and online.

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by Healthy Exchanges

Hawaiian Lime Cottage Cheese Salad

You don't have to serve just plain old cottage cheese when you have this delicious recipe in your collection! It's colorful, easy, tasty and healthy. That makes it just about perfect.

- 3 cups fat-free cottage cheese
- 1 (4-serving) package sugar-free lime gelatin
- 1 (8-ounce) can crushed pineapple, packed in fruit juice, drained
- 3/4 cup reduced-calorie whipped topping
- 1 teaspoon coconut extract
- 3 tablespoons chopped pecans
- 2 tablespoons flaked coconut

1. In a large bowl, combine cottage cheese and dry gelatin. Stir in pineapple, whipped topping and coconut extract. Add pecans. Mix gently to combine.

2. Transfer mixture to attractive serving bowl. Evenly sprinkle coconut over top. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. Gently stir just before serving. Makes 6 (2/3 cup) servings.

* Each serving equals: 151 calories, 3g fat, 16g protein, 15g carb., 56mg sodium, 1gm fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 1 Meat, 1 Starch, 1/2 Fat.

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FLASH GORDON

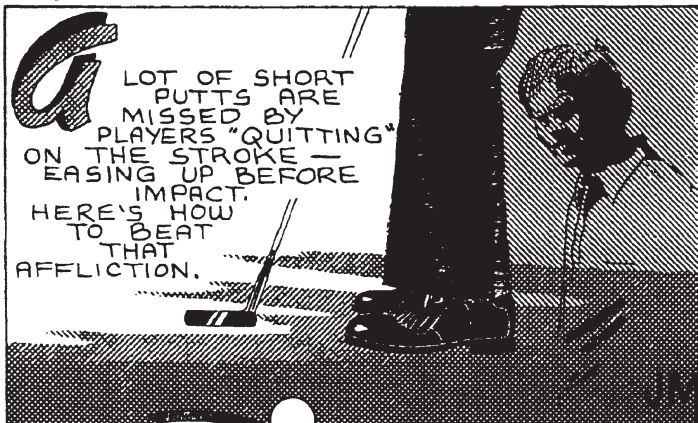
6-20

By JIM KEEFE

WITHOUT WARNING, THE LIZARD-MEN STRIKE!

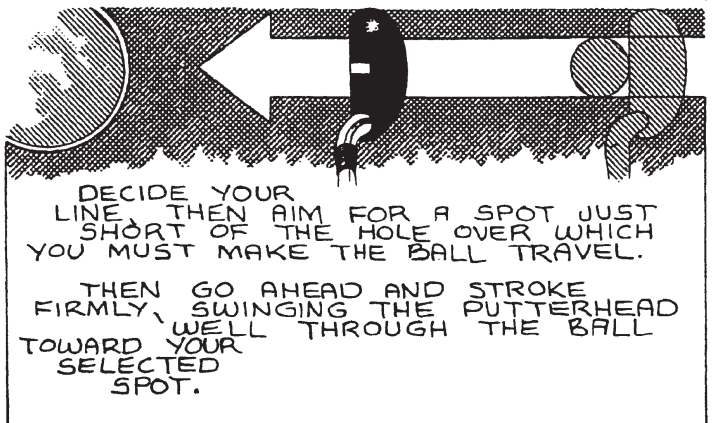


Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



A LOT OF SHORT PUTTS ARE MISSED BY PLAYERS "QUITTING" ON THE STROKE — EASING UP BEFORE IMPACT. HERE'S HOW TO BEAT THAT AFFLICTION.

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DECIDE YOUR LINE, THEN AIM FOR A SPOT JUST SHORT OF THE HOLE OVER WHICH YOU MUST MAKE THE BALL TRAVEL.

THEN GO AHEAD AND STROKE FIRMLY, SWINGING THE PUTTERHEAD TOWARD YOUR SELECTED SPOT.



Poison Ivy? Gardener Shares Home Remedy

DEAR DR. ROACH: Quite by accident, I have found a home remedy for poison ivy and poison oak. As an avid gardener, I get poison ivy once or twice a year. I always wash my hands, arms and any affected area with liquid soap. However, this time I was out of soap and used a liquid detergent with a degreaser. I put a small amount on my arm, rubbed it down my arm and added water to wash it off. I have tried different detergent degreasers over the past several months, and any of them will work. It makes sense, because poison ivy and oak have urushiol oil, and of course a degreaser would dissolve it and wash it away. I hope you can pass this on to your readers! -- F.C.

ANSWER: I appreciate your writing, and I agree with your take on the issue. Poison oak, ivy and sumac all have the same irritating oil, urushiol, which is one of the few substances that can cause a severe hypersensitivity reaction the first time a person is exposed to it. Repeated exposures are often worse.

The most important advice on these poisonous plants is not to get exposed in the first place. That means removing it if it's in your yard, if possible, and knowing how to recognize and avoid it. Protective clothing is essential if you must be near it.

If you are exposed inadvertently and recognize it, then removing the oil is urgent: Within 10 minutes is best, but washing off will help even if it's two hours after exposure. Washing after the rash shows up isn't helpful. Warm water with soap or detergent is recommended, but don't over-vigorously scrub, because damaging the skin can make the rash worse. The oil can stay under the fingernails and on clothing. Clean under the nails carefully and wash clothing in hot water.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I was receiving testosterone injections for a diagnosed low testosterone level (96, with the normal 300-720). I received testosterone injections for a number of years, as directed by my doctor at that time. Ultimately, I changed doctors and the new one prohibited the testosterone injections as "too dangerous to continue." I objected then and am about to object again, since my symptoms in the past year continue to point to low testosterone, in my mind. I have low energy level, low libido and erectile dysfunction. -- M.J.

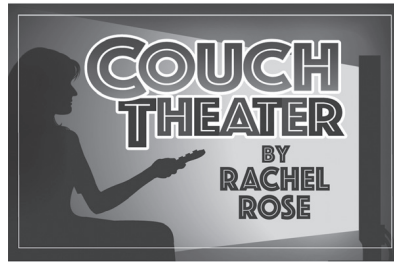
ANSWER: If a person with normal testosterone takes a large amount of extra testosterone, such as athletes looking for a performance boost, there are significant risks. Scientists used to worry that a similar issue would be the case if a person with low testosterone took a replacement dose to get him into the normal range, but the fears of testosterone replacement therapy have been proven largely unjustified.

Given your symptoms and your definite low level, experts would agree that you are a good candidate for long-term testosterone replacement therapy. The risks and benefits are not known with certainty, but the evidence so far suggests no serious risks and some potential benefits on heart health even beyond improvement in symptoms. I would suggest consultation with an expert on testosterone replacement, such as a urologist.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu.

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"In the Heights" (PG-13) — If you pick just one movie to see in 2021, this much-anticipated musical is THE highlight of summer films. Its high-energy music-and-dance numbers tell stories of love, family, community and dreams in the predominantly Dominican New York City neighborhood of Washington Heights. With music and lyrics written by Lin-Manuel Miranda (of "Hamilton" fame), every number is impassioned and exuberant. Brooklyn native and Broadway star Anthony Ramos is dreamy in the lead role of Usnavi, but the real delight of this movie is the relatability of the stories across cultures. This is a new generation of musical, and it is spectacular. (Theaters and HBO Max)

Good on Paper (R) — For those who like best-friend shenanigans, "Good on Paper" is a familiar story that speaks to any woman who's ever second-guessed a new love interest. Main character Andrea Singer, played by comedian and writer Iliza Schlesinger, meets a nice, smart, charming, nerdy guy, Dennis. They date. He says the right things. He's funny. Seems nice. Something must be wrong with him, right? Enter Andrea's best friend Margot — the always perfect Margaret Cho — who plants the seeds of doubt and then helps investigate who Dennis really is. Ryan Hansen smoothly portrays the boyfriend in question, keeping audiences guessing if he is legit or just another smooth talker. (Netflix)

Rebel Hearts (NR) — This 2021 Sundance Film Festival documentary tells the story of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Los Angeles in the 1960s. Labeled "blasphemous" and "uppity," these nuns chose to become unlikely social activists pushing for equality and modernism within an organization based on antiquated, sexist norms. Attending freedom marches and placing themselves in harm's way for justice, they

ignite much criticism from the church and risk their own livelihoods in the process. But their continued legacy of selfless servitude is inspiring to both Catholics and non-religious viewers alike. (Theaters and discovery+)

PJ Masks Season 4 (G) — The children's animated series continues following the adventures of 6-year-old nighttime superheroes Amaya, Connor and Greg. Their magic pajamas provide both identity protection and superpowers as they defend their fair city as Owlette, Gekko and Catboy. Hidden messages are tucked into every episode, teaching things like patience and forgiveness, but your preschooler will love it nonetheless. (Disney+)



Warner Bros. Pictures

Scene from "In the Heights"

False Positive (R) — Happy couple Lucy and Adrian want to start a family, but realize they'll need medical help to make this happen. When a famous fertility specialist works his magic and Lucy finally becomes pregnant, it seems everything is falling into place. But when Lucy begins seeing unusual things, she becomes ever more suspicious of both her doctor and her husband. This lighthearted romantic story quickly transforms into a horror flick where nothing is as it seems. Is it just pregnancy hormones giving Lucy "mom brain," or is something much more sinister at play? Justin Theroux and Ilana Glazer star as the couple, with Pierce Brosnan as their questionable doctor. (Hulu)

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1. Which band originally called themselves The Young Aborigines?

2. What part did Meatloaf play in "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" film?

3. Name the group that went through names such as Feedback and The Hype before settling on their final name.

4. Which Donna Summer song was used in the film "Thank God It's Friday"?

5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "Please lock me away, and don't allow the day, Here inside where I hide with my loneliness."

Answers

1. The Beastie Boys. They once claimed that BEASTIE was an acronym for "Boys Entering Anarchistic

States Towards Inner Excellence," but later admitted they'd come up with that after they already had the Beastie name.

2. He played Eddie, the ex-delivery boy.

3. U2. Out of all names they considered, this was the one they disliked the least. U2 appeared on Rolling Stone magazine's "The 100 Greatest Artists of All Time," coming in at No. 22 on both the 2004 and 2011 lists.

4. "Last Dance," in 1978.

5. "A World Without Love," by Peter and Gordon, in 1964. The duo's first single, taken from their debut album, was written by Paul McCartney when he was 16 years old.

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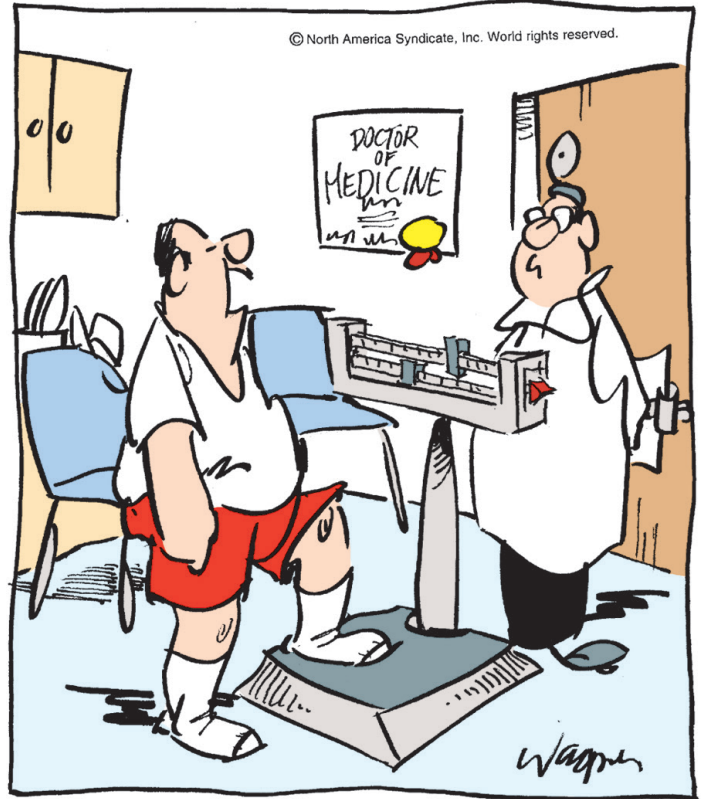
Just Like Cats & Dogs

by Dave T. Phipps



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GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}

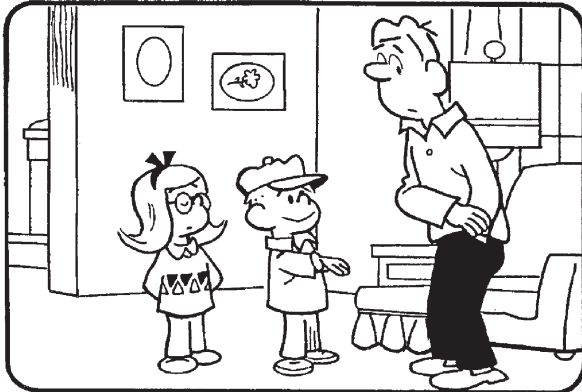


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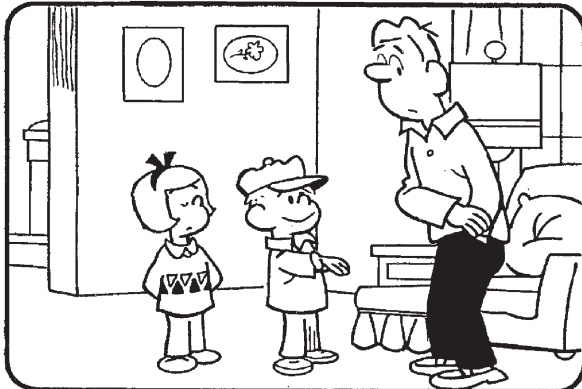
"Both feet?"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



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Differences: 1. Picture is higher. 2. Sweater is changed. 3. Glasses are removed. 4. Hairstyle is changed. 5. Pillow is added. 6. Shoes are different.



- Groceries and food shopping can eat up a tremendous portion of your budget if you aren't careful. The best and most serious money-saving tip for home economists is to ALWAYS use a list. It really does make a difference to have a plan. Here are some more tips to save money while feeding your family. — *JoAnn*

- Most stores list the unit price on the shelf tag. Use it to compare the cost of different sizes and brands of the same item. Just because a package is bigger doesn't necessarily mean it has the best price per unit.

- "A secret of busy moms: Cook once, eat twice (or three times, if you plan well)! When you prepare favorite recipes that will freeze well, or even just elements of those recipes, make a double or triple batch. Then a few

nights of the month, you can just pop something in the oven easily. I cook taco meat once for the month, and we have tacos every week. I just freeze three portions of the meat, and the rest is easy to assemble." — *K.S. in Florida*

- "If you know you're going to make a purchase soon from a specific store, search online for discounted gift cards to that store. Many people get gift cards for places they don't shop, and they sell them at a discount for cash. That's a percentage off your purchase just for preplanning." — *E.S. in Virginia*

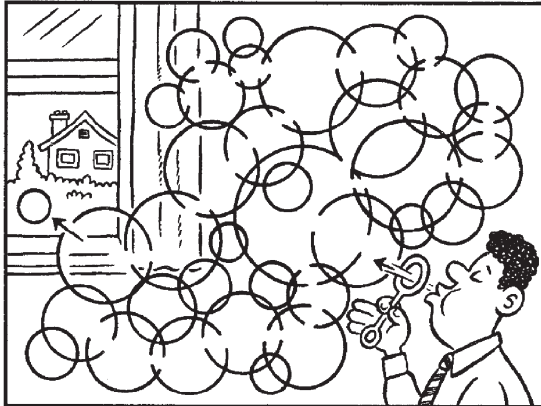
- Remember that, typically, the higher shelves and the lower shelves at the grocery store house the better deals.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803.

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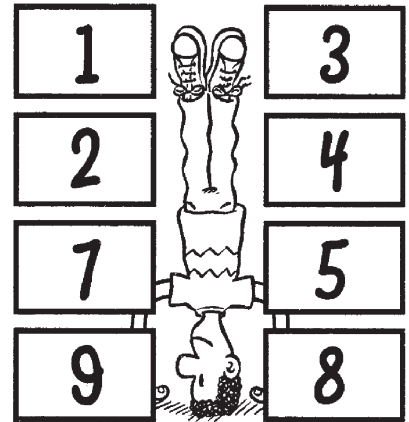


Junior Whirl

by Charles Barry Townsend

A TRICKY PROBLEM!

Make up eight cards with the numbers 1,2,3,4,5,7,8 and 9 printed on them. Then, lay out the cards so that they form two columns of four cards each, as shown. Now rearrange these cards, moving as few as possible, so that the numbers in the two columns add up to the same total. Get your friends to try it! P.S.: There's a catch, match.



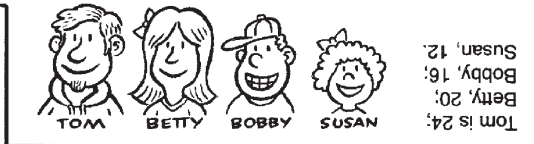
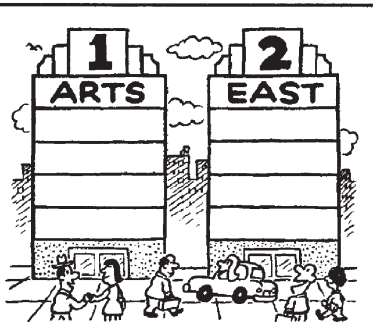
One way: Move the 8 to column 1 and the 9 to column 2. Turn the 9 upside down, making it a 6. Each column now adds up to 18.

BUBBLE TROUBLE! Find a path through the bubbles that leads from Andy's wand to the bubble that's floating out of the window.

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Illustrated by David Coulson

AGE SAGE! Can you figure out the ages of our four friends? Tom is four years older than Betty, who is four years older than Bobby, who is four years older than Susan, who is half the age of Tom.



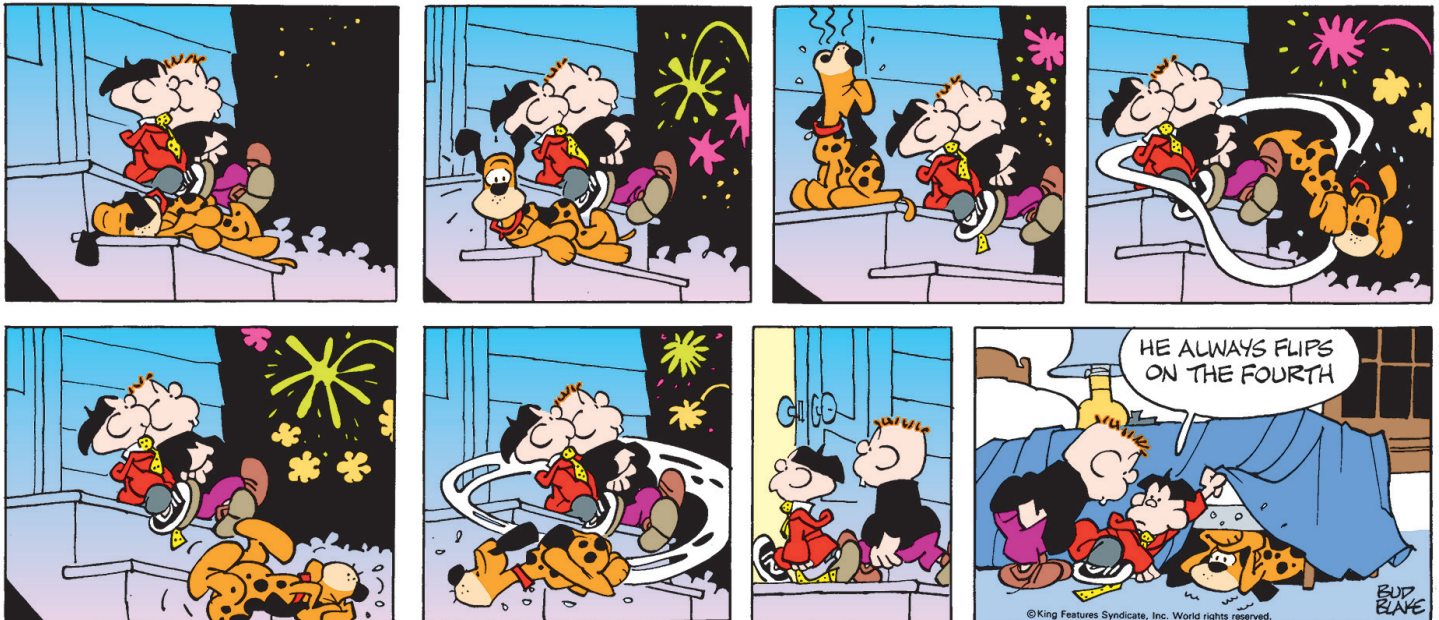
TWIN TOWERS! On the top floor of Tower 1 you'll find the word ARTS. Rearrange the letters to form four new words that you can enter in the remaining floors. When you're done, do the same with EAST on Tower 2.

Tower 1: Arts, rats, star, tars, tsar, tars, tsat, Tower 2: East, eats, sate, seat, teas (any order is Ok).

Tom is 24;
Betty, 20;
Bobby, 16;
Susan, 12.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE

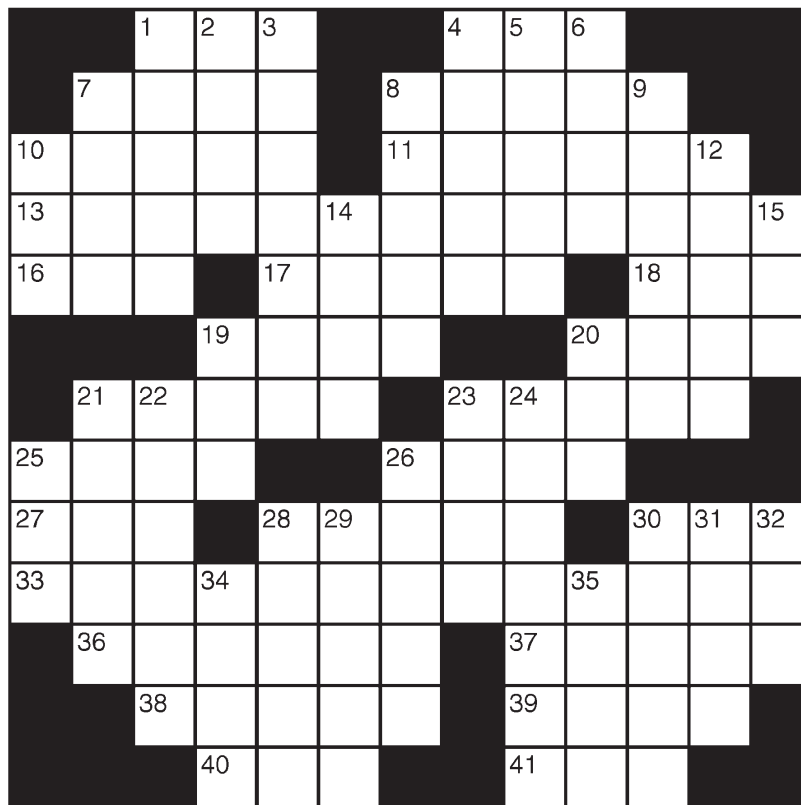


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King Crossword

ACROSS

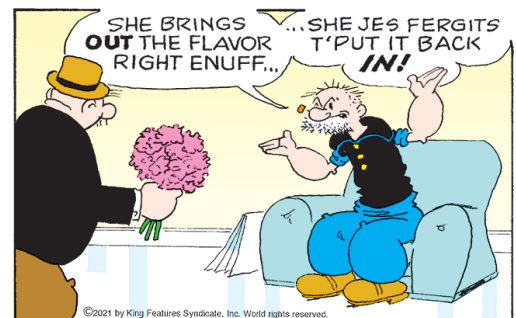
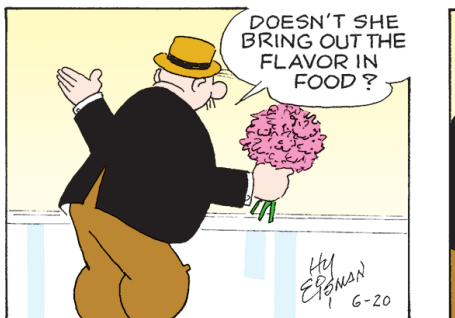
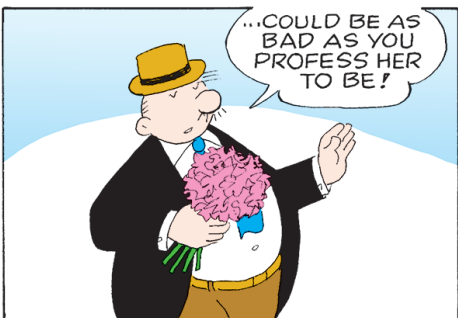
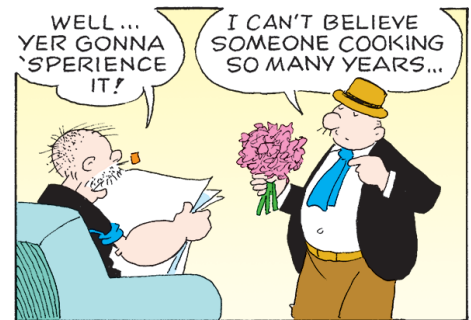
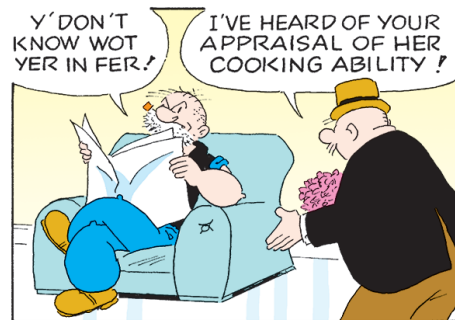
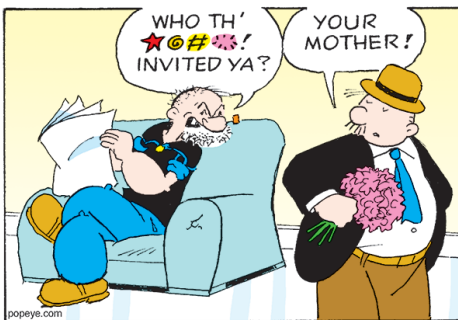
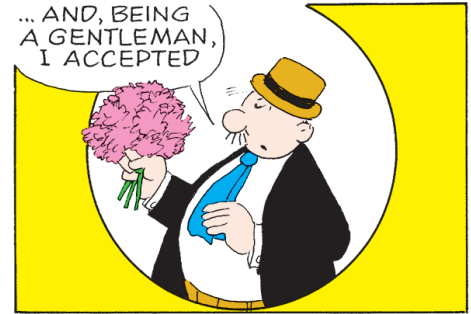
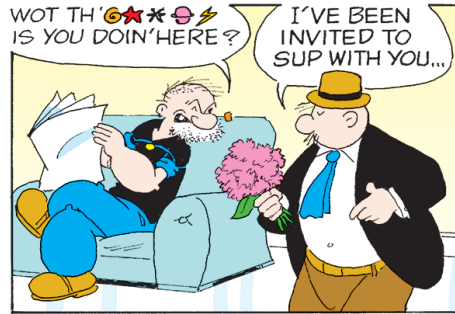
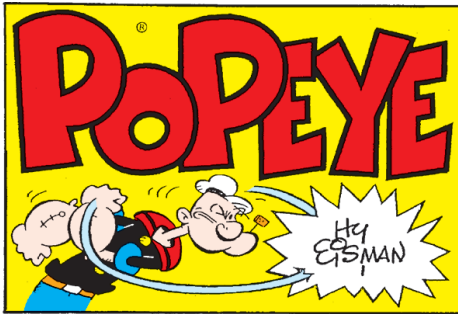
- 1 Choose
- 4 Scale amts.
- 7 Diving duck
- 8 Diner workers
- 10 Dijon darling
- 11 Removes, as a brooch
- 13 Winter Olympics event
- 16 "— Clear Day"
- 17 Bolivian city
- 18 "Ulalume" writer
- 19 Favorites
- 20 Roman emperor
- 21 Driverswith handles
- 23 Battery part
- 25 Persia, today
- 26 "What's — for me?"
- 27 Lincoln or Ford
- 28 Accord maker
- 30 Baseball execs
- 33 2016 Best Picture nominee
- 36 Net defender in hockey
- 37 Separated
- 38 Island near Java
- 39 Apple variety



- | | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
| 25 Persia, today | 40 Tax form ID | 9 Took potshots | the U.S./ |
| 26 "What's — for me?" | 41 Reply (Abbr.) | 10 Corp. money manager | Canadian border |
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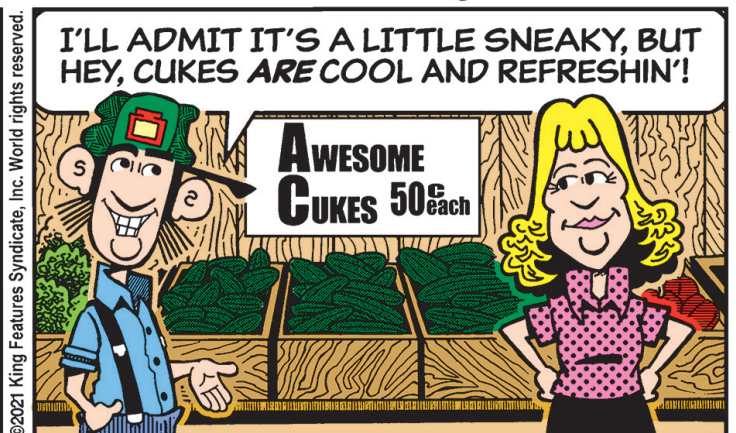
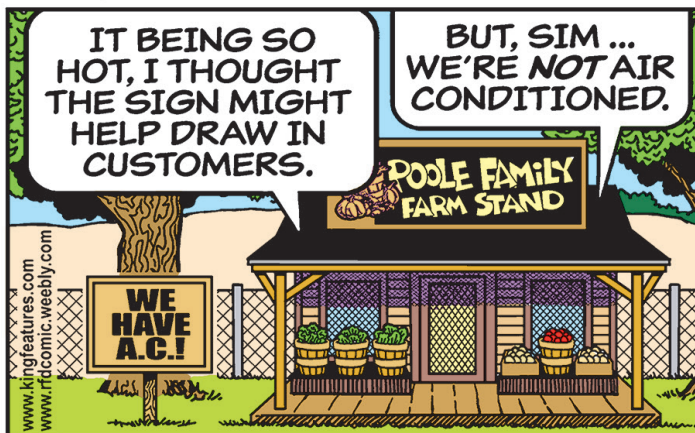
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R.F.D.

by Mike Marland



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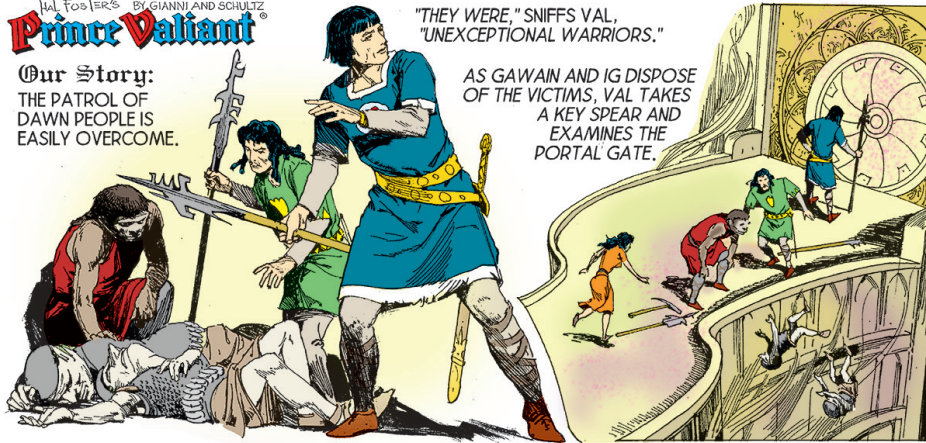
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Hal Foster's BY GIANNI AND SCHULTZ
Prince Valiant

Our Story:
THE PATROL OF
DAWN PEOPLE IS
EASILY OVERCOME.

"THEY WERE," SNIFFS VAL,
"UNEXCEPTIONAL WARRIORS."

AS GAWAIN AND IG DISPOSE
OF THE VICTIMS, VAL TAKES
A KEY SPEAR AND
EXAMINES THE
PORTAL GATE.



"WE KNOW NOT WHAT LIES BEYOND THIS DOOR,
GAWAIN AND I WILL PROCEED THROUGH. IG, YOU
WAIT HERE WITH PRUDENCE." BUT SHE HAS OTHER
IDEAS.

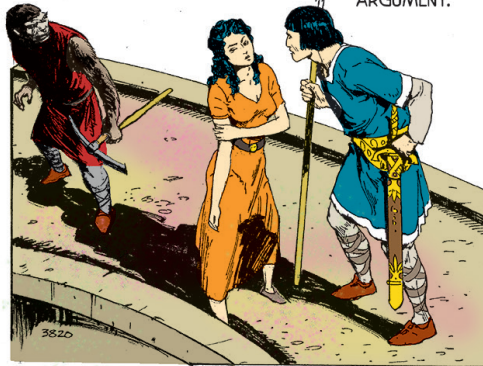
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"MY LORD, WHY CONSIDER ME A HINDRANCE,
WHEN IT WAS MY ABILITIES THAT BROUGHT
US THIS FAR? DO NOT ASSIGN ME TO BE THE
HELPLESS WARD OF IG!"

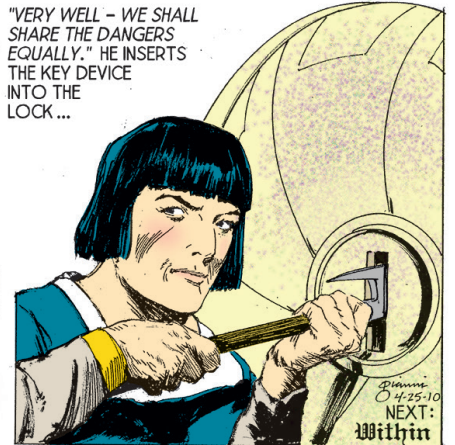


"CONFIDENTIALLY, HIS ADVANCES
ARE UNWELCOME. PLEASE DO
NOT GIVE HIM ENCOURAGEMENT!"

VAL MUST
CONCEDE
TO HER
ARGUMENT.



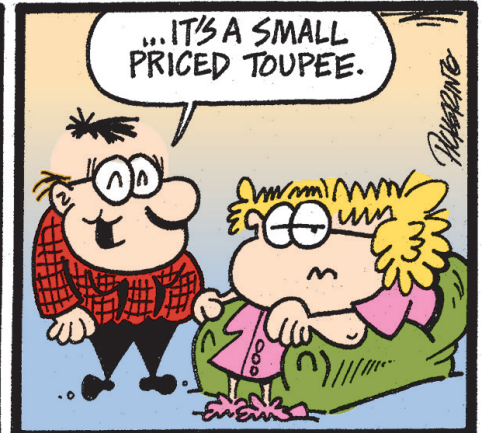
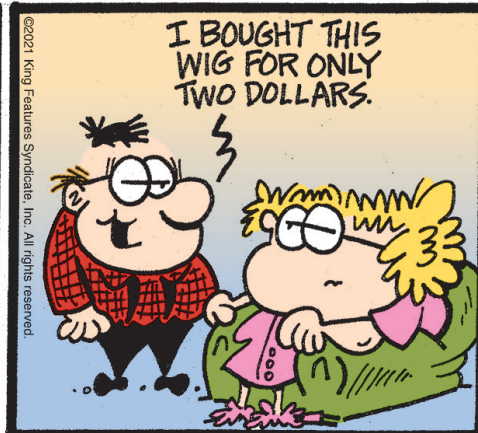
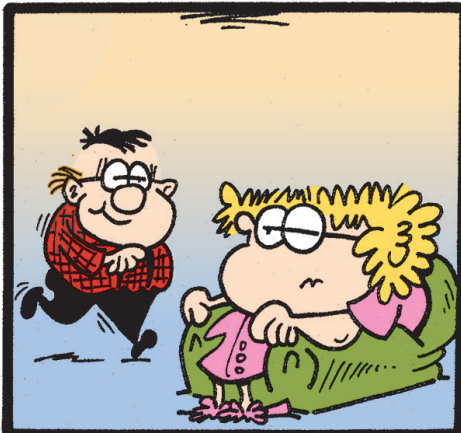
"VERY WELL - WE SHALL
SHARE THE DANGERS
EQUALLY." HE INSERTS
THE KEY
INTO THE
LOCK ...



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NEXT:
Within

The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



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Pickering

SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Mask ... or No Mask?

“I went to the grocery store without a mask today.” So said my neighbor just back from shopping.

I asked how many were maskless.

“Mostly it was the younger ones,” she said.

Which didn't surprise me. The 18-29 year-old age group is the one with the smallest percentage of people vaccinated, according to a recent poll.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says we don't need to wear a mask any longer, indoors or outdoors, if fully vaccinated. But a survey of U.S. doctors showed that over half disagreed with the CDC's new loosened rule. A survey of nurses said the same thing, at an even greater rate. Both groups said the easing of restrictions is premature.

And if the loosened mask restrictions were supposed to encourage people to get the vaccine, it failed spectacularly. A recent Kaiser poll revealed that 85% of those who don't want the vaccine don't care about the mask rule.

We have so many young people here where I live with no masks and no vaccine. We have a big population of seniors with underlying health conditions that make getting COVID even more dangerous. We have a wide variety of variants now with no clear indication about whether the vaccines cover those.

I only need look at our local statistics to know the virus is not only still with us, but in some cases it's getting worse. We have more people in the ICU than before, and more of them are on ventilators than we saw before. While they don't release the ages of people in the ICU, it's known here that the patients are mostly the younger ones that object to the vaccines ... and masks.

Am I ready to go to the store without a mask? No, not yet.

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1. Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Walter Johnson holds the Major League Baseball all-time record for shutouts with how many?

2. What British golfer won the Open Championship in 1934, '37 and '48? (Hint: The European Tour's Rookie of the Year award is named after him.)

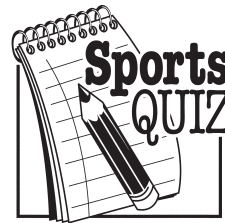
3. In 1989, the New York Knicks hired what 33-year-old to be their head coach?

4. What college football bowl game was first played at Yankee Stadium in 2010?

5. What Pro Football Hall of Fame kicker holds the NFL record for regular-season games played with 382 from 1982-2007?

6. Name the rookie NHL goaltender who started every regular-season game for the Detroit Red Wings in 1964-65?

7. Businesswoman Gail Miller was



by Ryan A. Berenz

owner of what NBA franchise from 2009-20?

Answers

1. 110.
2. Sir Henry Cotton.
3. Stu Jackson.
4. The New Era Pinstripe Bowl.
5. Morten Andersen.
6. Roger Crozier.
7. The Utah Jazz.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Cats Shouldn't Get a Free Pass to Poop

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: Could you explain why cats can poop in my garden and the owners are not responsible for them? Cats kill birds and chipmunks, and they dig in my garden. Children's sandboxes get fouled by cats. Cat poop is really unpleasant and can spread diseases. It seems unfair that cat owners should get all the enjoyment out of them, but not have to be responsible for their messes. Why do cat owners get a free pass? What can be done to keep the cats from killing birds and leaving messes in my yard? — *Pat in Spokane*

DEAR PAT: You're absolutely right. Cats can wreak havoc on the local environment as they don't limit their hunting to mice: A 2013 study estimated that cats kill billions of songbirds per year in the U.S. alone ([\[niamag.com\]\(http://niamag.com\) and search for "The Moral Cost of Cats"\). Yet owners who allow their cats outdoors often don't think that their sweet, adorable Fluffy could be a neighborhood menace.](http://www.smithso-</p></div><div data-bbox=)

That's one reason I constantly ask owners to keep their cats indoors. It's also for the cats' personal safety; they're at risk of being attacked by bigger wildlife or other cats.

Right now, there are two things you can do. First, deter cats from coming onto your property. Scatter a mixture of used coffee grounds, lemon peels and vinegar around the perimeter of the yard (pans of vinegar also work). Cover exposed ground in garden beds with river rock to discourage digging.

Second, raise awareness in the community. Spread the word about the damage cats do, and what owners can do to prevent it. Do this by talking with your neighbors and speaking at town or HOA meetings. Get the word out so the entire community can address the problem.

Send your tips, comments or questions to ask@pawscorner.com.

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

between the vowels in "bed" and "bad."

* Magnolia plants are so ancient that they're pollinated by beetles, as they existed prior to the appearance of bees.

* A study by psychologists found that when 4- to 6-year-olds pretended to be Batman while doing a boring but important task, it helped them resist distraction and stay more focused. (We're trying this the next time we wash the dishes.)

* Tootsie Rolls were added to soldiers' rations in World War II due to their ability to withstand all weather conditions.

* In medieval games of chess, pawns that had been promoted to a queen were given the title of "adviser," so as to not imply that the king had more than one queen or was guilty of adultery!

* Those tears you see in the Tin Man's eyes in "The Wizard of Oz" were made of chocolate syrup, as machine oil didn't photograph well.

* Ancient Egyptians loved their cats so much that household members would shave their eyebrows as a sign of mourning when the cat died. Mourning ended when their brows had grown back.

Thought for the Day: "I never thought in terms of being a leader. I thought very simply in terms of helping people." -- John Hume

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* In Tikrit, Iraq, there's a 6-foot-tall monument of a shoe that journalist Muntadhar al-Zeidi threw at then-President George W. Bush.

* Speaking of shoes, a collector of same is called a Sneakerhead.

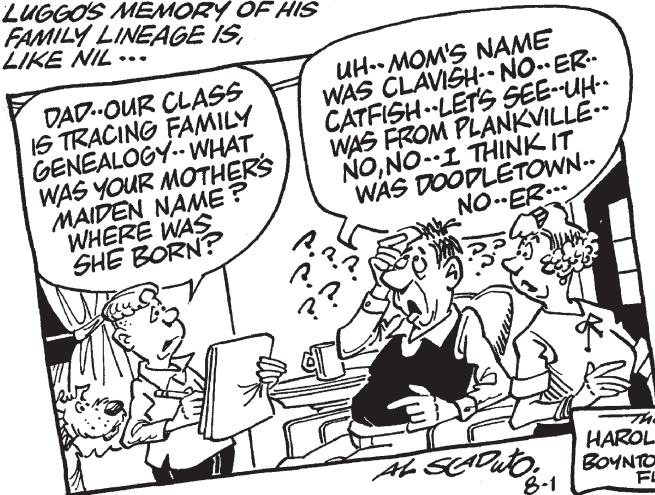
* Researchers were able to mimic the voice of a 3,000-year-old Egyptian mummy by re-creating much of its vocal tract using medical scanners, 3D printing and an electronic larynx. The mummy had little to say, however, even after all that time, as they produced just a single sound somewhere

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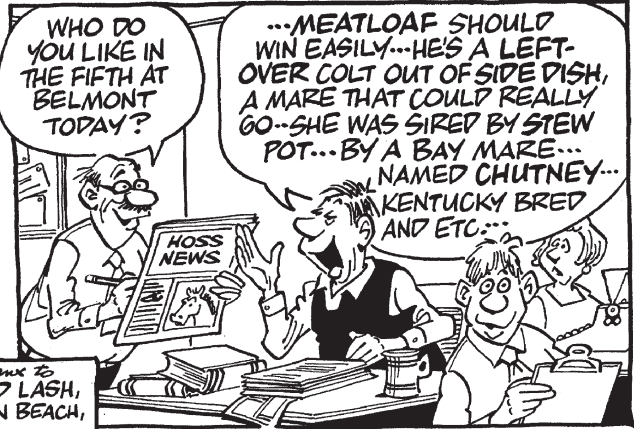
THEY'LL DO IT EVERY TIME

LUGGO'S MEMORY OF HIS FAMILY LINEAGE IS, LIKE NIL...

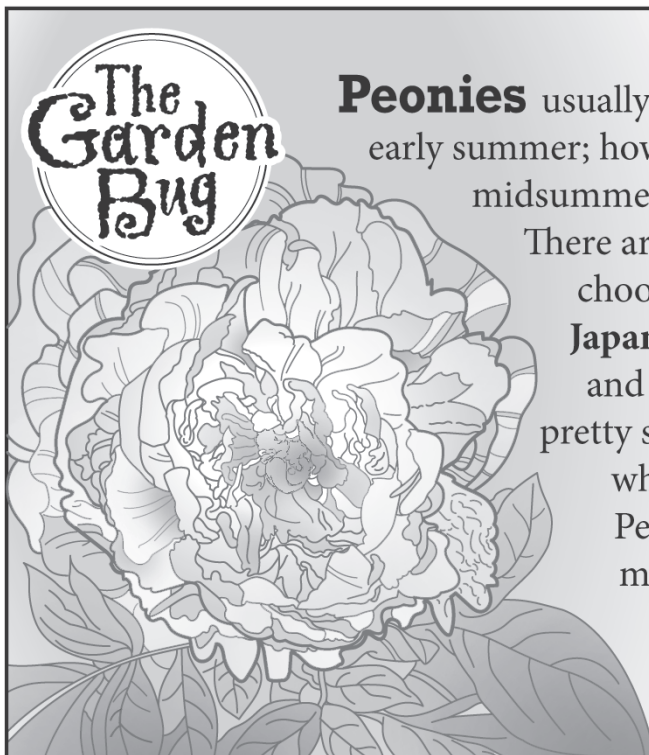


BY AL SCADUTO

BUT-ASK OL' LUGGO FOR A LINE ON ANY NAG AT ANY TRACK--AND HE EXPOUNDS LIKE THIS...



NO PLACE TO HIDE DEPT-



Peonies usually bloom late spring through early summer; however, some nurseries offer midsummer or late-summer varieties.

There are six peony flower types to choose from: **anemone**, **single**, **Japanese**, **semi-double**, **double** and **bomb**. Some peonies have pretty scents like roses or lemons, while others have none at all. Peonies flower every year for many years; some have done so for over 100 years.

- Brenda Weaver

Source: www.almanac.com

VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

Veterans Village

The older veterans stood in a semi-circle in the rear parking lot of the coffee shop, watching the activity and drinking coffee. What they were watching was the creation of the first two tiny homes that would eventually launch the Veterans Village.

Sarge had found construction drawings in the trash done by one of his homeless dormitory veterans, David, who had finally confessed that, yes, he used to be the owner of a construction company.

“But that was before,” David said. Before his life took a nosedive. Before he’d ended up homeless.

“And this is now,” said Sarge, spreading out the drawings.

After many discussions, after conferences with Sarge’s attorney and banker, after breaking through David’s fear-induced resistance, papers were signed. The plan was to sell several homes and generate enough cash to buy a small piece of land. On that

to buy a small piece of land. On that spot Veterans Village would rise, tiny homes for homeless veterans, all built by David. The construction site in the back parking lot was a busy place during the day, with experienced veteran carpenters doing the work.

The minute the roofs were shingled, a local man stepped up and asked how much the tiny houses were going to sell for. Sarge eased into the periphery of the conversation, staying silent but also staying nearby in case David faltered.

But he didn’t.

Instead, David smiled, confident and in charge, and said, “Now that’s going to depend on the finishes you’d want, sir. If you step over here, I can show you the flooring choices, the exterior cladding, the appliances you can choose from ...”

One of the elderly veterans waved Sarge over and whispered a question: “Does he know yet?”

Sarge shook his head.

No, David didn’t know that the elderly veterans and their families had banded together, hunted for land and opened their wallets. David was closer to creating the Veterans Village than he ever imagined.

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SDSU Extension Urges Testing for Nitrate Due to Drought

Brookings, S.D. - More than 63% of South Dakota is now labeled as being in a Severe Drought (D2) or Extreme Drought (D3) region. While the intense heat and lack of precipitation is creating an adverse growing season for farmers, the weather conditions are also not conducive for putting up high-quality forage either.

"With the current drought conditions across the state, the risk of high nitrates in forages is increased due to slowed photosynthesis and conversion of nitrate into proteins," says South Dakota State University (SDSU) Extension Cow/Calf Field Specialist Adele Harty.

SDSU Extension encourages producers to get standing forages tested before being harvested for hay or grazing. Available at various SDSU Extension locations and veterinary clinics across the state (extension.sdstate.edu/nitrate-quicktest-forages), the Nitrate QuikTest for Forages allows producers to make decisions based on the presence or absence of nitrates and appropriate timing for cutting.

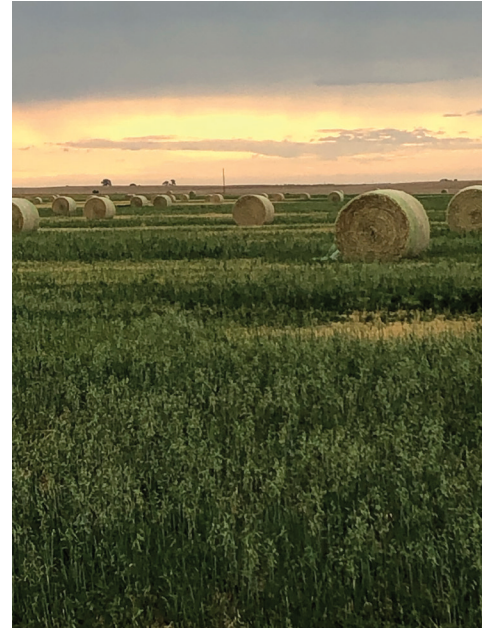
"This is a qualitative test," Harty says. "Therefore, if the results are positive, the recommendation will be to wait a few days and bring an additional sample in for re-testing. If it is negative, the hay can be cut without risk of nitrates."

If the hay has already been cut and it tests positive, Harty says the recommendation is to send a core sample in after the hay is baled so that a representative sample can be collected and sent to a lab for quantitative analysis prior to feeding.

A representative sample needs to be taken from different areas across the field to reflect topography and soil differences, as these factors can affect nitrate levels. Harty advises selecting plants from at least 10 different areas and cutting the plant at ground level or pulling it out of the ground so that the lowest growth nodes can be tested, as the highest concentration of nitrate is in the lowest third of the plant. The more representative the sample, the better the test will work to identify potential nitrate concerns, she says.

"Be diligent about testing forages prior to haying or grazing to prevent the negative impacts that nitrates can cause, specifically in ruminant animals," Harty says. "If crops, such as wheat, fail to make grain, and producers plan to utilize them for a hay crop, test them for nitrates prior to harvest to determine their safety level. The higher the level of nitrogen fertilizer that is applied, the higher the risk for nitrate toxicity. Always err on the side of caution and have feeds tested."

To get a Nitrate QuikTest completed, contact your local Regional Extension Center (extension.sdstate.edu/nitrate-quicktest-forages). For specific questions on the test, contact Harty at 605-394-1722 or Adele.Harty@sdstate.edu or Jaelyn Quintana at 605-394-1722 or Jaelyn.Quintana@sdstate.edu.



If the hay has already been cut and it tests positive, Harty says the recommendation is to send a core sample in after the hay is baled so that a representative sample can be collected and sent to a lab for quantitative analysis prior to feeding. (SDSU Extension)

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CONGRESSMAN
DUSTY JOHNSON
Representing **SOUTH DAKOTA** at large



Fleeting Freedoms

Earlier this month marked the 32nd anniversary of Tiananmen Square, a tragic day in which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) forced the silence of thousands of pro-democracy activists and killed hundreds.

Unfortunately, no Chinese citizen will find mention of that day in their history books. That's because the CCP continues its suppression of democratic values.

This past week, China forced Apple Daily, Hong Kong's pro-democracy newspaper to shut down, citing violation of its year-old national security law.

Under Beijing's new national security law, any act of subversion or collusion with foreign forces as deemed by the authoritarian regime may be punishable up to life in prison.

The forced shutdown of Apple Daily comes just one week after hundreds of officers raided their office. Several of the newspaper's top editors and executives were arrested, the company's assets were frozen, and reporters' computers were seized.

In the company's final press release, they noted they could no longer continue publication, given the pressuring circumstances.

With the doors closing at Apple Daily, the CCP has taken down the last Hong Kong based pro-democracy paper. Not only is this move alarming for its crackdown on democratic freedoms, it brings Beijing another step closer to reining in what little autonomy Hong Kong has left.

Two years have passed since democratic protests rocked Hong Kong. The U.S. must continue to stand by Hong Kong and its fight for freedom while standing up to the Chinese government, which is shaping up to be the single greatest geopolitical threat to the United States in the 21st century.

A free press is the lifeblood of democracy. It is enshrined in our Constitution as a right guaranteed by the First Amendment. While the Founders could never have envisioned the magnitude and sophistication of what media has evolved into, they understood the inextricable bond between a free press and a lasting democracy.

As we advocate for democratic freedoms around the world, we must continue to preserve those same freedoms in our homeland.

South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Biden's Backdoor Death Tax

Over the past year, our farmers and ranchers went to work every day to feed this country during a time of great challenge and uncertainty for millions of Americans.

How does President Biden plan to thank them? By raising their taxes.

The so-called "American Families Plan" would create a backdoor death tax on family farms and millions of other small businesses.

For decades, our tax code has protected farmland from being double-taxed when it is passed on to the next generation by ensuring that a capital gain is not realized at the time of death and transfer – otherwise known as a step-up in basis. But President Biden needs more money to pay for his \$1.8 trillion wish list of big government programs, and he's expecting hardworking Americans to pick up the check. His tax plan would eliminate step-up in basis and impose a capital gains tax of up to 43.4 percent on unrealized gains valued at over \$1 million. President Biden claims that this will only impact the wealthiest Americans. Unfortunately, that's not the case.

Farmers and ranchers tend to own large amounts of valuable land, equipment, and livestock that makes them appear wealthy on paper, but they often have very little cash on hand. They spend years incurring great costs to make their land more productive, but they never know each year whether they will make any money. By the time that land is transferred to an heir at death it likely will have increased greatly in value, and under President Biden's plan this would trigger a significant tax burden for the person who inherits it.

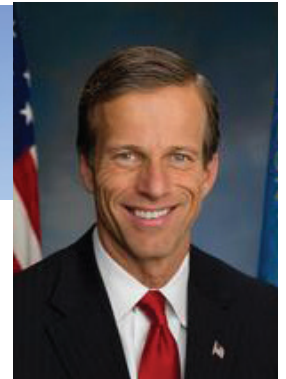
I experienced this firsthand when my dad died in an accident on our family farm and ranch. Our family was dealing with a tragedy, and suddenly we were faced with a massive death tax bill. We had land, machinery, and cattle, but we didn't have any money in the bank. Thankfully, we had support from our small community and were able to borrow on our land and pay off that debt. But it took ten years and a lot of sacrifice. Those less fortunate than us would have been forced to sell the family farm to pay that tax.

That's why I got into politics in the first place. And when I was in Congress, I worked with President Trump to repeal the death tax for most family farms in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

Our farmers and ranchers face challenges every day that few of us can imagine. They work and sacrifice to feed the world while building something that they can pass on to their kids and grandkids. Another death tax will only make it more difficult for young farmers and ranchers to acquire the land and equipment needed to pursue a life in agriculture. As a result, we will see more farm consolidation and the loss of vibrant rural communities.

Prosperity is not created by higher taxes and bigger government. Leaders like Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump knew that. The American people create our shared prosperity through their independence, hard work, and ingenuity. Washington, D.C. should learn to leave that well enough alone.

John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Founding Fathers' Spirit of Patriotism Lives on in Americans

Two hundred and forty-five years ago, a group of patriots stood up and declared independence for themselves and their countrymen. They did this despite the risk to their own lives and with no promise that their campaign for freedom would succeed. All they had was a ragtag team of volunteer soldiers who were willing to stand up to a global empire – funds were tight, weapons were scarce, and there was still much disagreement over the direction this new country should go.

What they knew to be true, though, was they had the strength of a just cause and the desire for freedom. Despite the long odds, succeed they did. And thus, our country was founded upon that spirit of patriotism, bravery, and freedom – and we've never looked back.

The famed document our Founders adopted on July 4, 1776, laid out the case for the colonies' independence from Britain. It proclaimed that government derives its power from the governed and that it is, therefore, the right of the people to change their government. This was a radical idea during the era of kings and queens and emperors, but it has stood the test of time and has remained a core tenet of our nation to this day.

Our Founding Fathers wanted to form a government – a democratic republic – that empowered the people to decide their representation through elections. Our current government as we know it today wasn't created until the signing of the Constitution 11 years later, but the ideas put forth in the Declaration of Independence are woven into the very fabric of our democratic system.

The rich history of our Founding Fathers is still evident today. Not just in the monuments and statues erected in their honor, but also in the adventurous, freedom-loving American spirit. We are a people of free thought and independence, resiliency and risk-taking, loyalty and faith. These qualities drove history's patriots to fight for the independence we enjoy today, which has been preserved by generations of selfless Americans who have answered the call to defend it. These inspiring traits made our Founding Fathers successful in creating the greatest country the earth has ever known. These are still the qualities that make America a nation of deep-rooted communities, religious diversity, and strong family ties.

Each year on the Fourth of July, we join together as a country to celebrate our nation's founding and take pride in the great things we've accomplished together. Through the centuries, there have been ups and downs, but we toast to these cherished words that have helped guide our country through our ever-evolving journey: "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

America has always promised something unique to its people: to be a country where you can pursue your dreams, find happiness, and earn success—opportunities we cherish every day in South Dakota.

I wish every American a happy Independence Day. I hope that we can all strive to fulfill our Founders' promise and pass along the great American spirit for generations to come.

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Celebrating the most American of freedoms

By Ken Paulson

The 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence knew what they were getting into. As we celebrate the 4th of July 245 years later with flags and fireworks, it's easy to forget that these patriots risked death to give a new nation life.

If you've never read the Declaration of Independence in its entirety, this is a good time to do that. More than two centuries later, it's still a good read. These rebels, who would be accused of treason by Great Britain, wrote the document in a reasoned manner, attempting to convey to the world that their cause was a just one.

At its most basic, it's a demand for a divorce, with one party explaining why this marriage can't be saved. What's fascinating, though, is how the list of complaints about the king of England not only cited justification for the break-up, but also telegraphed the principles the new nation would insist upon in establishing its own governance.

The entire document was a bold statement, speaking truth to power. As it established its own future, this new nation would have to find a way to guarantee free speech, particularly in regard to criticizing government.

The Declaration of Independence lists more than two dozen examples of why the king "was unfit to be the ruler of a free people." The new United States of America would need to create a check on those who abused their power. That would come from a free press.

Much of the Declaration is devoted to examples of the king ignoring the colonies' needs and maintaining a stranglehold on new legislation to address those needs. Clearly, the United States would have to guarantee petition and assembly.

Memorably, the Declaration states that all men are endowed by their "Creator" with certain "unalienable rights." This was an acknowledgement of a Higher Power without a specific reference to any religion. This new nation would go on to guarantee freedom of faith.

Freedom of speech, press, and religion. The rights of petition and assembly. Today, we see all five nestled together in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. It took a war for independence and 17 years, but those aspirations became the cornerstone for a young and vibrant country.

Fast forward to the 21st century. A new survey of citizens around the globe by legal public-policy center Justitia has assessed how citizens in 33 countries feel about freedom of speech. It found that most citizens in most countries feel free speech is important and positive, but they waver when presented with scenarios in which free speech offends others or hampers society.

In order, Norway, Denmark, the U.S., and Sweden top the list: Citizens of these nations say they are steadfast in their support of free speech. At the bottom of the list: Tunisia, Kenya, Egypt, and Pakistan.

In a telling passage, Justitia quotes free-speech expert and Columbia University President Lee Bollinger as saying the U.S. is "the most speech-protective of any nation on earth, now or throughout history." The report also notes that a 2015 Pew research study determined that no nation in the world was more supportive of free speech and a free press than the U.S.

At our best – and not without lapses – we walk that talk.

In 1776, our founders published a Declaration of Independence, but also a declaration of intent. Those early Americans sought "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" by creating a nation founded on freedom. But those freedoms must never be taken for granted, and our collective vigilance is essential.

On the most American of holidays, let's be sure to celebrate the most American of freedoms.

Ken Paulson is director of the Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University. A First Amendment expert, Paulson has written and been quoted widely on issues related to free speech and a free press, freedom to assemble and to petition the government, and freedom of religion.



EMBRACE YOUR FAITH.

Protect freedom of religion.
freespeech.center

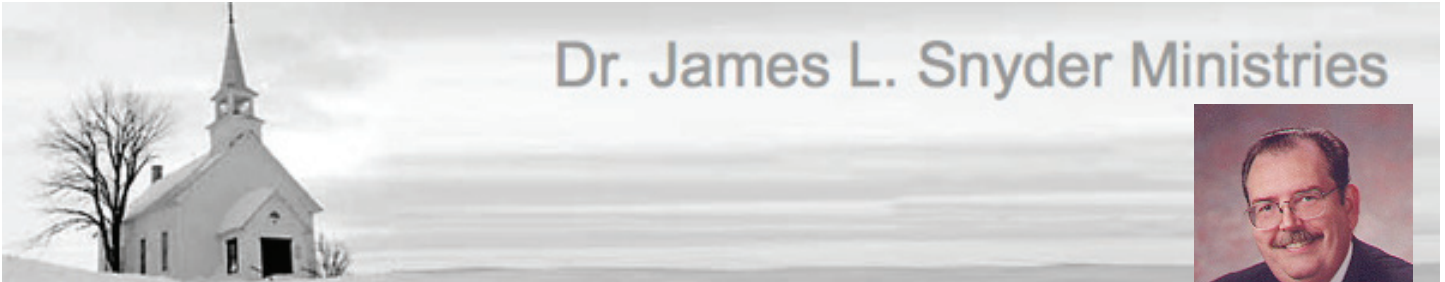


FREE SPEECH
CENTER
at Middle Tennessee State University

MIDDLE
TENNESSEE
STATE UNIVERSITY

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Dr. James L. Snyder Ministries



Bump, Bump, Bump, Where's the Scratch

Life can get crazy because there are so many crazy people in the world. I know, I'm one.

Through the years, I have come to appreciate crazy people. They make life interesting and make me look less crazy than I really am.

The interesting thing is that a crazy person shows up in your life when you least expect it. There's no way you can prepare for these crazy episodes. If only I could wear a camera on my glasses, I could make a fortune.

The other day I drove through the McDonald's drive-through to order my morning cup of coffee to take to my office. Of course, I do that every morning as a routine.

This morning was rather a stressful kind of a morning, and I had a schedule I wanted to complete for the day. So I was thinking about what I was going to do as I was driving through the drive-through. In front of me was a blue car and a lady driving it.

She finished her order and then began driving forward, I started driving forward and happened to look left at the ordering place, and unbeknownst to me, she stopped and I bumped into her bumper.

Isn't that what bumpers are for?

That was the beginning of one of the craziest episodes I've had in a long time. Oh, that my camera was in place.

As a young person, I enjoyed watching "Smile, You're on Candid Camera." I thought this was happening to me.

The lady jumped out of her car screaming at me and shaking her fist, and I thought it was a joke. You know how people like to prank other people, so I thought this was what was happening.

I looked at her and started laughing, thinking that this was part of a joke.

The more I laughed, the more she yelled and screamed at me. She used language that even sailors would not use in public. She asked me to do things to myself that are physically impossible to do. Enough said on that.

Then she went to her car, got her cell phone, came back, and took pictures of my truck's license plate. I hope I don't see it on Facebook. Then she took pictures of what my truck had done to her bumper.

I got out to look, and I had to look very hard to find it, and finally, there it was. A little scratch about the size of a fingernail. I looked at the front of my truck, and I couldn't find any scratches at all comparable to her scratch.

She began yelling, "Don't you dare touch me!"

I don't do a lot of things and not touching her was at the top of that list.

Then she took her cell phone and showed it to me and said, "I'm calling the police."

We were in the middle of the drive-through, and the customers behind us couldn't get through because she would not move until the police got there.

The manager of McDonald's came out and calmed her down and finally got her to move out of the line and wait for the police. I followed and parked next to her.

As we were waiting for the police to come, she was taking pictures of the tiny scratch. I did not talk to her; I just let her go and do her thing.

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Finally, the police arrived. I was a little concerned because we would be wasting his time when there are more serious issues for him to deal with. But, crazy will be crazy.

He talked to us and took our information, and then he looked toward her car. He didn't go over and look at it because he said it is not worth a police investigation. I agreed with him. So did the manager of McDonald's. A scratch isn't really that much damage. It probably could be fixed with fingernail polish.

The manager said that there were cameras and that incident would have been recorded.

She finally drove off, and I had a short chat with the police officer, and then we parted ways.

That was not the end of the story.

Have you ever faced a temptation so strong that it was all you could do not to yield to it?

One of my favorite hymns has this phrase, "Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin."

I wasn't able to place my order before this incident, so I drove around McDonald's to get into the drive-through. You will not guess who was in front of me in the left lane of that drive-through?

Oh yeah, it was the lady with the scratch on her car.

My temptation was to pull in behind her and make sure she noticed I was behind her. I wrestled with that thought for a moment or two.

After some thoughtful consideration, I pulled over to the right lane and, in fact, got ahead of her in ordering my coffee. In the McDonald's store, that was the talk of the employees.

It's not often that I get involved in such a crazy situation.

As I was driving away from McDonald's a verse of Scripture came to my mind. "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38).

Temptations will come every day, but I have the strength in Christ to resist every temptation for the glory of God.

EARTHTALK

From the Editors of E - The Environmental Magazine

Dear EarthTalk: I am looking to finally ditch the old minivan and upgrade to an EV. What are the best choices out there nowadays in terms of up-front cost and fuel efficiency?

-- J. Wilson, Summertown, TN

Now is a great time to make the jump into an electric vehicle (EV)—those futuristic new cars that run solely on electricity instead of gasoline. Of course, EVs are still more expensive than their gas-powered counterparts, and re-charging facilities can be few and far between. But those gaps are shrinking, and if you can live with a few trade-offs, you'll be saving money down the line by avoiding the gas station altogether while helping wean humanity off of fossil fuels.

If you haven't surveyed the EV landscape in a while, you'll be shocked at all the choices available nowadays. Thirteen different automakers now offer American consumers some 19 different flavors of an all-EV drivetrain. Tesla remains king of the hill, currently offering three different models that get at least 300 miles per charge. While Teslas aren't the cheapest of the EV lot, ranging in price from \$40k all the way up to \$120k, the savings in gas money if you drive a lot may more than make up for the premium pricing.

According to the website Zutobi.com, Teslas are also the cheapest to drive, racking up about \$3 in electricity costs on average for every 100 miles driven—meaning that your total fuel expense for a cross country trip of 3,000 miles would be about \$100. (Finding places to recharge every 300 miles might be a challenge, especially in those states less inclined toward supporting green vehicles.)

Tesla is far from the only EV game in town. Audi, BMW, Ford, Jaguar, Mini Cooper, Nissan, Polestar, Porsche, Volvo, Kia, Hyundai and Chevrolet all have horses in the race. If range is your thing and you don't want a Tesla, try Ford's Mustang Mach-E California Route 1, a two-seater that can go 305 miles on a charge, and signals the classic American car company's newly announced commitment to a future full of EV drivetrains. Other good choices with range in mind are Chevrolet's Bolt EV, which tops out at 259 miles per charge, and Hyundai's Kona Electric at 258 miles per charge.

If saving money up-front is your primary concern, the best deals going in EVs include the Mini Cooper Electric Hardtop 2 Door, Nissan's Leaf, Hyundai's Ioniq and Chevy's Bolt EV—each going for a suggested retail price of around \$30k. The downside to several of these cheaper EVs is shorter range—the Mini Cooper can only make it 110 miles before it needs a recharge. But if you use it for short to medium length daily commute, especially to a place where it can recharge all day, then the money saved up front can go straight into the piggy bank. Another factor to keep in mind is that Americans who purchase a new EV or PHEV can still get a tax credit for up to \$7,500 from Uncle Sam depending on the automaker and the number of EVs they've sold to date.

EarthTalk® is produced by Roddy Scheer & Doug Moss for the 501(c)3 nonprofit EarthTalk. See more at <https://emagazine.com>. To donate, visit <https://earthtalk.org>. Send questions to: question@earthtalk.org.



f you are looking for a lower price tag and a decent amount of range in a new EV, Chevrolet's Bolt is among the better bets. Credit: Stephen Rees, FlickrCC.

Drop in daycare openings putting financial and logistical hardships on South Dakota families

Danielle Ferguson

South Dakota News Watch

A major decline in the availability of affordable child-care options in South Dakota has prevented some parents from entering the workforce and created financial and emotional hardships for low-income families and single parents trying to balance work and daycare needs.

Thousands of available daycare slots for children in South Dakota were lost during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to Early Learner South Dakota, a statewide child advocacy group. The resulting lack of affordable child care is a barrier for parents trying to return to the workforce during a time when the state and nation are experiencing vast labor shortages and businesses are in great need of employees.

Families unable to find child care, especially now that the school year has ended, are sometimes forced to limit or completely cut one parent's job, and single parents are stuck paying a large portion of their income on out-of-home care.

Women in South Dakota have disproportionately left the workforce and are rejoining at a slower rate than men, according to statistics from the state department of labor, in part because of a lack of child care.

"Without child care, people can't work," said Pigeon Big Crow, program director for the Oglala Sioux Tribe Child Care and Development Program. "Without work, they rely more on social service programs. Having child care is vital to a local economy."

Affordable daycare was limited prior to the pandemic, but the scarcity became far worse during the COVID-19 pandemic and remains so amid the pandemic recovery.

South Dakota has one of the highest rates of working parents in the nation and a shortage of state-registered spots for families seeking out-of-home care. More than 75% of children are in families with all available parents working. The state is second in the nation only to Massachusetts for the percentage of children under 5 who are in a child care setting for more than 10 hours each week, at 68%.

Some rural counties have zero state-registered child care options, such as Mellette, Sully, Shannon and Hyde counties, according to the South Dakota Department of Social Services care search tool. Day County has the highest number of children younger than 6 per childcare slot, yet has just two state-registered options, one of which is an after-school program.

Families of the 51,000 children in need of daycare can pay anywhere from \$5,200 to \$8,700 per year for each toddler or infant they enroll, according to a report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. For many South Dakota families, that is a big expense relative to their income: almost half of South Dakota children under the age of six live in a household with an income below 200% of the federal poverty



The Oglala Sioux Tribe Care & Development Program, shown here, has programs for tribal children to learn about math, technology, science, art and math. The tribal facilities transitioned to home-based care in March 2020 and reopened some centers in May 2021. Photo:

Courtesy OST Child Care & Development Program

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standard. Families that make the median income on average pay about 11% of their income toward infant child care, according to Kids Count.

The majority of state-registered providers and child care programs remained open and operational during much of the past year, but many still imposed some COVID-19 restrictions, even though the state did not require them. For many providers, that meant operational changes and decreased revenue.

Many child-care facilities returning to a pre-COVID-19 capacity are struggling to find workers to care for more kids.

Parents and providers worried during the pandemic that widespread closures of daycare facilities could result. Many child-care providers were taking fewer kids because of capacity limits or because parents kept their children at home.

Some smaller home daycares couldn't afford to stay open, compounding a decade-long trend of a decrease in home care centers in South Dakota. An exact number of facility closures is unknown because centers that take fewer than 12 children do not have to register and therefore may not be tracked by the state. A survey from the Bipartisan Policy Center estimates that 60% of daycares nationwide closed because they couldn't afford to operate during the pandemic and many may not be able to return.

Almost half of the family child care home operators in South Dakota who responded to a National Association for the Education of Young Children survey said they lost income last year because families who still used their services struggled to pay for care. One-third said parents couldn't pay any fees. About 33% said their operation wouldn't be able to remain open or reopen without financial support.

In the past year, slots for children at registered home agencies were lost at a quicker rate than in the previous six years. More than 1,800 slots were lost across the state in 2020, according to Early Learner South Dakota. From 2015 to 2019, about 2,900 spaces and 244 providers for in-home registered centers were lost, according to data from the Kids Count program at the University of South Dakota. In that same period, 19 new out-of-home day care centers were added.

State-registered facilities have capacity for about half of children under 6 years old, according to Kids Count, and slots in home care options are on the decline. In 2010, there were 923 family child care homes registered with the state. In 2020, there were 403, according to Kids Count. As of June 2021, there were 377 family child care homes registered with the state, according to the Department of Social Services.

Whether that decline is because more family home care options are closing or because fewer are choosing to register with the state is unknown, said Xanna Burg, coordinator for Kids Count.

"Either way, the data tells us that there are fewer licensed or registered options for parents now than 10 years ago," she said in a statement.

At one point during the last year, Nahida Barwari lost half of the children who were enrolled at her state-registered, in-home daycare. At least four families kept their children at home.

Barwari, who has been a daycare provider for the last 21 years in Sioux Falls, said some parents were frustrated with extra protocols and fearful of infection spread, and she had to sanitize and clean more often.

"It was hard, very hard," she said.

Barwari was able to stay open during the pandemic, and is slowly seeing more parents bring their children back to her care. She has all the labor help she needs to eventually return to caring for 12 children,



Nahida Barwari and her husband smile with two children enrolled in their family child care center in Sioux Falls. Barwari lost about half of her enrolled children during the pandemic, but is slowly starting to see more kids re-enroll. Photo: Courtesy of Nahida Barwari

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her full capacity as a state-registered family child care provider, because her husband and daughter are also licensed as child care workers.

"It's getting better," she said. "I think it's getting busier because people are tired of having to work and care for their child."

Parents across the state are seeking child care now more than ever with the school year ending, and with the continued closures of in-home care, more parents are turning to larger daycare centers.

"Parents are more willing to bring (their kids) into centers," said Lisa Carson, director of Apple Tree in eastern Sioux Falls. "What I've heard is a lot of in-homes have been closing down or don't know if they can stay open."

Carson, who used to be an in-home care provider, said she personally knows at least three in-home workers who had to close their business because of the pandemic.

Apple Tree has experienced a "rush" within the past few months, Carson said. She added that she's heard colleagues at other centers with larger capacities say the same.

"Everywhere else is getting pretty full," she said.

Carson struggled to find staff during the school year and was worried about a continued worker shortage when parents flooded phone lines in the spring, but she's starting to see an increase in interest from college students who are on summer break, she said.

Big Crow said the Oglala Sioux Tribe Child Care and Development Program is having a difficult time recruiting workers, even with a \$500 sign-on bonus.

"It's taking a toll on the ones who are here because their hours are longer," Big Crow said. "I'm really concerned because I don't want to burn them out."

The development program operates six centers in five towns for Oglala Sioux Tribe members. In March 2020, the program switched to home-based care. Staff trained family members and other workers to provide home-based care and delivered meals and education materials to families.

"We're very relative-oriented here," Big Crow said. "If we hear of a relative who needs help, we raise our hands to help."

Some parents have been hesitant to re-enroll their kids in centers, some of which reopened five weeks ago, for fear of coming into contact with other families who aren't vaccinated. Some families prefer to continue in-home care from relatives. However, Big Crow said enrollment is starting to increase, and so is her need for staff. One location already has a waiting list seven children deep and another one is delaying its opening because of a need for workers.

The childcare industry has lost hundreds of thousands of workers nationwide. About 166,800 fewer people were working in child care in December 2020 than had been in those jobs at the same time in 2019, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. South Dakota does not track how many people work for child care programs, but the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics says there were about 2,400 people working in licensed child care agencies across the state in May 2020. Historical data was not available.

In 2020, child care workers in South Dakota had a median hourly wage of \$10.39, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, or the equivalent to making about \$21,600 per year if working full-time.



Staff for and children enrolled in the Oglala Sioux Tribe Child Care and Development Program prepare medicine bags of sage to take home and give as gifts in spring 2020, before the pandemic shut down in-person care centers across the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Photo: Courtesy OST Child Care & Development Program

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"Low wages for child care workers leads to staffing instability, making it challenging for child care businesses to retain workers and remain open," said Burg, with Kids Count.

Bethesda of Aberdeen, a daycare facility in north-eastern South Dakota, chose to limit its capacity to the children of employees for the long-term care facility but was able to keep all of its daycare workers, said April Wirth, operations director of the daycare.

Workers were reassigned to other tasks within the long-term care facility until the need for more child care providers returned this spring. The daycare is almost back to its pre-pandemic capacity, and Wirth said she expects to need additional workers soon.

The decision to close care to the community was tough, she said, and the facility still hasn't regained all of the children who were formerly enrolled.

"We felt the right thing to do was to close to the community to try to keep the employees at the long-term care facility as safe as possible and still allow them to work because they were essential workers," she said.

In a Brookings County study of child care availability released in May 2021, the majority of responding parents said they had to contact at least three providers before finding an opening. One respondent said she called 21 facilities and was only able to find a slot nine months out from her request.

Another family had to take two children to two different facilities because they could not find a location with two openings. A single mother reported that she spent almost three-fourths of her monthly income on childcare. Some families chose to keep a parent at home because they couldn't find child care, and another parent had reservations about moving to Brookings over fears they wouldn't be able to find an opening.

The survey also showed that the majority of parents who responded use un-registered in-home day cares, but would prefer to take their child to a facility licensed by the state.

About 800 child care facilities are licensed, but Early Learner South Dakota and Kids Count estimate there are more than 2,000 daycare providers across the state. Only licensed providers are able to receive relief funds given to the state, such as those in the American Rescue Plan.

The South Dakota Department of Social Services received more than \$100 million for child care development and stabilization through the American Rescue Plan. That money can be used by providers for expenses such as personnel costs, rent, utilities, facilities maintenance, insurance, personal protective equipment, other health and safety practices and mental health services for child care provider staff and children.

"The State of South Dakota would likely have a hard time reaching out to more than half of the child care capacity in the state to promote these resources, because those child care providers are not registered," according to the brief from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe child care program is subsidy based, Big Crow said, and is the go-to option for families who need help paying for child care. Families receive aid based on income. CARES Act and American Rescue Plan funding is being used to pay 100% of the cost for families working in essential services and for families who just barely earn more than the threshold for aid but still can't afford child care, Big Crow said. Part of that money is also being used to expand services to tribal members living in Rapid City.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis report suggested that to improve South Dakota's child care infrastructure, the Legislature should look at expanding already existing subsidy programs, consider requiring more agencies to register, research the current child care landscape more and bring more Native American, immigrant, and communities of color into conversations about improving child care.

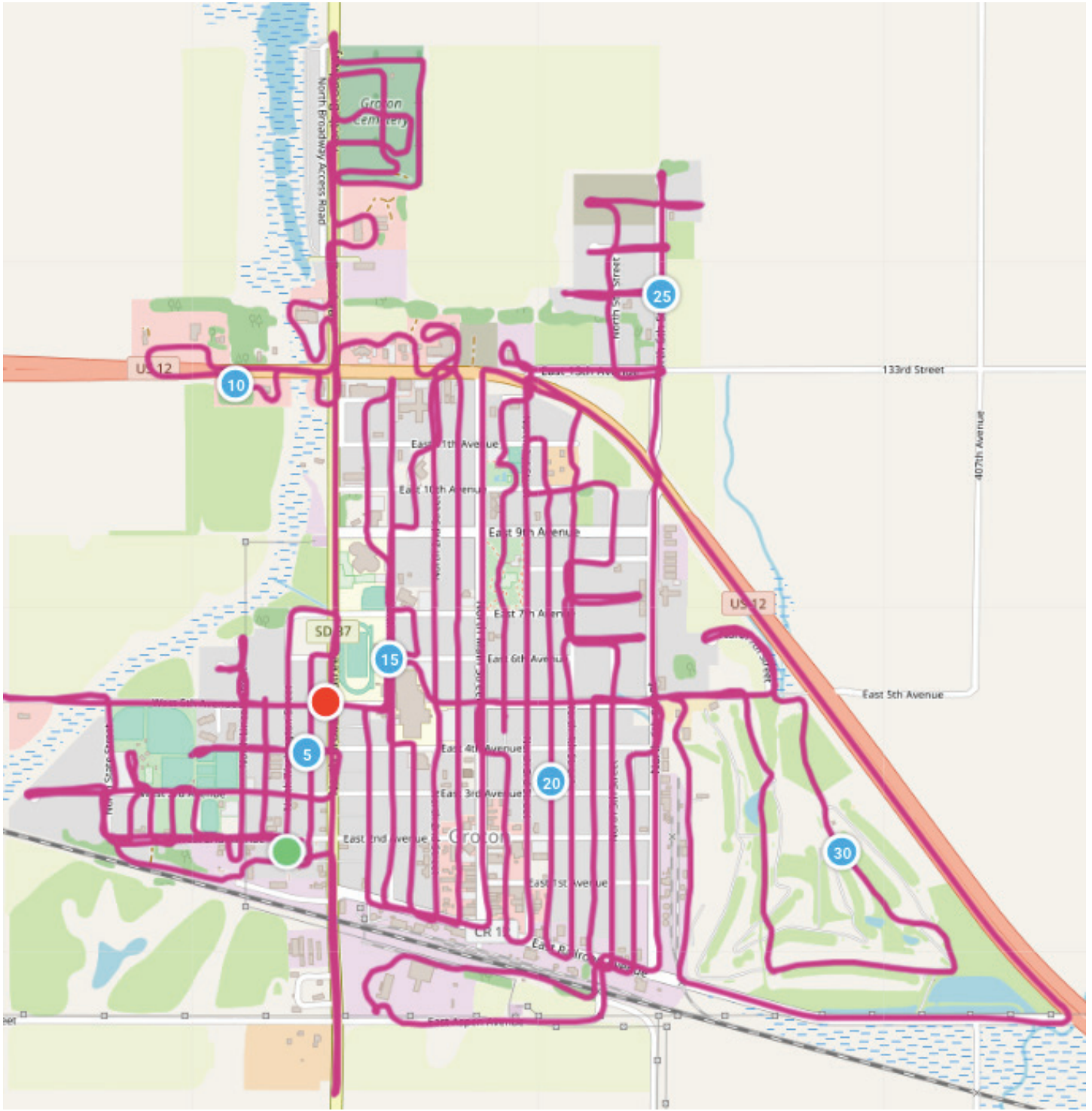


Apple Tree Children's Center in eastern Sioux Falls is quickly filling up with school letting out and more parents returning to work. Child care centers are among the industries that need workers amid a national labor shortage. Photo: Courtesy Lisa Carson

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Mosquito Control Sunday Morning

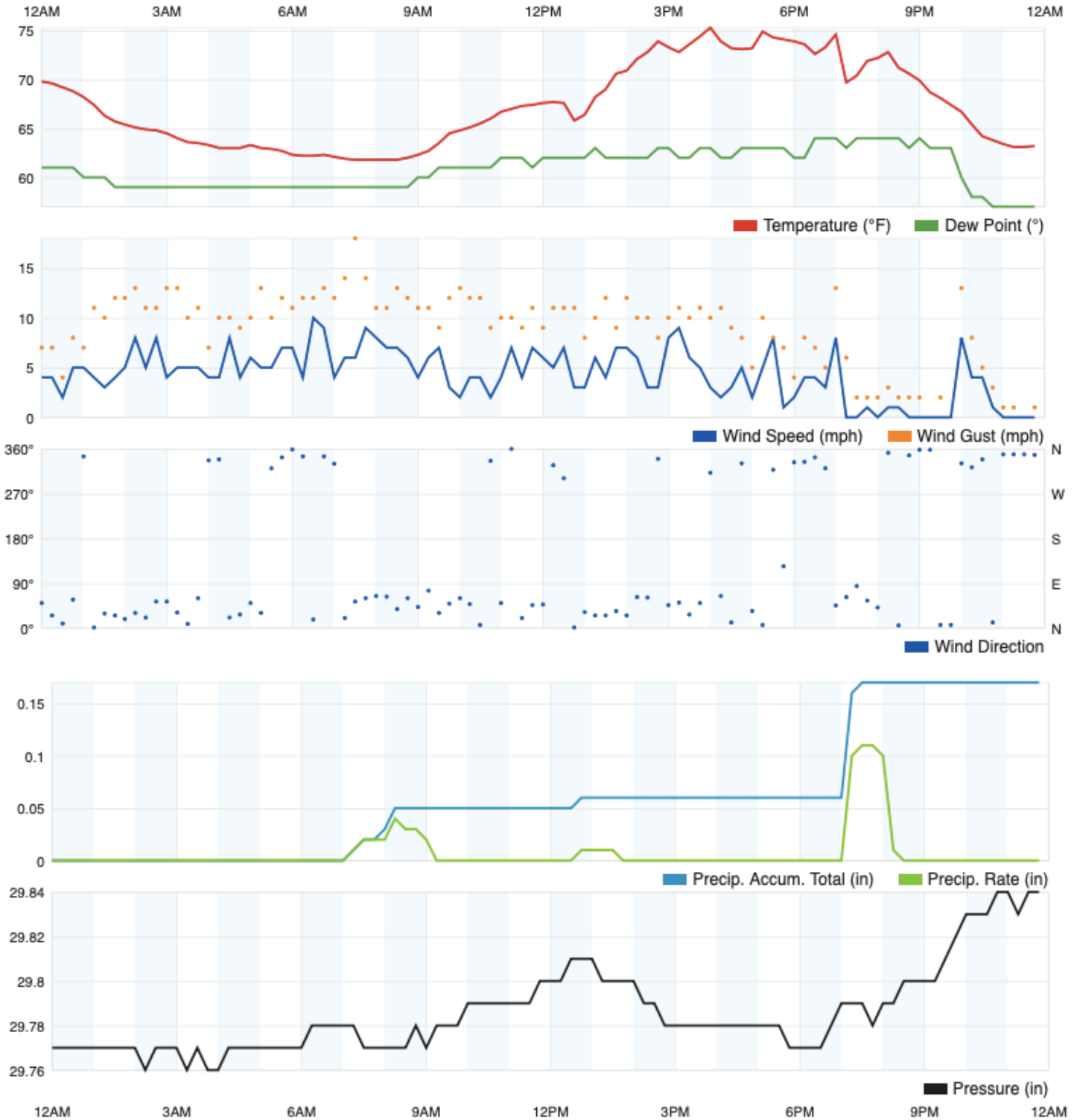


The City of Groton conducted mosquito control early Sunday morning. Nine gallons of Evolver 4x4 was used. The wind was light out of the WNW and it was 65 degrees

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs

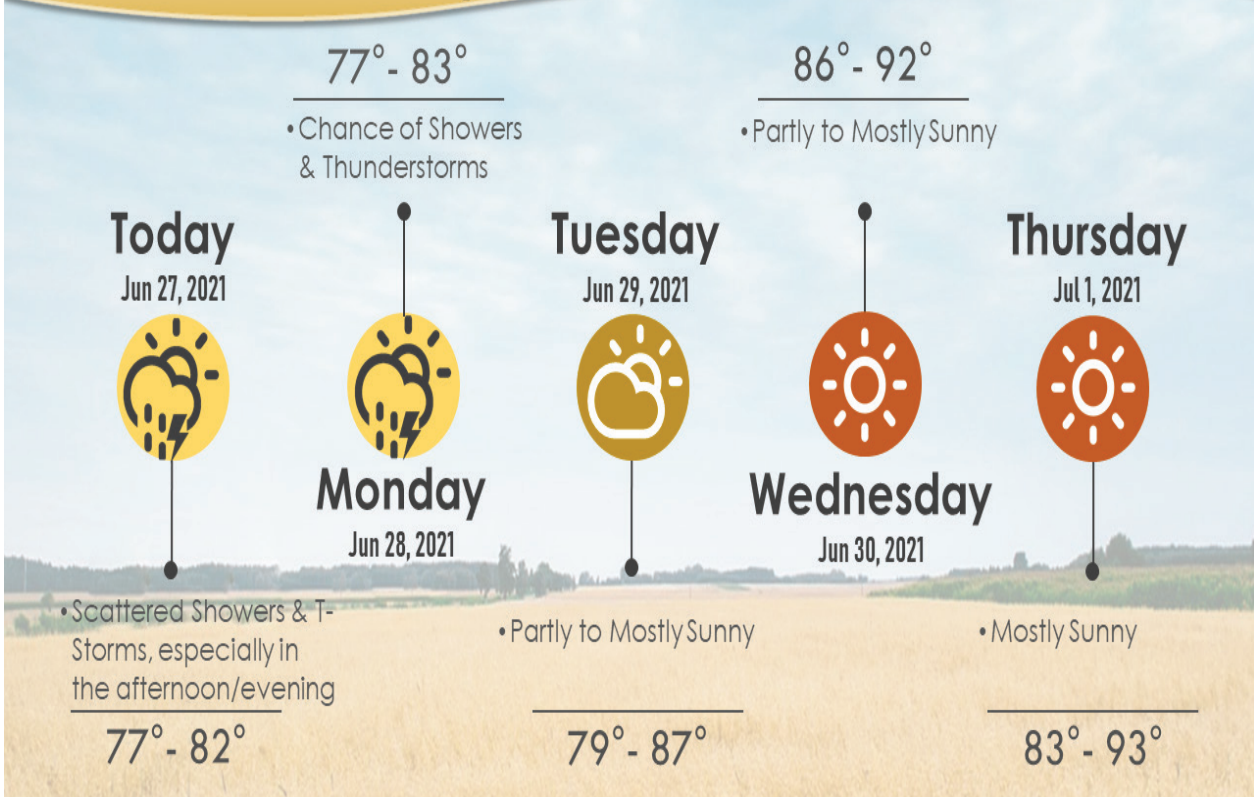


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Today	Tonight	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
				
40%	30%	30%		
Scattered T-storms	Chance T-storms	Chance T-storms	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 81 °F	Low: 56 °F	High: 80 °F	Low: 58 °F	High: 86 °F

Showers Possible through Monday, then Warmer & Dry



Scattered showers and thunderstorms will develop this afternoon with the heating of the day and continue into the evening hours. Similar conditions are expected again on Monday, then a period of warm and dry conditions will occur into the start of July.

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Today in Weather History

June 27, 1894: Three people were injured as a tornado destroyed a home 5 miles north of Houghton in Brown County. Lumber on a wagon was scattered for over a mile. This tornado was estimated to be an F2. Also, a second F2 tornado formed south of Aberdeen and moved northeast and went near Randolph, to beyond Bath. Several barns and two homes were destroyed along the narrow path. Three other small funnels were seen to touch down. Another tornado with estimated F2 strength moved ENE from northeast of St. Lawrence to Bonilla and Hitchcock. At least one home was destroyed. One person was killed in the destruction of her home, north of Wessington. An estimated F2 tornado hit 2 miles south of Henry. At least two small houses were blown away. There was another possible tornado 12 miles north of Henry. Numerous tornadoes continued into Minnesota.

June 27, 1928: A long-lived estimated F2 tornado moved southeast from 7 miles west of Faulkton, passing north and east of Orient. Buildings were damaged on nine farms. One home near Orient was riddled with timbers from a nearby grain elevator. This tornado was estimated to travel a distance of 40 miles.

1901 - There was a rain of fish from the sky at Tiller's Ferry. Hundreds of fish were swimming between cotton rows after a heavy shower. (David Ludlum)

1915: The temperature at Fort Yukon, Alaska soared to 100 degrees to establish a state record.

1957 - Hurricane Audrey smashed ashore at Cameron, LA, drowning 390 persons in the storm tide, and causing 150 million dollars damage in Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi. Audrey left only a brick courthouse and a cement-block icehouse standing at Cameron, and when the waters settled in the town of Crede, only four buildings remained. The powerful winds of Audrey tossed a fishing boat weighing 78 tons onto an off-shore drilling platform. Winds along the coast gusted to 105 mph, and oil rigs off the Louisiana coast reported wind gusts to 180 mph. A storm surge greater than twelve feet inundated the Louisiana coast as much as 25 miles inland. It was the deadliest June hurricane of record for the U.S. (David Ludlum) (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Thunderstorms moving out of Nebraska produced severe weather in north central Kansas after midnight. Thunderstorm winds gusting to 100 mph damaged more than fifty camping trailers at the state park campground at Lake Waconda injuring sixteen persons. Thunderstorm winds gusted to 80 mph at Beloit and Sylvan Grove. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - The afternoon high of 107 degrees at Bismarck, ND, was a record for the month of June, and Pensacola, FL, equalled their June record with a reading of 101 degrees. Temperatures in the Great Lakes Region and the Ohio Valley dipped into the 40s. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms produced severe weather from the Ohio Valley to western New England. Thunderstorm spawned six tornadoes, and there were 98 reports of large hail and damaging winds. Tropical Storm Allison spawned six tornadoes in Louisiana, injuring two persons at Hackberry. Fort Polk LA was drenched with 10.09 inches of rain in 36 hours, and 12.87 inches was reported at the Gorum Fire Tower in northern Louisiana. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1995: The Madison County Flood on June 27, 1995, was the worst flash floods Virginia had seen since the remnants of Camille dropped up to 30 inches of rain one night in Nelson County in August 1969. The Nelson County flood ranked as one of the nation's worst flash floods of this century and resulted in the deaths of 117 people. The Madison County flood killed one person.

2011: Polar temperatures and unusual snowfall chill several cities in Brazil's southern states. Four cities in Santa Catarina state are blanketed in snow. The town of Urubici reported a temperature of 23.9 degrees Fahrenheit with a wind chill of 16.6 degrees below zero. In Florianopolis, the capital of Santa Catarina and a renowned sea resort, thermometers registered 21.2 degrees.

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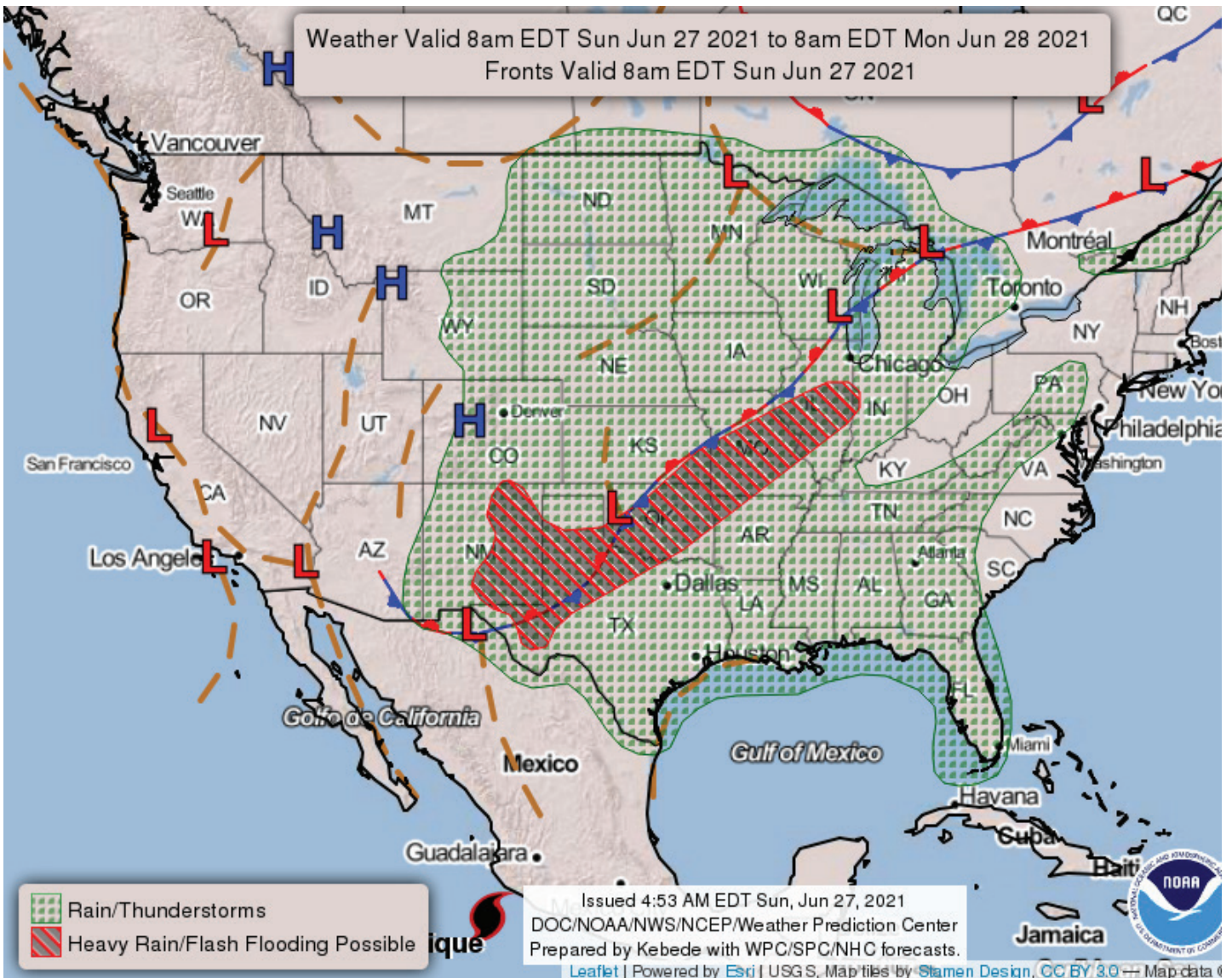
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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 75.3 °F
Low Temp: 61.8 °F
Wind: 18 mph
Precip: .17

Today's Info

Record High: 104° in 1931, 1936
Record Low: 42° in 2017
Average High: 83°F
Average Low: 58°F
Average Precip in June.: 3.24
Precip to date in June.: 0.77
Average Precip to date: 10.49
Precip Year to Date: 4.71
Sunset Tonight: 9:26 p.m.
Sunrise Tomorrow: 5:48 a.m.



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A SURE SOURCE OF STRENGTH

Are we failures if we fail or do we fail because we are failures?

All of us fail at one time or another or at one task or another. Not because we do not try – because trying is not the problem. It is because we do not make use of the help – or power – that's available to us from God. God is ready to help us whenever we call upon Him. There are no preconditions.

Sometimes I think that David must have faced more problems than any other person in the Bible. But he knew what to do and where to go when things were about to destroy him. There were times when he was weak from suffering. There were days when doing what God called him to do caused some serious difficulties for him. When he faced these challenges, he knew where to go and what to do!

"Summon Your power, God; show us Your strength, God, as You have done before."

God provides His strength when we suffer. Paul had no easy life. His life often seemed to go from bad to worse. But God said, "Paul, my grace will be sufficient for every problem you will ever face, my Son's presence in every cell you occupy and My healing each time you are beaten."

He gives us strength when He calls us to serve Him. An elderly lady was asked, "Where do you get all of your energy to help so many people?" "Well," she said, "the first thing I do in the morning is to connect with God's power through my time of prayer. As I put my hand in God's hand, I can feel His strength pass into me. Then I can do whatever it is He leads me to do in His name!"

Prayer: Help us, Lord, to believe that no matter what problems we face we can do all things through Your power. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Summon Your power, God; show us Your strength, God, as You have done before. Psalm 68:28

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2021 Community Events

- Cancelled** Legion Post #39 Spring Fundraiser (Sunday closest to St. Patrick's Day, every other year)
03/27/2021 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter Weekend)
04/10/2021 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the American Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/24/2021 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/25/2021 Princess Prom (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/01/2021 Lions Club Spring City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
05/31/2021 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
6/7-9/2021 St. John's Lutheran Church VBS
06/17/2021 Groton Transit Fundraiser, 4-7 p.m.
06/18/2021 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
06/19/2021 U8 Baseball Tournament
06/19/2021 **Postponed to Aug. 28th:** Lions Crazy Golf Fest at Olive Grove Golf Course, Noon
06/26/2021 U10 Baseball Tournament
06/27/2021 U12 Baseball Tournament
07/04/2021 Firecracker Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
07/11/2021 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 10am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
07/22/2021 Pro-Am Golf Tournament at Olive Grove Golf Course
07/30/2021-08/03/2021 State "B" American Legion Baseball Tournament in Groton
08/06/2021 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course
08/28/2021 Lions Club Crazy Golf Fest 9am Olive Grove Golf Course
09/11/2021 Lions Club Fall City-Wide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
09/12/2021 Sunflower Classic Golf Tournament at Olive Grove
09/18-19 Groton Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/08/2021 Lake Region Marching Band Festival (2nd Friday in October)
10/09/2021 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm (Saturday before Columbus Day)
10/29/2021 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
10/31/2021 Groton United Methodist Trunk or Treat (Halloween)
11/13/2021 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/25/2021 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/11/2021 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-Noon

News from the Associated Press

SD Lottery

By The Associated Press undefined

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

Dakota Cash

17-20-24-26-32

(seventeen, twenty, twenty-four, twenty-six, thirty-two)

Estimated jackpot: \$68,000

Lotto America

03-06-08-40-49, Star Ball: 7, ASB: 3

(three, six, eight, forty, forty-nine; Star Ball: seven; ASB: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$7.41 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$61 million

Powerball

08-31-39-43-60, Powerball: 17, Power Play: 3

(eight, thirty-one, thirty-nine, forty-three, sixty; Powerball: seventeen; Power Play: three)

Estimated jackpot: \$75 million

Woman killed in rollover on Interstate 29 in SE South Dakota

ELK POINT, S.D. (AP) — A 38-year-old woman has died in a crash on Interstate 29 about 15 miles north of Elk Point in southeastern South Dakota.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol said a minivan was southbound on I-29 just before 3:45 a.m. Saturday when it entered the median, then crossed both southbound lanes, went into the west ditch and rolled.

The driver, who was not wearing a seat belt, was thrown from the van. She died at the scene. Her name was not immediately released.

The freeway was closed and traffic was rerouted for about an hour.

Woman killed in crash near Lennox in eastern South Dakota

LENNOX, S.D. (AP) — A 78-year-old woman died has died in a one-car crash two miles west of Lennox in Turner County.

The South Dakota Highway Patrol says the woman was killed Friday afternoon when she lost control of a car on a gravel road, went into the ditch and rolled. She died at the scene, which was about 20 miles southwest of Sioux Falls.

The highway patrol says the woman, whose name was not immediately released, was the only person in the car and was not wearing a seat belt.

]Flandreau Santee Sioux to open medical cannabis dispensary

FLANDREAU, S.D. (AP) — South Dakota's first medical marijuana dispensary is set to open in Flandreau.

The Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe announced Friday that it will open its first retail location and begin selling cannabis Thursday, the day medical marijuana becomes legal in South Dakota. The tribe said it's already accepting applications for medical marijuana ID cards, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader reported.

The tribe's program is independent of South Dakota's new law and the system that the South Dakota Department of Health has until October to launch. The state is also awaiting a Supreme Court decision on whether recreational marijuana will become legal under a constitutional amendment approved by voters in November.

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The Native Nations Cannabis Dispensary is about 45 miles north of Sioux Falls.

To qualify through the tribe, an applicant must first be certified by a medical professional to have "a chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition." Patients who might benefit from cannabis — such as those with AIDS, anorexia, arthritis, cancer, migraines and glaucoma — are eligible with a recommendation from anyone licensed to prescribe drugs.

Applications are on the tribe's website. The fee is \$50.

"The tribe's goals for the development of cannabis is similar to other jurisdictions," the tribe's news release said. "It wants a safe product to produce revenue for tribal programs, to curtail black-market sales of cannabis, and to prevent illegal diversion, especially to children."

Dakota State University cyber camp attracts 5 relatives

By MARY GALES ASKREN Madison Daily Leader

MADISON, S.D. (AP) — Enthusiasm is contagious. Nowhere is that more evident this week than at GenCyber Co-ed Camp at Dakota State University. Of the six Madison students in attendance, five are related to one another.

"I've gotten most of my family to come," said Enoch Martin, who is attending the camp for the third time.

The first year he attended, Martin was the only Madison student to do so. This year, he is joined by his brother Calvin and his cousins Grant Hasleton, Nathan Hasleton and Addy Meyer. Maggie Engebretson is also attending.

In a conversation which vacillated between enthusiastic wonder, serious reflection and amusing quips, Martin talked about his experience at the camp which is hosted at DSU annually. Part of a nationwide initiative funded by the National Security Agency and the National Science Foundation, the camps are intended to inspire "the next GENERation of CYBER stars," which gives the camps their name.

DSU piloted the program in 2014.

"It was literally a bar napkin idea," said Kyle Cronin, program director.

The university now hosts three GenCyber camps -- one for high school students in grades 10-12, one for teachers and one for middle school girls.

Students from 16 states are attending the co-ed camp this week. Of the 130 students in attendance, 82 are from South Dakota and approximately one-third are female. Word of mouth has proven to be the camp's best form of promotion, the Madison Daily Leader reported.

"We're playing with things, exposing kids to what they'd learn at the college level," Cronin said in describing the program.

Each day offers both training in the core areas of programming, networking and cybersecurity concepts and a variety of other electives campers can choose to explore. While some electives -- like a sequence in programming in a different language -- sound like traditional computer and cyber training, others sound more like Criminal Activities 101.

Students can learn to pick locks. They can learn how to hijack and decode radio waves used in a wireless society. They do this with wireless doorbells, which is relatively innocuous, but the same concept applies to unlocking car doors, according to Cronin.

"What we want is for the kids to understand how technology really works," he said. Cronin noted that students also learn about situational ethics, about using technology and skills for the right purposes.

In addition to a wide range of learning opportunities, campers get backpacks, water bottles and other swag, including a computer smaller than a hand, called a Raspberry Pi.

In speaking about the camp, Martin referred to this device when talking about the easy camaraderie which exists among the students who attend.

"It's so cool," he said. "Everyone here is into the same things. We're all here for the same thing -- which is probably these Raspberry Pis."

The small computer is used for a variety of sessions, including one called "Headless Pi," which uses only a wireless connection. In other sessions, it's connected to a keyboard and monitor.

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"They're so incredibly small. They're so much fun -- and I get it for free," Martin enthused.

One of the sessions he took involved creating a text adventure, which is like a video game that uses text only or a book that allows the reader to create their own adventures. He's planning to use his Raspberry Pi to continue working on the text adventure he started.

Martin also showed off several projects he constructed in classes, including a love detector, which randomly generates a number from one to five when two individuals press buttons at the same time, and a sound sensor, which causes LED lights to flash when a microphone picks up sound.

On a more serious note, he talked about the impact the GenCyber camps have had on his future plans.

"It gave me an insight into what I wanted to do," Martin said. He plans to enroll in DSU's new Cyber Leadership and Intelligence program with the goal of going into cyber law.

Because the camps are designed to strengthen the pipeline of individuals who choose to pursue careers in cybersecurity or a related field, this is the kind of outcome desired.

However, Cronin said, it's equally beneficial for those who discover cybersecurity is not of interest to them.

Cronin doesn't know how many of the GenCyber campers have attended DSU since the first camp was offered, but he is certain some do, because he sees the swag years later.

"We give all the students backpacks," he said. "Every year it's a different backpack. When the freshmen are coming onto campus, we see these backpacks."

Before building collapse, \$9 million in repairs needed

By CURT ANDERSON and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — Nearly three years before an oceanfront building collapsed near Miami, an engineering firm estimated that major repairs the building needed would cost more than \$9 million, according to newly released emails.

The email from the firm of Morabito Consultants was among a series of documents released by the city of Surfside as rescue efforts continued at the site of the collapsed building, where more than 150 people remained unaccounted for. At least five people were killed in the collapse.

The release of the 2018 cost estimate followed the earlier publication of another document from the firm showing the ground-floor pool deck of the building was resting on a concrete slab that had "major structural damage" and needed to be extensively repaired. That report also uncovered "abundant cracking and spalling" of concrete columns, beams and walls in the parking garage.

The report did not warn of imminent danger from the damage, and it is unclear if any of the damage observed was responsible for the collapse of Champlain Towers South.

The cost estimate showed that repairs across the entire building would cost more than \$9.1 million, with the cost of work at the garage, entrance and pool deck alone accounting for more than \$3.8 million. The work had not been done by the time the building collapsed.

The earlier report said the waterproofing under the pool deck had failed and had been improperly laid flat instead of sloped, preventing water from draining off.

"The failed waterproofing is causing major structural damage to the concrete structural slab below these areas. Failure to replace the waterproofing in the near future will cause the extent of the concrete deterioration to expand exponentially," the report said.

The firm recommended that the damaged slabs be replaced in what would be a major repair.

Some of the damage to the concrete in the parking garage was minor, while other columns had exposed and deteriorating rebar. It also noted that many of the building's previous attempts to fix the columns and other damage with epoxy were marred by poor workmanship and were failing.

Beneath the pool deck "where the slab had been epoxy-injected, new cracks were radiating from the originally repaired cracks," the report said.

These were all problems that should have been dealt with quickly, said Gregg Schlesinger, an attorney specializing in construction defects and a former construction project engineer.

"The building speaks to us. It is telling us we have a serious problem," Schlesinger said in a telephone

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interview Saturday about the new documents. "They (building managers) kicked the can down the road. The maintenance was improper. These were all red flags that needed to be addressed. They weren't."

In a statement Saturday, Morabito Consultants confirmed its report "detailed significant cracks and breaks in the concrete, which required repairs to ensure the safety of the residents and the public."

The firm said it was hired again in June 2020 by Champlain Towers South to begin the 40-year recertification process that would detail what work needed to be done.

"At the time of the building collapse, roof repairs were under way, but concrete restoration had not yet begun," the statement said.

Abi Aghayere, a Drexel University engineering researcher, said the extent of the damage shown in the engineering report was notable. In addition to possible problems under the pool, he said several areas above the entrance drive showing signs of deterioration were worrisome and should have been repaired immediately.

"Were the supporting members deteriorated to the extent that a critical structural element or their connections failed leading to progressive collapse?" he wrote in an email to the AP after reviewing the report. "Were there other areas in the structure that were badly deteriorated and unnoticed?"

The building was in the midst of its 40-year recertification process, which requires detailed structural and electrical inspections. In an interview Friday, Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said he wasn't sure if the inspection had been completed, but he said it may contain vital clues.

"It should have been a very straightforward thing," Burkett said. "Buildings in America do not just fall down like this. There is a reason. We need to find out what that reason is."

The 12-story tower's collapse Thursday morning has also raised questions over whether other similar buildings are in danger.

"This is a wake-up call for folks on the beach," Schlesinger said. "The scary portion is the other buildings. You think this is unique? No."

Details of the building's 40-year recertification inspection will be made public once they are completed, Surfside Town Clerk Sandra McCreedy said in an email.

The collapse is already drawing lawsuits, including one filed hours after the collapse by attorney Brad Sohn against the condo's homeowners association seeking damages for negligence and other reasons for all of the tower's residents.

The association, the lawsuit contends, "could have prevented the collapse of Champlain Towers South through the exercise of ordinary care, safety measures and oversight."

An attorney for the association, Ken Direktor, did not respond to an email requesting comment.

Mike Gravel, former US senator for Alaska, dies at 91

SEASIDE, Calif. (AP) — Mike Gravel, a former U.S. senator from Alaska who read the Pentagon Papers into the Congressional Record and confronted Barack Obama about nuclear weapons during a later presidential run, has died. He was 91.

Gravel, who represented Alaska as a Democrat in the Senate from 1969 to 1981, died Saturday, according to his daughter, Lynne Mosier. Gravel had been living in Seaside, California, and was in failing health, said Theodore W. Johnson, a former aide.

Gravel's two terms came during tumultuous years for Alaska when construction of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline was authorized and when Congress was deciding how to settle Alaska Native land claims and whether to classify enormous amounts of federal land as parks, preserves and monuments.

He had the unenviable position of being an Alaska Democrat when some residents were burning President Jimmy Carter in effigy for his measures to place large sections of public lands in the state under protection from development.

Gravel feuded with Alaska's other senator, Republican Ted Stevens, on the land matter, preferring to fight Carter's actions and rejecting Stevens' advocacy for a compromise.

In the end, Congress passed the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980, a compromise

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that set aside millions of acres for national parks, wildlife refuges and other protected areas. It was one of the last bills Carter signed before leaving office.

Gravel's Senate tenure also was notable for his anti-war activity. In 1971, he led a one-man filibuster to protest the Vietnam-era draft and he read into the Congressional Record 4,100 pages of the 7,000-page leaked document known as the Pentagon Papers, the Defense Department's history of the country's early involvement in Vietnam.

Gravel reentered national politics decades after his time in the Senate to twice run for president. Gravel, then 75, and his wife, Whitney, took public transportation in 2006 to announce he was running for president as a Democrat in the 2008 election ultimately won by Obama.

He launched his quest for the 2008 Democratic presidential nomination as a critic of the Iraq war.

"I believe America is doing harm every day our troops remain in Iraq — harm to ourselves and to the prospects for peace in the world," Gravel said in 2006. He hitched his campaign to an effort that would give all policy decisions to the people through a direct vote, including health care reform and declarations of war.

Gravel garnered attention for his fiery comments at Democratic forums.

In one 2007 debate, the issue of the possibility of using nuclear weapons against Iran came up, and Gravel confronted then-Sen. Obama. "Tell me, Barack, who do you want to nuke?" Gravel said. Obama replied: "I'm not planning to nuke anybody right now, Mike."

Gravel then ran as a Libertarian candidate after he was excluded from later Democratic debates.

In an email to supporters, he said the Democratic Party "no longer represents my vision for our great country." "It is a party that continues to sustain war, the military-industrial complex and imperialism — all of which I find anathema to my views," he said.

He failed to get the Libertarian nomination.

Gravel briefly ran for the Democratic nomination for president in 2020. He again criticized American wars and vowed to slash military spending. His last campaign was notable in that both his campaign manager and chief of staff were just 18 at the time of his short-lived candidacy.

"There was never any ... plan that he would do anything more than participate in the debates. He didn't plan to campaign, but he wanted to get his ideas before a larger audience," Johnson said.

Gravel failed to qualify for the debates. He endorsed Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders in the contest eventually won by now-President Joe Biden.

Gravel was born Maurice Robert Gravel in Springfield, Massachusetts, on May 13, 1930.

In Alaska, he served as a state representative, including a stint as House speaker, in the mid-1960s.

He won his first Senate term after defeating incumbent Sen. Ernest Gruening, a former territorial governor, in the 1968 Democratic primary.

Gravel served two terms until he was defeated in the 1980 Democratic primary by Gruening's grandson, Clark Gruening, who lost the election to Republican Frank Murkowski.

Serena Williams says she will not play at the Tokyo Olympics

By HOWARD FENDRICH AP Tennis Writer

WIMBLEDON, England (AP) — Serena Williams said she will not go to the Tokyo Olympics, but did not want to say why during her pre-Wimbledon video conference with reporters Sunday.

"I'm actually not on the Olympic list. ... Not that I'm aware of. If so, then I shouldn't be on it," Williams said.

The 39-year-old Williams has won four gold medals at past Summer Games for the United States: in both singles and doubles at the 2012 London Olympics — which held the tennis competition at the All England Club — and in doubles at the 2000 Sydney Olympics and 2008 Beijing Olympics.

All of her doubles golds were won with her older sister, Venus, as her partner.

At the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, Serena Williams lost in the third round of singles to Elina Svitolina of Ukraine and the siblings were beaten in the first round of doubles. Before that, they had been 15-0 as an

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Olympic doubles team.

"There's a lot of reasons that I made my Olympic decision," Williams said Sunday, the day before the start of main-draw action at Wimbledon, where she will try to collect her 24th Grand Slam singles title. "I don't really want to — I don't feel like going into them today. Maybe another day. Sorry."

Asked what it will be like to sit out the Summer Games, Williams replied: "I have not thought about it. In the past, it's been a wonderful place for me. I really haven't thought about it, so I'm going to keep not thinking about it."

Other top tennis players such as Rafael Nadal and Dominic Thiem also have said they'll skip the trip to Japan, where the Olympics open on July 23, a year after being postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

Roger Federer said Saturday he hasn't decided whether to participate in the Tokyo Games and will figure that out after he sees how things go at Wimbledon.

'Not fun': Northwest heat wave builds, all-time records fall

By SARA CLINE and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Oregon's largest city broke its all-time heat record on Saturday. It could beat the new mark on Sunday.

Forecasters say many Pacific Northwest communities may sweat through the hottest days in their histories as temperatures soar during a heat wave that has sent residents scrambling for relief.

Stores sold out of portable air conditioners and fans, hospitals canceled outdoor vaccination clinics, cities opened cooling centers, baseball teams canceled or moved up weekend games, and utilities braced for possible power outages.

Portland, Oregon, reached 108 degrees Fahrenheit (42.2 degrees Celsius) Saturday afternoon, according to the National Weather Service. The previous heat record for Oregon's largest city was 107 F (41.7 C), a mark hit in 1965 and 1981.

Seattle reached 101 F (38.3 C) Saturday, making it the hottest June day on record and only the fourth time in recorded history the usually temperate city had topped 100 degrees.

The forecast was for even hotter temperatures on Sunday and Monday. Many all-time heat records could be broken. In Seattle, the highest temperature ever measured was 103 F (39.4 C), in 2009.

Other cities and towns from eastern Washington state to Portland to southern Oregon were also expected to break records, with temperatures in many areas likely to top out 30 degrees or more above normal.

That's dangerous for a region accustomed to mild weather, and where many don't have air conditioning.

The extended "heat dome" over the Pacific Northwest was a taste of the future as climate change reshapes weather patterns worldwide, said Kristie Ebi, a professor at the University of Washington who studies global warming and its effects on public health.

"We know from evidence around the world that climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity and duration of heat waves. We're going to have to get used to this going forward," she said.

James Bryant, a Seattle resident, picked up an air conditioner in anticipation of the extreme heat.

"My house is already hot, and so with the added heat over the next few days, I've got kids. I got to make sure they don't get too hot as well," Bryant said. "It seems to be a trend ... So I'm not sure what's driving it, but it's not fun, that's for sure."

Officials in Multnomah County, Oregon, were asking for volunteers to help staff cooling centers as older people, homeless residents and others struggled with the heat. Cascades Street Outreach, an advocacy group for people experiencing homelessness, was going to homeless camps in the region to encourage people to use the cooling centers.

Peter Tiso, who works with Multnomah County's Joint office of Homeless Services, told The Oregonian/OregonLive.com that the Oregon Convention Center can hold about 300 people, but no one will be turned away from the cooling shelter. The shelter also allows pets, he said.

"We don't want anyone to be making the dangerous decision between leaving their pet behind or not,"

he said.

Unusually hot weather was expected to extend into next week for much of the region.

The hot weather had berry farmers scrambling to pick crops before they rot on the vine. Columbia Basin fisheries managers are worried about how the heat wave will affect endangered Snake River sockeye and other species of protected salmon.

State, tribal and federal officials are trying to mitigate rising water temperatures in the lower Snake River, The Lewiston Tribune reported, in part by releasing 42 F (5.56 C) water from Idaho's Dworshak Reservoir.

They began releasing the water earlier this week, hoping to keep the water temperature at the Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River at or below 68 F (20 C). Officials fear a repeat of 2015, when water temperatures in Columbia and Snake river reservoirs reached lethal levels for sockeye salmon.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee lifted COVID-19 capacity restrictions on publicly owned or operated and non-profit cooling centers in light of the heat. Capacity is currently limited to 50% until the state fully reopens next Wednesday. In Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown suspended capacity limits for movie theaters and shopping malls — places with air-conditioning — as well as swimming pools ahead of a statewide reopening Wednesday.

In Seattle, a few new city lifeguards went through last-minute training at a beach on Lake Washington. Case Berrysmith has been a lead lifeguard for 15 years. This is the hottest stretch he has ever seen.

"Most rescues are going to be over-estimated ability," Berrysmith said. "Stay safe. Stay hydrated."

Transgender rights, religion among cases justices could add

By MARK SHERMAN and JESSICA GRESKO Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — A closely watched voting rights dispute from Arizona is among five cases standing between the Supreme Court and its summer break. But even before the justices wrap up their work, likely later this week, they could say whether they'll add more high-profile issues to what already promises to be a consequential term, beginning in October.

This month, the court has already issued big decisions on health care and religious freedom. And next term, the high court has agreed to take on cases about abortion and guns. The court could say as soon as Monday what it will do about these issues awaiting action:

TRANSGENDER RIGHTS

A Virginia school board is asking the court to uphold a policy, struck down by lower courts, that prohibits transgender students from using school bathrooms that correspond with their gender identity. The case has been around for six years, since then-high school student Gavin Grimm filed a federal lawsuit over the Gloucester County board's refusal to allow him to use the boys bathroom.

RELIGION

The justices just wrapped up a case involving a church-affiliated foster care agency that declined to work with same-sex couples, ultimately siding with the agency. Now they'll have to decide whether to hear other cases involving religious freedom claims. Alternately, they could send the cases back to lower courts for review in light of their recent decision.

The pending cases include a dispute out of Washington state involving a florist who refused to provide arrangements for a same-sex wedding. The Supreme Court already sent that case back once to lower courts to be revisited after the court's 2018 ruling involving a Colorado baker who declined to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple.

Also waiting is a case involving a Catholic hospital in Maryland sued by a transgender man who sought to have a hysterectomy. The hospital canceled the procedure, saying it was contrary to its Catholic faith, after learning the reason for it.

ABU GHRAIB

Seventeen years after shocking photographs of prisoners being abused at the U.S.-run prison in Abu Ghraib were first made public, Iraqis who claim they were victims of torture are still seeking their day in court against a U.S. defense contractor that supplied the military with interrogators. The company, CACI

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Premier Technology of Arlington, Virginia, is appealing to the court on a technical legal issue that could delay or even prevent a trial. The inmates say they were beaten and tortured by military police officers who were acting at the direction of civilian interrogators who wanted the inmates "softened up" for questioning. CACI says none of its interrogators is linked to the abuse suffered by the men who are suing.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

A chocolate company's expansion plans are at the heart of what could be the court's biggest case about property rights in years, if the justices take it. The case involves a property the city of Chicago took by eminent domain in order to allow the Blommer Chocolate Company to expand.

Agreeing to hear the case would give the court the opportunity to overturn a 2005 case that has been roundly criticized by conservatives. In that case, the court divided 5-4 to say that the city of New London, Connecticut, could use eminent domain to take private property and then sell it to private developers as part of an attempt to revitalize the city. The decision was written by Supreme Court Justice John Paul Stevens, who acknowledged it was the most unpopular opinion he ever wrote. Justice Antonin Scalia, who dissented, ranked it among the court's biggest mistakes. Only two justices who decided the case remain on the court: Justice Clarence Thomas and Justice Stephen Breyer. Stevens died in 2019 and Scalia in 2016.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

A book that became the Hollywood movie "War Dogs" is at the center of what could become a landmark First Amendment case. Shkelzen Berisha, the son of the former prime minister of Albania, says the book harmed him by falsely linking him to would-be arms dealers from Miami.

He sued for defamation and wants the justices to revisit the high bar the court has set for public figures to win defamation lawsuits. Berisha's complaint stems from a landmark civil rights-era case, *New York Times v. Sullivan*. As a result of *Sullivan* and cases that followed, public figures can win defamation lawsuits only if they can prove that the person publishing the falsehood knew the statement they made was false or made it with reckless disregard for the truth. Former President Donald Trump has complained about the high bar, and Thomas has said the court should consider overturning the case.

As variant rises, vaccine plan targets 'movable middle'

By RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thrown off-stride to reach its COVID-19 vaccination goal, the Biden administration is sending A-list officials across the country, devising ads for niche markets and enlisting community organizers to persuade unvaccinated people to get a shot.

The strategy has the trappings of a political campaign, complete with data crunching to identify groups that can be won over.

But the message is about public health, not ideology. The focus is a group health officials term the "movable middle" — some 55 million unvaccinated adults seen as persuadable, many of them under 30.

"We're not just going to do the mass vaccination sites," said Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra. "It's door to door. It's mobile clinics. We're doing vaccinations at church, the PTA meeting, the barber shop, the grocery store."

Officials have seized on a compelling new talking point, courtesy of the coronavirus. The potent delta variant that has ravaged India is spreading here. Now accounting for about 1 in 5 virus samples genetically decoded in the U.S., the more transmissible mutation has gained a foothold in Mountain West and heartland states. Many of those infected are young and unvaccinated.

The White House has lent its top names to the vaccine push.

President Joe Biden visited a mobile vaccination site in Raleigh, North Carolina, on Thursday. Earlier in the day, first lady Jill Biden held the hand of a woman at a drive-thru vaccination site in Kissimmee, Florida.

Doug Emhoff, the husband of Vice President Kamala Harris, has racked up thousands of frequent flyer miles, visiting at least 18 or 19 states by his count.

The administration also has recruited celebrities and athletes, including country music star Brad Paisley and the Tampa Bay Lightning hockey team. It has teamed up with Twitch and Riot Games to reach online

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gamers and with Panera and Chipotle to offer free food to those getting a shot.

The message, as Surgeon General Vivek Murthy put it: "If you are vaccinated, you are protected. If you are not, the threat of variants is real and growing."

It's unclear how well the levers of persuasion are functioning. Vaccination rates have dropped below 1 million a day, and there's no sign yet of a turnaround. The administration has acknowledged that it will fall short of its goal of having 70% of adults vaccinated by July Fourth.

At this point, about 170 million American adults have received at least one vaccine dose, representing roughly two-thirds of those 18 and older. An Associated Press analysis suggests that Biden's self-imposed goal may not be reached until late July at current rates of vaccination.

Analysts at HHS have developed a rough sketch of those in the movable middle. They tend to be younger, mainly 18-29. Most are not college educated, and political independents predominate. Black and Latino adults are more likely to fall in this category than people of other backgrounds.

It can be a hard sell. After Jill Biden's visit to Mississippi earlier in the week, Gulf Coast resident Sherie Bardwell was unimpressed. She said Biden's comment that "vaccines might feel like a miracle, but there's no faith required," sounded to her like a dig at people with Christian beliefs.

"She said shots are miracles that don't require faith. The Bible says just live by faith," said Bardwell, who followed news about the first lady's visit. Bardwell said both she and her husband had COVID-19 and she was hospitalized.

"My thoughts are, if you've already had the coronavirus, why do you need the vaccine?" asked Bardwell. "If the vaccine was the 'miracle,' then why are you still at risk of contracting the virus after receiving the shot? It just doesn't make sense to me." Doctors advise recovered patients to get vaccinated so as to maintain protection.

Privately, some White House officials fret that the persuadable universe may be shrinking.

Early success with vaccination has paradoxically made things more difficult. Now that cases and deaths have dropped to levels not seen since the onset of the pandemic, officials say it's become harder to convince Americans of the urgency of getting a shot — particularly younger people who already knew they were at low risk of serious complications.

Biden officials say they recognize that it's going to take more than celebrity pitches to close the deal. In Knoxville, Tennessee, a retired hospice and home care administrator has become a volunteer COVID-19 response organizer in the Black community. Cynthia Finch is one of many around the country to whom federal health officials have turned as "trusted messengers."

Finch dubbed her local vaccine strategy the "3 V's." She started with what she calls "vaccine partners," such as local hospitals and universities, to create a framework. Then she organized volunteers to give shots by working with professional groups including a Black nursing sorority. Finally, she reached out to pastors and community organizations to provide venues where people could come to get their vaccines. Finch estimates those efforts have led to thousands of people getting fully vaccinated.

She said she is used to dealing with skepticism, particularly given the history of substandard care in minority communities and the use of Black patients in medical experiments without their consent. She tries to listen carefully to objections and concerns, and respond with factual information that's on point.

"When you start telling them things they can relate to, it kind of calms them down," she said.

Her own motivation is personal. Finch said a close friend lost two brothers days apart to COVID-19, and that motivates her to keep working. "People are still dying," she said.

While applauding the Biden administration's efforts to get Americans vaccinated, some public health experts say there are limits to what persuasion can achieve.

The administration has ruled out vaccine passports that could become a ticket to benefits such as international travel. But Dr. Leana Wen, a former Baltimore health commissioner, said a federal verification system that people could use to prove their vaccination status could still be an incentive.

"Setting an aspirational goal of 70% was the right goal for the Biden administration, but I wish they had not been so hesitant about vaccination requirements," she said.

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"We are going to be in a position where the majority of the country is going to be vaccinated," said Wen. "Why should they be held hostage by a minority of the population, who are potentially endangering everybody else?"

Administration officials show no signs of budging in their position. "The federal government is not planning to create a database of people who have been vaccinated," Murthy said.

'Message in the mess': Family finds hope as search continues

By JOSHUA GOODMAN and RUSS BYNUM Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — When Mike Noriega heard that part of the condominium tower where his grandmother lived had collapsed, he rushed with his father to the scene. They arrived at a nightmarish 30-foot pile of pancaked concrete and mangled metal, the remains of her 12-story building — and no sign of 92-year-old Hilda Noriega.

But among the flying debris, they stumbled across mementos that bore witness to Hilda's life on the sixth floor in Champlain Towers South: an old picture of her with her late husband and their infant son, and a birthday card that friends from her prayer group sent two weeks earlier with the acronym "ESM," Spanish for "hand-delivered," scrawled across the yellow envelope with a butterfly etching.

"There was a message in the mess of all this," Noriega said. "It means not to give up hope. To have faith."

Days after Thursday's collapse, Hilda remains among more than 150 people unaccounted for in Surfside, north of Miami Beach, with five confirmed dead and authorities and loved ones fearing the toll will go much higher.

As scores of rescuers continue to use heavy machinery and power tools to clear the rubble from the top and tunnel in from below, the Noriega family still have hope she will be found alive.

"Some miracles are very big, others are small," said Mike, 36, who last spoke to Hilda the day before the disaster.

They described Hilda as a fiercely independent and vivacious retiree — in Mike's words, "the youngest 92-year-old I know ... 92 going on 62."

Hilda Noriega had called Champlain Towers South home for more than 20 years. But six years removed from her husband's death, she was ready to leave. The condo was up for sale, and her plan was to move in with family.

She had loved living near the ocean and friends, but "when you lose a spouse, you want to be surrounded by family ... and she wanted to spend more time with her family and grandchildren," said Sally Noriega, Hilda's daughter-in-law.

Sally called Hilda a sweet, loving person who built a life with her husband and raised a family after coming to the U.S. from Cuba in 1960.

"She was just one of those people who from the first time she met a person she instantly loved that person, and that person instantly loved her," Sally said.

Carlos Noriega, Hilda's son and police chief of nearby North Bay Village, was one of the emergency responders clambering atop the pile.

The Noriegas don't entirely know what to make of the treasured mementos found amid the chaos, but Sally said: "We are a family of faith. We'll just leave it at that."

They are among dozens of anguished families awaiting word on the fate of loved ones. The wait has been agonizing.

The atmosphere inside a hotel ballroom where around 200 family members were being briefed by authorities Saturday was tense, two people present told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

The two said families frustrated with the slow pace of recovery efforts had demanded they be allowed to go to the scene and attempt a collective shout — an attempt as much to find survivors as a cathartic farewell to those who had died.

The confirmed death toll rose to five Saturday as rescuers battled fire and smoke deep inside the heap

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in a race against time. With a sulfur-like stench hanging in the air, they used everything from trained dogs and sonar equipment to buckets and drones.

"Our top priority continues to be search-and-rescue and saving any lives that we can," Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said.

The mayor said the identification of three bodies had dropped the number of people unaccounted for down to 156, and crews also discovered other unspecified human remains. The remains are being sent to the medical examiner, and authorities are gathering DNA samples from family members to aid in identification.

A video posted online showed an official briefing families. When he said they had found remains among the rubble, people began sobbing.

Late Saturday, four of the victims were identified, as Stacie Dawn Fang, 54; Antonio Lozano, 83, and Gladys Lozano, 79; and Manuel LaFont, 54.

The Paramount Miami Worldcenter tower in downtown Miami was also lit with the words "One World, One Prayer." Organizers plan to light up the condo building with the message every night for two minutes on the hour until all victims of the Champlain Towers South collapse are accounted for.

Also late Saturday, Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said a city official had led a cursory review of the nearby Champlain Towers North and Champlain Towers East buildings but "didn't find anything out of the ordinary."

The news came after word of a 2018 engineering report that showed the building, which was built in 1981, had "major structural damage" to a concrete slab below its pool deck that needed extensive repairs, part of a series of documents released by the city of Surfside.

Further documentation showed the estimated cost of the repairs would total over \$9 million. That included more than \$3.8 million for garage, entrance and pool remediation and nearly \$3.2 million for fixes to the exterior façade.

While officials said no cause for the collapse early Thursday has been determined, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said a "definitive answer" was needed in a timely manner.

Regional election poses crucial test for French far right

PARIS (AP) — A decisive, second round of voting in France's regional elections on Sunday is being scrutinized as a litmus test of whether the anti-immigration far right is gaining in acceptability before the French presidential election next year.

Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right National Rally, has spent a decade trying to cast off the extremist reputation that made the party anathema to many French voters in its previous guise as the National Front. A failure to win control of a region Sunday would mark a stinging setback for the rebranded party.

There were plenty of hand sanitizer bottles but not many voters at a polling station in Saint-Quentin in northern France as Sunday's elections got under way. Paris voting stations that sometimes see lines stood largely empty, other than a few elderly voters. Turnout nationwide was less than 13% by midday.

A record-low turnout of 33% in the first round of voting on June 20 proved particularly damaging for the National Rally and Le Pen's hopes of securing a regional breakthrough to bolster her 2022 presidential campaign. The party has not previously won a region.

Polls had suggested that Le Pen's party had some momentum, with legitimate ambitions to win control of leadership councils in one or more of France's 12 mainland regions.

But the apathy last week also infected National Rally voters. Only in one region, in the southeast, did the party finish first. Its candidates elsewhere were all relegated to second place or lower, with some openly abandoning all hopes of winning in round two.

A major question in the runoff is whether voters will band together to keep Le Pen's party out of power as they have in the past, repulsed by her anti-immigration and anti-European Union populism and the racist, antisemitic image that clung to the National Front, which was founded by her father, Jean-Marie Le Pen.

The party dominated the first round of the last regional elections in 2015 but collapsed in the runoff as parties and voters joined together against it.

The National Rally's best chance of a first-time regional victory is in the southeastern Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur region. Its candidate there, Thierry Mariani, is in a tight race with a mainstream conservative incumbent, Renaud Muselier.

Results are expected after the last polls close at 8 p.m. The left currently heads five of the 12 mainland regions while the mainstream right runs seven.

The Latest: Israel's new leader urges youth to get vaccine

By The Associated Press undefined

JERUSALEM — Israel's new prime minister is urging the country's youth to get vaccinated as coronavirus case numbers have crept up in recent days due to a localized outbreak of the Delta variant.

Naftali Bennett's comments came at a meeting of the government Sunday in Jerusalem.

"We don't want to impose any restrictions: not on parties, on trips or anything like that. But specifically because of this, if you don't want restrictions, go get vaccinated today. Talk to your parents and get vaccinated," he said.

Israel reinstated a mask mandate indoors amid a rise in new infections in the past week. Israel's Health Ministry recorded 113 new coronavirus cases Saturday.

The prime minister also says the government has appointed a special director in charge of managing the country's border crossings — with particular emphasis on Israel's main international airport — and preventing the spread of the coronavirus and other diseases.

Bennett said the appointment of Roni Numa, a former army general, aims to step up the country's efforts "to prevent the entry of this virus and variants and other future viruses from around the world into Israel."

Many of the new cases reported in the past week were traced to individuals who had arrived from abroad.

MORE ON THE PANDEMIC

- What should I know about the delta variant?
- UK virus cases hit highest since Feb. 5 amid 'grab a jab' initiative
- Russia mandates vaccinations for some as virus cases surge
- Finland sees spike in virus cases from soccer fans returning from Russia
- Fort Benning's commanding general urges people get vaccinated to protect soldiers

Follow more of AP's pandemic coverage at <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-pandemic> and <https://apnews.com/hub/coronavirus-vaccine>

HERE'S WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING:

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — Malaysia's leader says the country will indefinitely extend a near-total lockdown that's been in place for a month, as coronavirus infections remain high.

Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on Sunday said the lockdown won't be eased unless daily new cases fall below 4,000, the vaccination rate reaches 10% and demand is reduced for intensive care in hospitals. The national Bernama news agency quoted Muhyiddin as saying he hopes this will happen by mid-July.

The lockdown was set to expire Monday.

Daily new cases have stubbornly stayed above 5,000, with the Health Ministry on Sunday reporting 5,586 new infections, taking the country's tally to 734,048 cases and nearly 5,000 deaths.

Only 6% of Malaysia's 33 million people have been fully vaccinated so far, but the government has stepped up vaccination efforts.

Malaysia halted most economic and social activities since June 1, after daily cases shot up to more than 9,000 cases.

It was the second nationwide lockdown in over a year and is expected to hurt its economic recovery. The World Bank has cut its growth forecast for Malaysia to 4.5% this year, from an earlier estimate of 6%.

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LONDON — The U.K. has recorded its most new coronavirus infections since early February, as the National Health Service runs a “grab a jab” initiative to further drive up vaccination rates.

Government figures on Saturday showed that another 18,270 people tested positive for the virus across the U.K., the highest daily number since Feb. 5.

Over the past week, nearly 100,000 have tested positive, around 50% increase up on the week before. That has raised questions over whether lockdown restrictions will end as planned.

Daily cases have risen fairly sharply over the past few weeks as a result of the delta variant, which was first identified in India and is considered by government scientists to be between 40% to 80% more transmissible than the previous dominant strain. It accounts for nearly all the new cases in the U.K.

Most of the new confirmed cases are among younger age groups which haven’t yet received COVID-19 vaccines. The latest spike came as hundreds of walk-in vaccination sites, including at stadiums and shopping centers, opened in England over the weekend in a bid to boost vaccine numbers, particularly among those younger age groups.

PULA, Croatia (AP) — Croatia forward Ivan Perišić has tested positive for the coronavirus and will miss the match against Spain in the round of 16 of the European Championship.

Perišić will have to self-isolate for 10 days, the Croatian team said in a statement Saturday. The rest of the squad and coaching staff tested negative.

“Medical staff isolated Ivan from the other members of the national team,” the Croatian team said, “and immediately and thoroughly informed competent epidemiological authorities about the situation, providing evidence of complying with all the necessary measures aimed at protection against the spread of coronavirus.”

The quarantine period will also sideline Perišić if the 2018 World Cup finalists reach Friday’s quarterfinals and the semifinals on July 6.

Perišić scored in Tuesday’s 3-1 victory over Scotland, which was missing Billy Gilmour after the midfielder had tested positive for the coronavirus. No other Scotland players were told to isolate.

Croatia has returned to its home country from Glasgow. The Euro 2020 squad, without Perišić, is scheduled to fly from Pula to Copenhagen on Sunday to face Spain the next day.

GENEVA — The head of the World Health Organization lamented the lack of coronavirus vaccines being immediately donated by rich countries to the developing world.

WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Friday that there was nothing to discuss during a recent meeting of an advisory group established to allocate vaccines.

In his words: “There are no vaccines to allocate.”

Tedros says concerns being raised by some donors that African countries don’t have the infrastructure to deliver vaccines or that there are vaccine hesitancy problems are inconsequential. He criticized rich countries that may be using that as a “pretext” not to donate vaccines.

RALEIGH, N.C. — In the two weeks since the state of North Carolina announced four \$1 million prizes would be given out to vaccinated adults, less than 118,000 residents, about 1% of the state population, came in for a first dose.

Less than half of North Carolinians eligible for a coronavirus shot are fully vaccinated, even though there are more than 2.1 million doses waiting on shelves for residents to take.

North Carolina ranks 12th worst in the nation in vaccines administered per capita, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

WASHINGTON — U.S. health officials have granted emergency use for another antibody-drug to help hospitalized patients with the most dangerous cases of COVID-19.

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The Food and Drug Administration said late Thursday it authorized the drug Actemra from Roche for hospitalized patients who are already receiving steroid drugs, oxygen and other measures to fight COVID-19.

When added to those treatments, studies showed Roche's drug reduced the risk of death and cut hospitalization time.

Actemra does not target the coronavirus directly but instead helps reduce inflammation, a driver of the disease. It is already approved for rheumatoid arthritis and several other diseases.

GENEVA — The head of the World Health Organization said the COVID-19 variant first seen in India, also known as the delta variant, is "the most transmissible of the variants identified so far" and that it is now spreading in at least 85 countries.

At a press briefing on Friday, WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the U.N. agency was concerned about it's the increasing reach of the delta variant, particularly among unvaccinated populations.

"We are starting to see increases in transmission around the world," Tedros said, adding that "more cases means more hospitalizations...which increases the risk of death." WHO has previously said that two doses of the licensed COVID-19 vaccines appear to provide strong protection against the variant first seen in India, but warned the lack of access to vaccines in poor countries — which have received fewer than 2% of the billion doses administered so far — makes them extremely vulnerable.

Tedros also said the unchecked circulation of the coronavirus could lead to the emergence of even more variants.

"New variants are expected and will continue to be reported," Tedros said. "That's what viruses do. They evolve," he said. "But we can prevent the emergence of variants by preventing transmission."

AMSTERDAM — The European Medicines Agency has approved a new manufacturing site for Johnson & Johnson's COVID-19 vaccine, in a move that should boost production of the one-dose vaccine across the 27-nation EU.

In a statement Friday, the EU drug regulator said the new site in Anagni, Italy, will finish manufacturing of the J&J vaccine, which was licensed for use in adults across Europe in March. Production problems have stalled J&J's roll-out across the European Union in recent months and millions of doses made at a U.S. factory had to be thrown out after contamination issues.

The EU has ordered 200 million doses of the J&J vaccine and was expecting 55 million by the end of June; to date, fewer than 14 million doses have been distributed.

J&J's vaccine roll-out was also stalled after the EMA concluded there was a "possible link" between the coronavirus shot and very rare blood clots and recommended that a warning should be added to the label. Health officials say the vaccine's benefits still far outweigh the risks.

Bangkok, 9 provinces restrict movements to curb rising cases

BANGKOK (AP) — Faced with a sharp rise in coronavirus cases, the Thai capital on Sunday announced a ban on indoor dining and gatherings of more than 20 people, in addition to the closure of construction sites and the sealing off of workers' quarters in Bangkok and nine other provinces.

The measures will remain for 30 days.

Thailand reported 3,995 confirmed cases and 42 dead in the last 24 hours. The numbers have doubled recently, and health officials blame a lack of cooperation from migrant workers employed in construction and in factories.

"Camps were closed but workers sneaked out to markets and communities, and spread the disease," Apisamai Srirangson, spokesperson for the Center for COVID-19 Situation Administration, said Friday. She said that "bubble and seal" disease control measures had proved successful within 28 days in handling clusters in Samut Sakhon province, south of Bangkok, but not in the capital.

The situation has become critical as the number of hospital beds in Bangkok for seriously ill COVID-19

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patients is running short despite the creation of several field hospitals. Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said Friday that a proposal for a seven-day curfew for all of Bangkok has been rejected for the time being.

Under the new restrictions, construction workers will be isolated in camps in Bangkok and five neighboring provinces, and in the country's four southernmost provinces, all virus hotspots.

Department stores and malls in Bangkok can stay open until 9 p.m., but food and drinks in restaurants are allowed only for takeaway. Seminars, meetings and parties are canceled. If more clusters are discovered, the governor can seal off those communities.

Travelers from the 10 provinces, including Bangkok, will be isolated and quarantined.

Authorities, meanwhile, are planning to go ahead with a plan to allow fully vaccinated foreign tourists to visit the southern resort island of Phuket without undergoing a 14-day quarantine that is otherwise mandatory. Thailand is anxious to begin the recovery of its lucrative tourism industry, which has been devastated by the pandemic and consequent travel restrictions.

Thailand has administered around 8.66 million vaccine doses, with around 9% of its 69 million people receiving at least one shot. Critics charge that Prayuth's government failed to secure timely and adequate vaccine supplies. He says Thailand now has agreements that will ensure enough vaccine for about 70% of its population by the end of the year.

Blinken, Lapid meet in Rome amid reset US-Israel relations

By LAURIE KELLMAN, MATTHEW LEE and ELLEN KNICKMEYER Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Hush-hush diplomacy. In-person visits. And a very public no-surprises agreement on Iran. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid will meet in Rome on Sunday as their new governments look to turn the page on former President Donald Trump and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, whose close alliance aggravated partisan divisions within both countries.

Now, with Trump sidelined in Florida and Netanyahu leading the opposition, President Joe Biden and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett are focused on pragmatic diplomacy rather than dramatic initiatives that risk fomenting opposition at home or distracting from other priorities.

That means aiming for smaller achievements, such as shoring up the informal cease-fire that ended last month's war with Gaza's militant Hamas rulers and replenishing Israel's Iron Dome defense system. A major push to revive the long-dormant peace process between Israel and the Palestinians could unsettle the delicate balance.

"Nobody thinks it's a good idea to start charging through on a major new peace initiative," said Ilan Goldenberg, a Mideast security expert at the nonprofit Center for a New American Security. "But there are things you can do quietly under the radar, on the ground, to improve the situation."

That approach — of managing the conflict rather than trying to solve it — may succeed in papering over domestic divisions. But it also maintains a status quo that the Palestinians find increasingly oppressive and hopeless, and which has fueled countless cycles of unrest.

The Americans and Israelis will try to work out differences away from the public, as in Biden's "quiet" diplomacy, when he privately urged Netanyahu to wind down the Israel-Hamas war ahead of a truce that took effect May 21.

"They know you can have a pitched battle, or handle it behind closed doors and try to move the policy," said U.S. Democratic pollster Mark Mellman, who worked as a consultant on Lapid's campaigns.

Both governments will try to preserve Israel's fragile governing coalition, in part by reducing provocations that played a part in sparking the 11-day war that claimed at least 254 Palestinian lives and killed 13 people in Israel.

The new coalition in Israel shares little beyond the conviction that Netanyahu had to go. It's composed of eight parties, each effectively with veto power on decisions. So if even one party bolts, Israel's government would be at serious risk of collapse, with Netanyahu waiting just offstage.

At least in the short term, Lapid, a centrist, will be Israel's point man on repairs to the tattered relationship with Biden and the Democrats. The party controls both houses of Congress but is increasingly divided

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on the Mideast conflict, with progressive members calling for the U.S. to exert more pressure on Israel. "What they're building now is mutual trust," said Michael Oren, former Israeli ambassador to the United States under Netanyahu. "I expect a change of tone rather than of substance... but there's a possibility that it could produce something better for Israel."

Topping the agenda in both countries are talks in Vienna over reviving Iran's 2015 accord with world powers to limit Tehran's ability to develop nuclear weapons. Trump, with Netanyahu's backing, pulled the U.S. out of the deal in 2018 and imposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic. Biden promised to restore and expand the agreement.

Though opposed to a new accord, Israel's new government seems intent on trying to influence the talks rather than scuttle them altogether. Netanyahu enraged many Democrats when he condemned the "very bad deal" before a joint session of Congress in 2015.

Netanyahu's defiance of the Obama administration, followed by his close ties to Trump, was widely seen as having undermined the traditional bipartisan U.S. support for Israel. And while Israelis welcomed Trump's diplomatic gifts to Netanyahu over the years, their timing often led to suspicions that he was trying to keep the prime minister in power through deadlocked elections and an ongoing corruption trial.

In contrast to Netanyahu's approach during the Obama era, Lapid recently announced that he and Blinken had agreed to a "no-surprises" policy in an effort to keep the lines of communication open. The two are expected to discuss the issue Sunday in Rome.

Even the right-leaning Bennett, who is ideologically aligned with the hawkish Netanyahu, has toned down the rhetoric on Iran.

"We will continue to consult with our friends, persuade, discuss, and share information and insights out of mutual respect," Bennett said Thursday. "But at the end of the day, we will be responsible for our own fate, nobody else."

Tamping down tensions — or at least not inflaming them — is a key strategy, the officials said. For example, Bennett is a religious nationalist who supports settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank. But he risks losing his job if he alienates his dovish coalition partners.

Officials expect there will be little settlement expansion beyond so-called "natural growth." But that's a vaguely defined term that could allow for considerable construction, as well as moving ahead with major infrastructure projects that pave the way for explosive future growth.

An Israeli Defense Ministry body advanced plans for 31 settlement construction projects last week, including a shopping center and a special needs school, Israeli media reported.

On the U.S. side, the Biden administration has made clear it wants to extricate the country from intractable conflicts in the Middle East and focus on other challenges, such as climate change and competition with China.

On Monday, outgoing Israeli President Reuven Rivlin is to visit Washington at Biden's invitation. A group of House Democrats are planning an official trip to Israel as soon as Congress' July 4th recess.

There's even talk of Lapid and Bennett traveling to Washington later in the summer, separately or together, the officials said. Bennett will serve as prime minister for the first two years, followed by Lapid, the architect of the coalition.

All the officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss administration plans and logistics, which have not been finalized.

So far, the reset seems to be functioning. But with the Israeli coalition barely two weeks old, significant challenges loom.

Biden has moved to reverse Netanyahu-backed Trump policies that alienated the Palestinians, and the administration has said Israelis and Palestinians should enjoy equal measures of security and prosperity.

But the U.S. has yet to explain how it intends to bring that about without ending Israel's half-century military occupation of the West Bank, its blockade on Hamas-ruled Gaza and discriminatory policies in Jerusalem that fueled a spring of unrest.

On the Israeli side, making peace with the Democrats appears to be the more urgent priority.

"They are angry," Lapid said as he took the helm of Israel's foreign ministry. "We need to change the way we work with them."

'Like a hell': Ethiopia airstrike survivors recall massacre

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (AP) — Maerg was serving customers at his cafe in Ethiopia's Tigray village of Togoga when the military airstrike occurred, filling the room with dust and bringing down debris that struck him on the head.

"Everything was covered in black smoke, it was like a hell," he told The Associated Press by phone, recounting one of the deadliest attacks in the Tigray conflict. "There was so much blood."

Seven people were killed in his cafe alone, and some 30 were wounded, including his sister-in-law, who suffered burns on her face, hands and legs. Outside, he said, he saw dozens more bodies. As time passed, he watched in horror as survivors realized that Ethiopian soldiers were blocking medical aid from arriving.

"We feel very angry because a lot of lives could have been saved," he said.

Such witness accounts are emerging after Ethiopia's military has said it was responsible for the airstrike that struck Togoga's busy marketplace on Tuesday, which health officials said killed at least 64 people and injured dozens more. Many died when soldiers blocked medical teams from reaching them, or from taking them to hospitals in the regional capital, Mekele, just 60 kilometers (37 miles) away, health workers said.

The military said the airstrike targeted Tigray fighters dressed in civilian clothes who had gathered to celebrate Martyrs' Day. But witnesses told the AP that although fighters loyal to Tigray's former leaders had been active in the surrounding countryside days before the airstrike, armed men were not in Togoga on the day of the attack.

Most of the victims were women and children, said a doctor who treated people at the scene.

In a war that has been largely fought in the shadows, with communications and transport links often cut since fighting in Tigray began in November, the airstrike in Togoga was a rare instance of a massacre emerging almost immediately. Within minutes, one former resident had tweeted the news. Within hours, there was international condemnation.

"Reprehensible," the United States said, as it, the United Nations and the European Union again called for a cease-fire in Tigray, where thousands of people have been killed and hundreds of thousands now face the world's worst famine in a decade.

Shaken survivors of the airstrike challenged the Ethiopian government's narrative, saying only civilians had been killed.

"There were not any fighters in the marketplace, just rural people who had arrived for the market," said Luel, a farmer who was buying clothes there when the earth shook and his leg was broken by the blast. He said he saw "around 60" bodies on the ground. As with others interviewed, the AP is using only his first name for his safety.

Habtay, who also was shopping in the market, also said no fighters were present. He suffered a shrapnel wound to his stomach but couldn't reach a hospital until Thursday, two days after the bombing.

"Everything was covered in dust and smoke," he said. Helpless, he watched some survivors try to give each other first aid.

Medical care would not reach people for hours, even more than a day. Health workers told the AP they were repeatedly denied access to the Togoga by Ethiopian soldiers on the day of the attack and the following morning. One doctor, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals, said soldiers shot at his ambulance when it tried to pass a checkpoint.

Yohannes, a farmer hit in the chest by a bomb fragment, said a convoy of four ambulances attempting to evacuate him and other patients to hospitals in Mekele was blocked by soldiers and ordered back to Togoga. One patient died after returning to the village, he said.

Even after reaching Mekele, six wounded survivors of the airstrike were detained en route to a hospital, a regional health official said, on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals. Three were later released, but the others, including a teenage boy, were held at a military barracks, the official, who described the

situation as “very desperate.” It was not clear why they were detained.

The airstrike occurred at a pivotal moment in Ethiopia, a day after much of the country voted in a national election that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize winner, has promoted as part of political reforms.

But the war in Tigray, sparked in part because the national election was delayed last year amid the COVID-19 pandemic, has overshadowed the vote. The election itself has drawn criticism by the U.S. and other observers who pointed to the detention or harassment of some opposition figures and deadly insecurity in parts of the country.

Ethiopia, with the airstrike, again finds itself on the defensive. It has disputed allegations that its troops have committed widespread human rights violations in Tigray — though the U.N. has said all sides in the war have committed them — and it asserts that aid has reached 5.2 million people in the region of 6 million.

The murder of three Doctors Without Borders staffers, announced by the aid group on Friday, brought a new round of condemnation of the atrocities in Tigray. It was not immediately clear who killed them.

For some US Muslims, raw talk on suicide, mental health

By MARIAM FAM Associated Press

Dr. Rania Awaad was attending a virtual religion program this Ramadan when discussion turned to an unexpected question: Is it religiously acceptable to say a prayer for someone who died by suicide?

Suicide is a complex and delicate topic that Awaad, as director of the Muslim Mental Health & Islamic Psychology Lab at Stanford University, knows much about — but one she says isn’t discussed nearly enough in U.S. Muslim communities. When it is, she said, it’s often poorly understood and shrouded in misconceptions.

Awaad and other mental health professionals are trying to change that, working alongside some faith leaders and activists to bring nuance and compassion to such conversations, raise awareness in Muslim communities about suicide prevention and mental health and provide religiously and culturally sensitive guidance.

The effort took on new urgency in the aftermath of an apparent murder-suicide that left six family members dead in Allen, Texas, in April, sending shock waves through Muslim communities in the area and beyond. Investigators believe two brothers made a pact to kill their parents, sister and grandmother before taking their own lives.

The incident sparked a flurry of activity in Muslim spaces, from public discussions on mental health and trainings on suicide response to healing circles and private conversations.

“The initial reaction of the community was total shock,” said Imam Abdul Rahman Bashir of the Islamic Association of Allen, where the family’s funeral was held. “Their reaction went from shock, grief to then concern about other families around them: Are they saying something that they can’t hear? Is something out there that they can’t see?”

“It definitely opened up the conversation for understanding what mental health is and the importance of mental well-being,” he added.

Suicide is theologically proscribed under Islam, and Awaad while acknowledging that, takes a nuanced view on the issue, arguing that it’s not up to people to judge. Contrary to what she’s heard some say about people who took their own lives, she believes the deceased may receive prayers regardless of how they died.

“We don’t know the state of a person when they reach this point in their life, and we don’t know their mental state in that moment,” she said. “... Only God can judge on this.”

The importance of seeking professional help for mental health struggles, without worrying about what people may say, is a message the Texas Muslim Women’s Foundation sought to drive home in a recent video. Aimed at the South Asian American community, it featured actors, young activists and others sharing their experiences to help break the stigma.

Some community leaders in Texas addressed suicide and mental health issues after a Muslim American

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woman took her own life in 2018, according to Saadia Ahmed, director of the foundation's youth leadership program. Following the Allen tragedy, she's heard from lots of people who have reached out to share their personal battles or ask how to get help for loved ones.

One young man opened up about having previously had suicidal thoughts and about how getting help made things better. There was a high school student who needed therapy but her parents weren't getting her any; with the aid of a school counselor, she ended up getting help. Ahmed also heard from parents worried about their kids.

"I feel like at least I see progress," Ahmed said.

Sameera Ahmed — no relation — a psychologist and executive director of The Family & Youth Institute, a not-for-profit research and education institute, said that when her group was developing suicide prevention resources for Muslim communities a few years ago, some questioned the need.

"People wouldn't share what was happening because they were afraid of the stigma," Ahmed said. "They were afraid people wouldn't come to their loved one's janazah," or funeral.

But today she sees more openness to conversation and says some well-known imams have begun addressing the issue from more compassionate perspectives. Still, much work remains, she added.

Following the Allen tragedy, Awaad gave virtual trainings on suicide response from her base in California to help people navigate the aftermath, including to religious and community leaders. Her lab at Stanford provided guidelines for Islamic sermons.

"The crisis response is the hardest part," she said. Many imams and religious leaders grapple with "striking a balance between healing the community and Islam's stance on the impressibility of suicide."

She also co-authored a piece detailing do's and don'ts after a suicide, like providing resources and support to those who may be struggling, while refraining from speculation on spiritual implications such as whether someone who took their life will go to paradise.

By the end of 2022, Awaad hopes 500 Muslim religious leaders will have received training on suicide using material developed by a nonprofit, Maristan, in collaboration with her lab at Stanford that's grounded in both science and the teachings of Islam.

Several religious leaders have thrown their weight behind the effort.

One of them, Imam Bashir, of the Islamic Association of Allen, said that while Islam doesn't allow suicide as a way to solve problems, the faith "encourages the community to be one body with ears, eyes and arms to help each other not get to a point where that would be a consideration."

Wrestling with difficult questions around suicide isn't unique to Muslims. Mathew Schmalz, a professor of religious studies at the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts, said a belief common to theistic traditions is that one's life belongs to God, so taking it "fundamentally violates" God's most precious gift.

Yet attitudes have been evolving with a greater appreciation of the complexities of mental illness, he added, and it's important to challenge beliefs that suicide signals moral weakness or a failure to be grateful of God.

"While an understanding of God as merciful is important," Schmalz said, "equally important is being part of a faith community in which mental health issues are taken seriously and not stigmatized."

Report showed 'major' damage before Florida condo collapse

By CURT ANDERSON and BERNARD CONDON Associated Press

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. (AP) — The ground-floor pool deck of the oceanfront condominium building that collapsed near Miami was resting on a concrete slab that had "major structural damage" and needed to be extensively repaired, according to a 2018 engineering report that also uncovered "abundant cracking and spalling" of concrete columns, beams and walls in the parking garage.

The report was among a series of documents released by the city of Surfside as rescuers continued to dig Saturday through rubble in an effort to find any of the 156 people who remain unaccounted for after the collapse. At least five people were killed.

While the engineering report from the firm of Morabito Consultants did not warn of imminent danger

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from the damage — and it is unclear if any of the damage observed was responsible for the collapse — it did note the need for extensive and costly repairs to fix the systemic issues with Champlain Towers South.

The report said the waterproofing under the pool deck had failed and had been improperly laid flat instead of sloped, preventing water from draining off.

“The failed waterproofing is causing major structural damage to the concrete structural slab below these areas. Failure to replace the waterproofing in the near future will cause the extent of the concrete deterioration to expand exponentially,” the report said.

The firm recommended that the damaged slabs be replaced in what would be a major repair.

Some of the damage to the concrete in the parking garage was minor, while other columns had exposed and deteriorating rebar. It also noted that many of the building’s previous attempts to fix the columns and other damage with epoxy were marred by poor workmanship and were failing.

Beneath the pool deck “where the slab had been epoxy-injected, new cracks were radiating from the originally repaired cracks,” the report said.

These were all problems that should have been dealt with quickly, said Gregg Schlesinger, an attorney specializing in construction defects and a former construction project engineer.

“The building speaks to us. It is telling us we have a serious problem,” Schlesinger said in a telephone interview Saturday about the new documents. “They (building managers) kicked the can down the road. The maintenance was improper. These were all red flags that needed to be addressed. They weren’t.”

In a statement Saturday, Morabito Consultants confirmed its report “detailed significant cracks and breaks in the concrete, which required repairs to ensure the safety of the residents and the public.”

The firm said it was hired again in June 2020 by Champlain Towers South to begin the 40-year recertification process that would detail what work needed to be done.

“At the time of the building collapse, roof repairs were under way, but concrete restoration had not yet begun,” the statement said.

Abi Aghayere, a Drexel University engineering researcher, said the extent of the damage shown in the engineering report was notable. In addition to possible problems under the pool, he said several areas above the entrance drive showing signs of deterioration were worrisome and should have been repaired immediately.

“Were the supporting members deteriorated to the extent that a critical structural element or their connections failed leading to progressive collapse?” he wrote in an email to the AP after reviewing the report. “Were there other areas in the structure that were badly deteriorated and unnoticed?”

The building was in the midst of its 40-year recertification process, which requires detailed structural and electrical inspections. In an interview Friday, Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said he wasn’t sure if the inspection had been completed, but he said it may contain vital clues.

“It should have been a very straightforward thing,” Burkett said. “Buildings in America do not just fall down like this. There is a reason. We need to find out what that reason is.”

The 12-story tower’s collapse Thursday morning has also raised questions over whether other similar buildings are in danger.

“This is a wake-up call for folks on the beach,” Schlesinger said. “The scary portion is the other buildings. You think this is unique? No.”

Details of the building’s 40-year recertification inspection will be made public once they are completed, Surfside Town Clerk Sandra McCreedy said in an email.

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava said at a news conference Friday that she has seen no evidence of a sinkhole — much more common in other parts of Florida — or of something criminal, such as a bomb.

“I can tell you that at this time, they haven’t found any evidence of foul play,” she said.

Beyond that, much focus is on ocean water, which is rising in South Florida and elsewhere because of climate change. Last year, Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis signed into law a measure that would require developers to complete sea-level rise studies before beginning publicly funded projects.

One theory is that the saltwater ubiquitous in the area, which is subject to flooding during so-called King

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Tide events, intruded into concrete supports, corroding the steel-reinforcing rebar inside and weakening the concrete.

Meanwhile, the land on which Champlain Towers sat has been gradually sinking, according to a study published last year by an environmental professor at Florida International University.

But the professor, Shimon Wdowinski, cautioned against blaming the collapse on the caving ground.

"In most cases, these buildings just move," he said in a video interview released by the university. "There's no catastrophic collapse like in the case in Surfside, which was very unfortunate."

Surfside officials say roof work was ongoing at the now-collapsed tower but have downplayed the possibility that work was a cause. Barry Cohen, a lawyer who escaped the crippled building with his wife, said the roof work could be part of a "perfect storm" of causes that combined to bring down the structure.

"They were doing a new roof. And I think, all day long, the building was pounding and pounding and pounding. They've been doing it for over a month," Cohen said.

Another issue is whether nearby construction might have caused vibrations that weakened Champlain Towers. Cohen said he raised concerns previously that the work was possibly causing cracked pavers on the pool deck.

The collapse is already drawing lawsuits, including one filed hours after the collapse by attorney Brad Sohn against the condo's homeowners association seeking damages for negligence and other reasons for all of the tower's residents.

The association, the lawsuit contends, "could have prevented the collapse of Champlain Towers South through the exercise of ordinary care, safety measures and oversight."

An attorney for the association, Ken Direktor, did not respond Friday to an email requesting comment.

Message sent: Berry turns away from flag during anthem

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

EUGENE, Ore. (AP) — For the past week, they've played the national anthem one time a night at the U.S. Olympic track and field trials.

On Saturday, the song happened to start while outspoken activist Gwen Berry was standing on the podium after receiving her bronze medal in the hammer throw.

While the music played, Berry placed her left hand on her hip and shuffled her feet. She took a quarter turn, so she was facing the stands, not the flag. Toward the end, she plucked up her black T-shirt with the words "Activist Athlete" emblazoned on the front, and draped it over her head.

"I feel like it was a set-up, and they did it on purpose," Berry said of the timing of the anthem. "I was pissed, to be honest."

Berry's reaction to the "Star-Spangled Banner" took its fair share of the spotlight on a blazing-hot second-to-last day at trials that also featured some blazing-fast times.

Gabby Thomas became the second-fastest woman ever in the 200, winning the final in 21.61 seconds. The only woman faster: Florence Griffith-Joyner. And, as expected, Grant Holloway won the 110-meter hurdles, though his time in the semifinals was the eye-opener. His 12.81 was only 0.01 off the world record.

Other winners Saturday included Emily Sisson (10,000), Katie Nageotte (pole vault), Maggie Malone (javelin), Rai Benjamin (400 hurdles) and Brittney Reese (long jump).

Not winning: Allyson Felix, who finished fifth in the 200, but already had her spot secured in the 400.

Also, Noah Lyles finished second in his 200 semifinal and looked somewhat shocked to see that 17-year-old Erriyon Knighton had beaten him to the line. Knighton finished in 19.88 to top an under-20 world record that had been held by none other than Usain Bolt.

Earlier, with temperatures reaching 101 degrees (38 Celsius) on the field, Berry earned her spot, and her platform at the Tokyo Olympics, grabbing the third spot by a scant 2 inches over Janee Kassanavoid.

Berry has promised to use her position to keep raising awareness about social injustices in her home country.

"My purpose and my mission is bigger than sports," Berry said. "I'm here to represent those ... who

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died due to systemic racism. That's the important part. That's why I'm going. That's why I'm here today."

She found it to be no matter of coincidence that she was front and center during the anthem. Unlike the Olympics, they don't play anthems to accompany medals ceremonies at the trials. But the hammer throwers received their awards just before the start of the evening session, which has been kicking off all week with a video rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" played on the scoreboard.

USA Track and Field spokeswoman Susan Hazzard said "the national anthem was scheduled to play at 5:20 p.m. today. We didn't wait until the athletes were on the podium for the hammer throw awards. The national anthem is played every day according to a previously published schedule." On Saturday, the music started at 5:25.

And so, while winner DeAnna Price and second-place finisher Brooke Andersen stood still on the podium with their hands over the hearts and stared straight ahead at the American and Oregon flags, Berry fidgeted and paced on the third step. Then turned away. And finally grabbed her T-shirt.

"They said they were going to play it before we walked out, then they played it when we were out there," Berry said. "But I don't really want to talk about the anthem because that's not important. The anthem doesn't speak for me. It never has."

Berry's gestures drew virtually no reaction from the still-filling stands. And they were something far less than two summers ago, when she raised her fist on the podium after winning the Pan-Am Games.

That demonstration led to a sanction, but ultimately pushed the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee to commit to not punishing athletes who raise fists or kneel at the trials or in Tokyo. It's a potential flash point for Tokyo, where the IOC has said it will enforce its Rule 50 that bans demonstrations inside the lines. It's the same prohibition that got sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos sent home from the Mexico City Games in 1968.

Now, Berry will be heading to her second Olympics, and she saw what it will take to earn anything close to a similar moment in Tokyo.

Price won with a throw of 263 feet, 6 inches (80.31 meters), which was nearly 7 feet longer than Berry's throw. Price, who became only the second woman in history to crack 80 meters, had no problem sharing the stage with Berry.

"I think people should say whatever they want to say. I'm proud of her," Price said.

She figures to be going for gold along with world-record holder Anita Wlodarczyk of Poland, who is expected to be in Japan. Meanwhile, Andersen's throw was a mere 2 inches shy of Berry's personal best.

Berry said she needs to get "my body right, my mind right and my spirit right" for the Olympics. The women's hammer throw starts Aug. 1.

But she doesn't think she needs to be on the podium in Tokyo to have an impact.

"I don't need to do anything sport-wise," she said. "What I need to do is speak for my community, to represent my community and to help my community. Because that's more important than sports."

Crews at collapse site find body, raising death toll to five

By RUSS BYNUM and FREIDA FRISARO Associated Press

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — Rescue crews found another body in the rubble of a collapsed 12-story condominium tower near Miami on Saturday, raising the death toll to five as they raced to recover any survivors after fighting back fire and smoke deep inside the concrete and metal remains.

Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava announced the heightened toll at an evening news briefing, saying the identification of three bodies had dropped the number of unaccounted for down to 156. She said crews also discovered other unspecified human remains.

The Miami-Dade Police Department later Saturday said four of the five deceased had been identified, along with the apartments where they were at the moment of the collapse. One of the was the mother of a boy who was rescued the night the building toppled, another couple in their late 70s and early 80s and a 54-year-old man.

Officials said remains they find are being sent to the medical examiner, and they are also gathering DNA

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samples from family members to help identify them.

Separately, a video posted online showed an official briefing families of missing loved ones. When he said they had found remains among the rubble, people began sobbing.

Throughout the day, rescue workers scoured the mountain of debris with trained dogs and sonar, searching for any survivors. "Our top priority continues to be search and rescue and saving any lives that we can," the mayor said.

But crews had to fight flames in the debris during the day. At one point Saturday, a fire hose blasted one of the lower floors on the north side of the tower as white smoke or steam streamed out. A bitter, sulfur-like smell hung in the air.

"The stench is very thick," Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis said.

A crane removed pieces of debris from the more than 30-foot pile in the city of Surfside, and scores of rescuers used big machines, small buckets, drones, microphones and their own hands to pick through the rubble.

For many with missing loved ones, the wait was agonizing. The atmosphere was tense inside a hotel ballroom where around 200 family members were briefed, two people present told The Associated Press on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversations.

The two said families frustrated with the slow pace of recovery efforts had demanded permission to go to the scene and attempt a collective shout — an attempt as much to find survivors as a cathartic farewell to those who had died.

Among those awaiting word of loved ones was Rachel Spiegel, whose mother, 66-year-old Judy Spiegel, lived on the sixth floor. Speaking beside her siblings, she said Saturday that "we're trying to hold it together."

"I know my mom is a fighter. I know she loves us. I know she doesn't want to give up. So, you know, it's day three, so it's hard," Spiegel said.

President Joe Biden said via Twitter that he had spoken with DeSantis on Friday to offer assistance as needed.

"My heart is with the community of Surfside as they grieve their lost loved ones and wait anxiously as search and rescue efforts continue," Biden tweeted.

Authorities announced they were beginning an audit of buildings nearing their 40-year review — like the fallen Champlain Towers South — to make sure they're safe. The mayor asked other cities in the county to join the building review and said there will be state and federal funding to help.

Federal Emergency Management Agency officials have joined local and state authorities at the site, DeSantis said. He added a nearby "sister building" of the collapsed tower is also being looked at because it was built at the same time and with the same designer.

Late Saturday, Surfside Mayor Charles Burkett said that a city official had led a cursory review of the nearby Champlain Towers North and Champlain Towers East buildings.

"They didn't find anything out of the ordinary," he said.

He emphasized the priority now was on rescuing anyone still alive.

"What we're doing now is we're saving lives and we're bringing people out of the rubble. What we're going to do in the next phase, after we address support for the families, is we are going to do a very deep dive into why this building fell down," Burkett said.

Burkett had said earlier he was working on a plan to temporarily relocate residents of the Champlain Towers North, which was constructed the same year and sits about 100 yards away from the collapsed building, and that FEMA has agreed to pay for lodging.

The mayor said he didn't plan to order residents to evacuate, but if he lived there, "I'd be gone."

Surfside city staffers had also been gathering details about Champlain Towers East, which was built in a different style and apparently was built at a different time.

The news came after word of a 2018 engineering report that showed the building had "major structural damage" to a concrete slab below its pool deck that needed extensive repairs, part of a series of documents released by the city of Surfside.

While officials said no cause for the collapse early Thursday has been determined, DeSantis said a "definitive answer" was needed in a timely manner. Video showed the center of the building appearing to tumble down first, followed by a section nearer to the beach.

The 2018 report was part of preliminary work by the engineering company conducting the building's required inspections for a recertification due this year of the building's structural integrity at 40 years. The condominium tower was built in 1981.

A federal agency specializing in disaster losses and structure failures is sending a half dozen scientists and engineers to collect direct information for determining whether to pursue a more thorough study.

The first team members arrived Friday, said Jason Averill, an official at the National Institute of Standards and Technology. That agency also investigated the collapse of the Twin Towers on 9/11, and more recently, Hurricane Maria devastation in Puerto Rico, among other disasters.

Separately, the government of Israel said it was sending a team of engineering and rescue specialists to aid the search. Israeli media have reported that some 20 citizens of that country were believed among the missing.

Another 22 people unaccounted for were from Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay and Paraguay, including relatives of Paraguayan first lady Silvana de Abdo Benítez.

Friends, family describe missing in Florida condo collapse

By The Associated Press undefined

SURFSIDE, Fla. (AP) — Families around the world remained stuck between waning hopes and widening fears Saturday, two days after the stunning collapse of a 12-story condominium near Miami.

At least five people were killed and more than 150 people remained unaccounted for as rescuers continued to dig through the rubble of the Champlain Towers South in Surfside. The building was home to an international mix of foreign retirees, South American immigrants and Orthodox Jews, all with anxious loved ones across the globe.

The Miami-Dade Police Department identified for the first time four of the five deceased people late Saturday and the apartments where they were at the moment at the collapse. Their names were Stacie Dawn Fang, 54; Antonio, 83, and Gladys Lozano, 79; and Manuel LaFont, 54.

STACIE DAWN FANG

Stacie Dawn Fang was with her son Jonah Handler when the building collapsed. They lived on the tenth floor of the condo building. The boy's small hand waved through the wreckage as a man who was out walking his dog hurried to the site, climbed through a pile of glass and rebar and promised to get help right away.

Rescuers helped the boy out from under a pile of cement and carried him away on a stretcher, taking him to a hospital.

"There are no words to describe the tragic loss of our beloved Stacie," members of her family said in a statement. "Many heartfelt words of encouragement and love have served as a much needed source of strength during this devastating time."

As far as the boy's condition, a friend of the family, Lisa Mozloom told the AP "He will be fine. He's a miracle."

ANTONIO AND GLADYS LOZANO

Antonio, 83, and Gladys Lozano, 79, lived on the ninth floor and were close to celebrating their 59th wedding anniversary. Their son, Sergio Lozano, told WPLG-TV that he had dinner with his parents hours before the collapse.

The son lived in one of the towers of the complex and could see his parents' apartment across the way from his. That night, he said he heard a loud noise they thought could be a storm.

"The building is not there," he said he told his wife. "My parents' apartment is not there. It's gone."

Here are the stories of some of the missing:

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TZVI AND INGRID "ITTY" AINSWORTH

Tzvi and Ingrid "Itty" Ainsworth were celebrating the birth of two new grandchildren. Their son in South Africa recently had a baby and their son in Florida had a baby just days ago, their niece Chana Harrel told The Associated Press on Saturday.

The couple, who are in their 60s, lived in Australia for nearly two decades before returning to South Florida to be near their children. The couple had seven children and many live in South Florida, including their daughter just blocks away, she said.

"Every person she encountered, ever in her life, became her friend. Everyone was treated as equals," Chana Wasserman wrote in a Mother's Day blog post to her mother Itty last year. "The guy at the laundromat, the guy working at the fruit market ..."

Ingrid struggled with chronic pain issues, but didn't let that darken her mood. She tried to focus on the positive, a sunny day, a long car ride that would seem tedious to many she reframed as a chance to talk and catch up, he daughter wrote.

"I know I will never be able to match my mother's pure enthusiasm for life but it's inspiring to watch," Wasserman wrote.

Itty's mother, a Holocaust survivor living in Miami Beach, is battling cancer and doesn't know about the tragedy.

"They didn't tell her. She's not well," Harrel. said. "It's absolutely horrific."

BRAD AND GARY COHEN

Brothers Brad and Gary Cohen were both medical doctors who were active in their local communities. Brad Cohen was married to Soriya Cohen. She has spent hours outside the condo building, showing pictures of the siblings on her phone to anyone who will listen, desperate for updates.

"We need every bit of help we can get. This is the difference between life and death for so many people including possibly my husband if he's still alive," she told CBS News 4.

Dr. Brad Cohen was a popular orthopedic surgeon who specialized in sports medicine. A woman who answered the phone at his office Friday said, with sadness in her voice, that his patients adored him. He did his residency at the State University of Stony Brook in New York and a fellowship at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, according to his website.

His brother, Dr. Gary Cohen was a physician at Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center in Alabama, and was also active in his local synagogue there.

"He spent many years providing care to our Veterans. He is part of the Tuscaloosa VAMC family and our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family during this incredibly difficult time," according to a statement from John Merkle, director of the Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center.

DAVID AND BONNIE EPSTEIN

David and Bonnie Epstein lived in unit 901 with their dog Chase, said Bonnie's cousin Joey Feldman.

David was a retired successful real estate investor who loved to jet ski and kite surf. The couple have a son who lives in New York.

Feldman said the family is very small.

"Bonnie was like my sister growing up," said Feldman, who lives in Los Angeles. "She took me to my first concert."

He said he is devastated but is praying for a miracle.

"I am holding out hope," he said. "I came into work to get my mind off of it. But no sleep."

HILDA NORIEGA

Hilda Noriega had called Champlain Towers home for more than 20 years. But six years after her husband died, the 92-year-old was ready to leave.

"We were going to move her into our home and her condo was up for sale," said Sally Noriega, her daughter-in-law.

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Sally Noriega said her mother-in-law was extremely active and loved living so close to the ocean and to her friends. But, she said, "when you lose a spouse you want to be surrounded by family ... and she wanted to spend more time with her family and grandchildren."

Hilda Noriega's daughter-in-law described her as "an extremely loving and sweet person," who built a life with her husband and raised a family after coming to the U.S. from Cuba in 1960.

"She was just one of those people who from the first time she met a person she instantly loved that person and that person instantly loved her," said Sally Noriega, who rushed to the scene of the collapse with her husband, Carlos Noriega.

There, they found a reminder of the particularly strong bond Hilda Noriega shared with members of her church group. As they stood trying to hold onto hope amid the rubble, Carlos Noriega noticed an envelope peeking out from under his shoe.

"On the outside it was addressed to Hilda and the card had butterflies on it and it was a birthday card signed by her prayer group," said Sally Noriega. "They had taken her out for her birthday and they all signed the card."

Sally Noriega said the family does not know what to make of the card found among so much debris and chaos.

But, "we are a family of faith," she said. "We'll just leave it at that."

MYRIAM CASPI NOTKIN and ARNOLD NOTKIN

Myriam Caspi Notkin, 81, and her husband, Arnold "Arnie" Notkin, 87, married about 20 years ago after losing their spouses, according to a family friend.

"They were a happy couple. We're hoping for a miracle," said Fortuna Smukler, a North Miami Beach commissioner who grew up with Myriam Notkin's three daughters. When they ran into each other as adults, Notkin always recalled her friendship with Smukler's mother, who died 40 years ago.

"Every time Myriam would see me, she always had to make a point of saying how wonderful my mother was," Smukler said. "She was very thoughtful."

Smukler also knew Arnie Notkin dating back to his days as a physical education teacher and coach at Leroy D. Fienberg Elementary School in South Beach in the 1960s. He had an engaging personality and always had a story to tell.

"He had students who became famous, and he had to tell me about them, how they were good or mischievous," she said.

MARIA THERESA AND RICKY ROVIROSA

Maria Theresa and Ricky Rovirosa are a "perfect match" who support each other and others, according to longtime friend Monika Mucarsel Gressier.

The couple has two grown children they raised in their South Miami home, and used their Surfside condo as a part-time summer getaway. Gressier was living in California when she met Maria Theresa, whom she called Maituca, through work.

"We became instant friends," Gressier said in a text message. "She was one reason that gave me security and support for accepting a relocation to live in Miami. Maituca became my family support and always gave me and others the resources and guidance to navigate through the city of Miami."

Gressier described Ricky as charming and his wife as "stunningly beautiful" inside and out.

"When I think of them, I think of one of my favorite memories of the times I watched them dance salsa and how loving they were always to each other," Gressier wrote. "I am praying and hoping that they will survive this tragedy, as I know the strength, they both carry within, and I also know that their tremendous love for their girls and family will keep them fighting to survive this."

CASSONDRA BILLEDEAU-STRATTON

Cassandra Billedeau-Stratton, 40, has worked as an actress, model and Pilates instructor, bringing "a

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vivacious love of life to everything she does," her husband said in a statement.

"Cassie is a wife, mother and true friend to so many," said Michael Stratton, a Democratic political strategist from Colorado. He told Denver's KMGH-TV that he and his wife spent much of their time during the coronavirus pandemic in the condo they have owned for four years.

Billedeau-Stratton loved walking and biking along the beach, her sister, Stephanie Fonte, told the New York Times. When the sisters were together, she often would make them pose for photos on the beach or near a burst of flowers.

Michael Stratton said he and his wife were talking on the phone when the building collapsed.

"She described that the building was shaking and then ... the phone went dead," he said.

ILIAN NAIBRYF

Ilian Naibryf has been an active member of the Jewish community at the University of Chicago since arriving at the school three years ago, said Rabbi Yossi Brackman of the school's Rohr Chabad.

Naibryf, who just finished his junior year, served as the president of the Chabad House's student board for the past year. He and his girlfriend were in Florida to attend a funeral of a friend who had died of COVID-19, his parents told CNN.

"He is a really great guy, very friendly, always has a smile on his face and is just a really all-around well-liked person," Brackman said.

Brackman said the Rohr Chabad community is distraught but hopeful.

"Our message is one of hope and we encourage everyone to pray and be kind at this difficult time for many people," he said. "We believe in miracles, seen them and hope to see them again."

Trump airs old election grievances in return to rally stage

By JILL COLVIN Associated Press

WELLINGTON, Ohio (AP) — Former President Donald Trump reprised his election grievances and baseless claims of fraud as he returned to the rally stage Saturday, holding his first campaign-style event since leaving the White House.

"This was the scam of the century and this was the crime of the century," Trump told a crowd of thousands at Ohio's Lorain County Fairgrounds, not far from Cleveland, where he began making good on his pledge to exact revenge on those who voted for his historic second impeachment.

The event was held to support Max Miller, a former White House aide who is challenging Republican Rep. Anthony Gonzalez for his congressional seat. Gonzalez was one of 10 GOP House members who voted to impeach Trump for his role in inciting the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the Capitol building. Trump has vowed to back those who run against them.

And while he praised Miller as an "incredible patriot" and a "great guy" who "loves the people of Ohio," Trump spent much of the rally fixating on the 2020 election, which he insists he won, even though top state and local election officials, his own attorney general and numerous judges, including some he appointed, have said there is no evidence of the mass voter fraud he alleges took place.

Trump has been consumed with ongoing efforts to overturn the results in various states, and has even publicly entertained the idea that he could somehow be reinstated into office, even though no legal or constitutional basis for doing so exists.

"The 2020 presidential election was rigged," he told the crowd, which at one point broke into a "Trump won!" chant. "We won that election in a landslide." In reality, President Joe Biden's victory was thoroughly validated by the officials who reported finding no systemic fraud.

Saturday's focus on the election lies of 2020 began even before Trump arrived. The pre-show included a PowerPoint-style presentation by a man who claims an algorithm was used to manipulate the election results. And Mike Lindell, the My Pillow founder-turned-conspiracy theorist who has spent millions trying to prove the election was stolen, was hailed as a hero by some in the crowd, who chanted his name and jockeyed for photos as he milled around.

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When Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, a far-right Republican from Georgia known for her incendiary rhetoric, asked the crowd who their president is, they boomed loudly, "Trump!"

"President Trump is my president, too" she said.

The event had many of the trappings of the rallies Trump held as a candidate and as president. There was the eclectic playlist, the same stage design, and many familiar volunteers. Trump even reprised his performance of "The Snake," a song he has used as an allegory for illegal immigration, and the crowd chanted "Lock her up" at the mention of Hillary Clinton, the Democrat he defeated in 2016. But gone was the grand entrance using Air Force One as a backdrop, and the pomp that surrounds any sitting president.

Still, traffic through the afternoon was backed up from the fairgrounds into town, where pro-Trump signs dotted residents' lawns. On street corners, vendors sold "Trump 2024" flags and other merchandise as supporters arrived.

"I just love him," said Karen Barnett, 60, who drove from Dayton, Ohio and arrived at the fairgrounds around 3 a.m. after hopping in her car with "no sleep, nothing" when she heard the line was growing.

The rally, held five months after Trump left office under a cloud of violence, marks the beginning of a new, more public phase of his post-presidency. After spending much of his time behind closed doors building a political operation and fuming about the last election, Trump is planning a flurry of public appearances in the coming weeks. He'll hold another rally in Florida over the July Fourth weekend unattached to a midterm candidate and will travel to the southern border in the coming week to protest Biden's immigration policies.

The rally came as Trump, who has continued to tease the possibility that he will mount a comeback run for the White House in 2024, faces immediate legal jeopardy. Manhattan prosecutors informed his company Thursday that it could soon face criminal charges stemming from a wide-ranging investigation into the former president's business dealings. The New York Times, citing sources familiar with the matter, reported that charges could be filed against the Trump Organization within days. Trump has denounced the investigations as nothing more than a "witch hunt" aimed at damaging him politically.

Although Trump remains a deeply polarizing figure, he is extremely popular with the Republican base, and candidates have flocked to his homes in Florida and New Jersey seeking his endorsement as he has tried to position himself as his party's kingmaker.

Trump has said he is committed to helping Republicans regain control of Congress in next year's midterm elections. But his efforts to support — and recruit — candidates to challenge incumbent Republicans who have crossed him put him at odds with other Republican leaders who have been trying to unify the party after a brutal year in which they lost control of the White House and failed to gain control of either chamber of Congress.

So far, nine of the 10 House Republicans who voted for Trump's impeachment have drawn primary challengers. And Trump has offered to support anyone who steps forward to challenge the remaining candidate, Rep. John Katko of New York, syracuse.com reported.

Gonzalez, a former college and professional football player, has stood by his impeachment vote in the face of fierce criticism from his party's conservative wing, including his censure by the Ohio Republican Party. Miller, in opening remarks, labeled him an "anti-Trumper" who had betrayed Trump, the Republican Party and his district with his vote.

Trump's rallies have been instrumental to his politics since he launched his 2016 campaign. The former reality star is energized by performing in front of his audiences and often test-drives new material and talking points to see how they resonate with the crowd. His political operation also uses the events to collect critical voter contact information from attendees and as fundraising tools.

And they have spawned a group of hardcore fans who traveled the country, attending dozens of rallies, often camping out overnight to snag prime spots. Some of those supporters began lining up outside the venue early in the week as they reunited for the event.

Others were attending their first rallies, having felt compelled to turn out in the election's aftermath.

They included Chris Laskowski, 55, who lives in Medina, Ohio. "We miss him," she said. "I think they robbed him of the election and he's still our president."

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She wasn't alone.

"He'll be back in August," predicted Peggy Johnson, 60, who had traveled from Michigan to attend what she said was her seventh Trump rally. "He actually is president now." ____

Associated Press writer Hope Yen contributed to this report from Washington.

Portland records hottest day ever amid Northwest scorcher

By SARA CLINE and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP) — Utility workers and wildlife managers across the Pacific Northwest were trying to keep people and animals safe Saturday as a historic heat wave scorched the region, toppling records and sending residents searching for relief.

Stores sold out of portable air conditioners and fans, hospitals canceled outdoor vaccination clinics, cities opened cooling centers, baseball teams canceled or moved up weekend games, and utilities braced for possible power outages.

Portland, Oregon, had the hottest day ever recorded -- reaching 108 degrees Fahrenheit (42.2 degrees Celsius) Saturday afternoon, according to the National Weather Service. The previous record for Oregon's largest city was 107 F (41.7 C), a mark hit in 1965 and 1981.

Seattle reached 101 F (38.3), making it the hottest June day on record and only the fourth time in recorded history the usually temperate city had topped 100 degrees.

Other cities and towns from eastern Washington state to southern Oregon were also expected to break records, with temperatures in many areas expected to top out up to 30 degrees above normal.

It's a dangerous forecast for a region accustomed to mild weather, and where many don't have air conditioning.

James Bryant, a Seattle resident, picked up an air conditioner in anticipation of the extreme heat.

"My house is already hot, and so with the added heat over the next few days, I've got kids. I got to make sure they don't get too hot as well," Bryant said. "It seems to be a trend ... So I'm not sure what's driving it, but it's not fun, that's for sure."

The hot weather had berry farmers scrambling to pick crops before they rot on the vine and fisheries managers working to keep endangered sockeye salmon safe from too-warm river water.

Officials in Multnomah County, Oregon were asking for volunteers to help staff cooling centers as older people, homeless residents and others struggled with the heat. Cascades Street Outreach, an advocacy group for people experiencing homelessness, was going to homeless camps in the region to encourage people to use the cooling centers.

Peter Tiso, who works with Multnomah County's Joint office of Homeless Services, told the Oregonian/OregonLive.com that the Oregon Convention Center can hold about 300 people, but no one will be turned away from the cooling shelter. The shelter also allows pets, he said.

"We don't want anyone to be making the dangerous decision between leaving their pet behind or not," he said.

Unusually hot weather was expected to extend into next week for much of the region.

Columbia Basin fisheries managers are worried about how the heat wave will affect endangered Snake River sockeye and other species of protected salmon.

State, tribal and federal officials are trying to mitigate rising water temperatures in the lower Snake River, the Lewiston Tribune reported, in part by releasing 42 F (5.56 C) water from Idaho's Dworshak Reservoir. They began releasing the water earlier this week, hoping to keep the water temperature at the Lower Granite Dam on the Snake River at or below 68 F (20 C). Officials fear a repeat of 2015, when water temperatures in Columbia and Snake river reservoirs reached lethal levels for sockeye salmon.

In eastern Washington, berry farmer Jason Morrell said the sun was rapidly drying out his strawberries, leaving them at risk of rotting if they aren't picked fast. Morrell, the owner of Walters' Fruit Ranch near Spokane, told television station KREM that normally farmers have about three weeks to get their strawberry crop picked. With Spokane expected to reach 109 F (42.78 C) on Monday, he expects to have just

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a few days to get the job done.

Washington Gov. Jay Inslee lifted COVID-19 capacity restrictions on publicly owned or operated and non-profit cooling centers in light of the heat. Capacity is currently limited to 50% until the state fully reopens next Wednesday. In Oregon, Gov. Kate Brown suspended capacity limits for movie theaters and shopping malls — places with air-conditioning — as well as swimming pools ahead of a statewide reopening Wednesday.

In Seattle, a few new city lifeguards went through last-minute training at a beach on Lake Washington. Case Berrysmith has been a lead lifeguard for 15 years. This is the hottest stretch he has ever seen.

"Most rescues are going to be over-estimated ability," Berrysmith said. "Stay safe. Stay hydrated."

The sweltering temperatures expected on the final weekend of the U.S. Olympic Track and Field trials in Eugene, Oregon, also prompted USA Track and Field to reschedule several weekend events to times earlier in the day to avoid the peak heat.

Roughly 3,000 people signed up to compete in the Ironman race in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, on Sunday, when temperatures could reach a record 101 F (38 C). The triathlon includes a 2.4-mile (3.9-km) swim, a 112-mile (180-km) bike ride and a marathon run.

The extended "heat dome" over the Pacific Northwest was a taste of the future as climate change reshapes weather patterns worldwide, said Kristie Ebi, a professor at the University of Washington who studies global warming and its effects on public health.

"We know from evidence around the world that climate change is increasing the frequency, intensity and duration of heat waves. We're going to have to get used to this going forward," she said.

Biden: Infrastructure vow was not intended to be veto threat

By LISA MASCARO and ZEKE MILLER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Aiming to preserve a fragile bipartisan deal on infrastructure, President Joe Biden endorsed it "without hesitation" Saturday, walking back from a threat to veto it if Congress also didn't pass an even larger package to expand the social safety net.

Biden said he didn't mean to suggest in earlier remarks that he would veto the nearly \$1 trillion infrastructure bill unless Congress also passed a broader package of investments that he and fellow Democrats aim to approve along party lines, the two together totaling some \$4 trillion.

Speaking on Thursday moments after fulfilling his hopes of reaching a bipartisan accord, Biden appeared to put the deal in jeopardy with his comment that the infrastructure bill would have to move in "tandem" with the larger bill.

Though Biden had been clear he would pursue the massive new spending for child care, Medicare and other investments, Republicans balked at the president's notion that he would not sign one without the other. "If this is the only thing that comes to me, I'm not signing it," Biden said then of the infrastructure bill. "It's in tandem."

By Saturday, Biden was seeking to clarify those comments, after his top negotiators Steve Ricchetti and Louisa Terrell worked to assure senators that Biden remained enthusiastic about the deal.

"My comments also created the impression that I was issuing a veto threat on the very plan I had just agreed to, which was certainly not my intent," Biden said in a statement.

"I intend to pursue the passage of that plan, which Democrats and Republicans agreed to on Thursday, with vigor," Biden added. "It would be good for the economy, good for our country, good for our people. I fully stand behind it without reservation or hesitation."

Biden's earlier remarks had drawn sharp criticism from some Republicans, including Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., who tweeted on Friday, "No deal by extortion!" Others felt "blindsided" by what they said was a shift in their understanding of his position.

Tensions appeared to calm afterward, when senators from the group of negotiators convened a conference call, according to a person who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

"My hope is that we'll still get this done," said Sen. Rob Portman of Ohio, the lead Republican negotiator,

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in an interview Friday with The Associated Press. "Our infrastructure is in bad shape."

Biden was set to travel on Tuesday to Wisconsin for the first stop on a nationwide tour to promote the infrastructure package, the White House said.

The sudden swings point to the difficult path ahead for what promises to be a long process of turning Biden's nearly \$4 trillion infrastructure proposals into law.

The two measures were always expected to move together through Congress: the bipartisan plan and a second bill that would advance under special rules allowing for passage solely with majority Democrats votes and is now swelling to \$6 trillion. Biden reiterated that was his plan on Saturday, but said he was not conditioning one on the other.

"So to be clear," his statement said, "our bipartisan agreement does not preclude Republicans from attempting to defeat my Families Plan; likewise, they should have no objections to my devoted efforts to pass that Families Plan and other proposals in tandem."

Before his clarification Saturday, not all senators were swayed by the White House outreach, which came after a tumultuous month of on-again, off-again negotiations over Biden's top legislative priority.

The Democrats' two-track strategy has been to consider both the bipartisan deal and their own more sweeping priorities side by side, as a way to assure liberals the smaller deal won't be the only one.

A bipartisan accord has been important for the White House as it tries to show centrist Democrats and others that it is working with Republicans before Biden tries to push the broader package through Congress.

Ten Republican senators would be needed to pass the bipartisan accord in the 50-50 Senate, where 60 votes are required to advance most bills.

While the senators in the bipartisan group are among some of the more independent-minded lawmakers, known for bucking their party's leadership, it appears criticism by Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell of Biden's approach could peel away GOP support.

Experts: Impact of Chauvin case on policing yet to be seen

By TAMMY WEBBER Associated Press

Former Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin's conviction and lengthy prison sentence in George Floyd's murder could lead to better police hiring and training, law enforcement experts say. It could spur more effort to build trust among officers and communities.

And it might have made the public — and future jurors — more receptive to longstanding complaints about police interactions with minorities.

Even so, the case was so unusual — from bystander video of Chauvin kneeling on Floyd's neck for 9 1/2 minutes to police department brass testifying against him — that it's difficult to say it was a watershed moment for lasting change.

"The conviction was critically important, in part, because of how blatant the violence was and because of the way in which the video couldn't allow the lies that police often tell in these situations to dominate the narrative," said Sheila A. Bedi, a professor at Northwestern University's Pritzker School of Law and director of the school's Community Justice & Civil Rights Clinic.

But the outcome in Chauvin's case — including his 22 1/2-year sentence — doesn't address deep-rooted issues of race and violence affecting police interactions with minorities that don't result in charges or convictions against officers, said Bedi, who has been involved in numerous use-of-force lawsuits against the Chicago Police Department.

"And until we get at that, I caution anyone to celebrate the conviction and sentence as a victory," she said.

Officers accused of brutality or other misconduct against Black people rarely go to trial, and among those who have, the list of acquittals and mistrials is longer than the list of sentencings after conviction. That includes acquittals in recent years of officers tried in the deaths of Philando Castile in suburban Minneapolis and Terence Crutcher in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Eleven non-federal law officers, including Chauvin, have been convicted of murder for on-duty deaths since 2005. Of those, the nine who were sentenced before Chauvin received sentences ranging from six

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years, nine months, to life behind bars, with the median being 15 years, said Philip Stinson, a criminal justice professor at Bowling Green State University.

Still, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison said Friday that the outcome was a step toward accountability, even if not total justice. And he urged federal, state and local lawmakers to pass laws to improve policing, saying Chauvin's sentencing was "by itself not enough."

Chauvin's high-profile case likely led more people to believe longstanding complaints about police interactions with Black people, even if his actions were blatantly wrong, experts said. And that could make jurors less likely to simply believe police versions of events in the future.

"Extreme cases by their nature open up public awareness ... but it doesn't necessarily result in across-the-board reform because the situation was so unique," said former federal prosecutor Jeffrey Cramer, senior managing director of the consulting firm Guidepost Solutions. "What would be the reform? Don't put your knee on someone's neck for 9 1/2 minutes?"

Still, the testimony of Minneapolis Police Department officers, including the chief, that Chauvin violated his training — though highly unusual — could make officers think twice about using force.

"And if it does, it's a good thing," Cramer said. "Anyone that's been in this game long enough knows that it comes down to hiring practices and training, but at the end of the day it's a certain officer in a certain situation. And I don't see these situations ending anytime soon."

Knowing that their encounters could be captured on cellphone video also could give officers pause, experts said. Minneapolis police originally said Floyd died in a medical incident. But video shot by 17-year-old Darnella Frazier showed Chauvin ignoring Floyd's pleas that he couldn't breathe and continuing to press his knee into Floyd's neck even after the Black man was dead.

But Kirk Burkhalter, a criminal law professor at New York Law School and a former 20-year New York Police Department detective, said police are being asked to do too much, especially in situations involving people with mental health issues or minor crimes. Floyd was suspected of trying to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill at a corner store.

"In a lot of these situations, we see poor decisions (by police), but they're often situations we should have never put cops in," said Burkhalter, who leads the law school's 21st Century Policing Project, which addresses relationships between police and communities.

Ellison, the attorney general, said he hoped Chauvin's conviction and sentence was a "moment for change" when it comes to trust between minority communities and police officers.

"You can't heal a dirty wound, and when there's little trust, sadly there's little safety," Ellison said.

Unless that broader issue is addressed, it doesn't matter what laws or regulations are adopted to address policing issues, Cramer said.

"I want to say I'm optimistic but ... pick any city: The mutual distrust is at a level I don't think I've seen since I've been doing this," Cramer said. But if good people on both sides want to solve the problem, then we've got a fighting chance."

Disappearances rise on Mexico's 'highway of death' to border

By MARK STEVENSON Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — As many as 50 people are missing after setting out on three-hour car trips this year between Mexico's industrial hub of Monterrey and the border city of Nuevo Laredo on a well-traveled stretch of road local media have dubbed "the highway of death."

Relatives say family members simply vanished. The disappearances, and last week's shooting of 15 apparently innocent bystanders in Reynosa, suggest Mexico is returning to the dark days of the 2006-2012 drug war when cartel gunmen often targeted the general public as well as one another.

"It's no longer between the cartels; they are attacking the public," said activist Angelica Orozco.

As many as half a dozen of those who disappeared on the highway are believed to be U.S. citizens or residents, though the U.S. Embassy could not confirm their status. One, José de Jesús Gómez from Irving, Texas, reportedly disappeared on the highway on June 3.

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On Saturday, the FBI office in San Antonio, Texas, issued a bulletin seeking information on the disappearance of a Laredo, Texas, woman, Gladys Perez Sánchez, and her 16-year-old son and 9-year-old daughter, who were last seen setting out on the highway June 13. They had visited relatives in Sabinas Hidalgo, a town on the highway, and were returning to Texas when they vanished.

Most of the victims are believed to have disappeared approaching or leaving the cartel-dominated city of Nuevo Laredo, across the border from Laredo, Texas. About a half-dozen men have reappeared alive, badly beaten, and all they will say is that armed men forced them to stop on the highway and took their vehicles.

What happened to the rest remains a mystery. Most were residents of Nuevo Leon state, where Monterrey is located. Desperate for answers, relatives of the missing took to the streets in Monterrey on Thursday to protest, demanding answers.

Orozco, a member of the civic group United Forces for Our Disappeared, said the abductions seem to mark a return to the worst days of Mexico's drug war, like in 2011 when cartel gunmen in the neighboring state of Tamaulipas dragged innocent passengers off buses and forced them to fight each other to the death with sledgehammers.

Then, as now, politicians and prosecutors have given the families of the disappeared few answers.

"Now, more than 10 years after the disappearances in 2010 and 2011, they cannot continue to use the same pretexts," said Orozco. But "they're using the same lines. ... In the last decade they were supposed to have created institutions and procedures, but it's the same old story of authorities doing nothing."

United Forces for Our Disappeared sent out a press statement on May 19 warning people about the dangers on the Monterrey-Nuevo Laredo highway, even though by mid-May the group had received only about 10 reports of people disappearing there. More reports poured in in June, and now amount to about 50.

The government of Nuevo Leon state acknowledged 10 days later that it had received reports of 14 people who had disappeared on the highway so far in 2021, along with five more in neighboring Tamaulipas, where Nuevo Laredo is located.

But Nuevo Leon didn't warn people against traveling on the highway until almost a month later on June 23.

That was too late for Gómez, and for Javier Toto Cagal, a 36-year-old truck driver and father of five who disappeared along with three employees of the same trucking company on the 135-mile (220 km) stretch of highway on June 3. They were driving to Nuevo Laredo in a car.

"Up to now, we don't know anything about (what happened to) them," said Erma Fiscal Jara, Toto Cagal's wife. "It wasn't until June 5 that the company called me to say 'your husband has disappeared.' As far as the authorities, I ask and they say 'we don't know anything.'"

Even after acknowledging the abductions, the Nuevo Leon state government suggested it was Tamaulipas' problem. The Nuevo Leon government also gave confusing information, first claiming to have rescued 17 people after abductions on the highway, then later acknowledging those victims had made it home on their own.

It wasn't until Friday that both state governments announced a joint program to increase policing and security on the highway, a step that, if it had been carried out a month earlier, might have saved dozens of lives.

"Only now is the National Guard going out to patrol the highway. Why did they wait so long?" asked Karla Moreno, whose husband, truck driver Artemio Moreno, disappeared on the road April 13.

She, too, is horrified that northern Mexico is reliving the experiences of a decade ago. "How can this be happening? We were supposed to have more (law enforcement) resources by now," she said.

Nuevo Laredo has long been dominated by the Northeast Cartel, a remnant of the old Zetas cartel, whose members were infamous for their violence.

Mexico security analyst Alejandro Hope said the highway disappearances and the June 19 events in Reynosa — when gunmen from rival cartels drove through the streets, randomly killing 15 passersby — were reminiscent of the attacks on civilians during the 2006-2012 drug war.

In 2008, a drug cartel in the western city of Morelia tossed hand grenades into a crowd during an Independence Day celebration. In 2011, cartel gunmen in Tamaulipas abducted dozens of men from passenger

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buses and made them fight each other to the death, either as a recruitment tool or for entertainment.

"It is something that happens episodically; it never completely stopped," Hope said of the attacks on civilians. The only thing that has changed, Hope said, was the rhetoric.

Officials in the early 2000s were often quick to repeat an old belief that drug cartels only killed each other, not innocent civilians. This time around, both in the Reynosa killings and highway abductions, officials quickly acknowledged the victims appeared to be innocent civilians.

"That argument, that 'they only kill each other' isn't heard so much anymore," Hope said.

In Georgia, Herschel Walker puts GOP in a holding pattern

By BILL BARROW Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The recently ousted former senator who wants her job back. A football hero considering his first run for office. Little-known politicians eyeing promotions. And a former president overshadowing them all in a state he lost last November.

Republicans' U.S. Senate nomination in a premier battleground like Georgia is a plum political prize, but a year before GOP voters choose a nominee for the 2022 midterms, they have no clear options. That leaves some power players worried about the party's chances to defeat freshman Democratic Sen. Raphael Warnock as they try to reclaim a Senate majority.

The glaring unknown as potential contenders consider their plans: whether political neophyte Herschel Walker will enter the race with the endorsement of his close friend, Donald Trump. Walker was a beloved Heisman Trophy winner for the University of Georgia and retired professional football star who played in the short-lived U.S. Football League when Trump was a team owner in the 1980s. Now, Trump is the former president who has divided Georgia Republicans with promises of vengeance against those he insists didn't do enough to help him overturn his defeat.

Together, they may be the most popular duo among Georgia Republicans.

Walker, who has joined in Trump's false assertions that the 2020 election was fraudulent, has stoked chatter about a Senate bid for months and discussed the race with national party leaders including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and Florida Sen. Rick Scott, head of the GOP's Senate campaign committee.

Trump has publicly encouraged Walker to enter the primary.

Walker, who recently attended Trump's private birthday celebration, has not indicated when he'll announce a decision. But the mere possibility of him running is enough to leave other would-be candidates in a holding pattern in a state where Democratic victories in 2020 highlighted Republicans' narrow margin of error.

The GOP bench most notably includes former Sen. Kelly Loeffler, who lost to Warnock in a January special election runoff, and U.S. Rep. Buddy Carter, a four-term congressman from near Savannah who has never run statewide.

Eric Tanenblatt, a top national Republican fundraiser and a principal at the law firm Dentons, called the GOP indecision "unfortunate" and warned that Warnock, the first Black senator from Georgia, will be a "formidable candidate" with a fundraising head start and no significant primary opposition as he seeks his first full Senate term.

"I guess my hope is that if Herschel does it, he decides to do it sooner than later," Tanenblatt said. "You have people waiting to jump on board, but it almost becomes a little too late."

Walker, 59, stirred fresh speculation about a Senate bid with a recent social media post showing the longtime Texas resident beside a car with a Georgia license plate. In the video, Walker declared himself "ready" to "run with the big dogs." But he has not set up any visible political operation in Georgia, and it's still not clear he's re-established residency in his home state. He had no presence at the annual state Republican convention or district and county conventions earlier this spring, leaving some Republicans frustrated.

"You've got to get out there and meet people, and it takes time to do that" in an expansive, populous state, said Jack Kingston, a former south Georgia congressman and 2014 Senate candidate. "Republican

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primary voters get mad easily if you don't come to their events, even if you're Herschel Walker."

That's a contrast to a handful of declared candidates, led by Gary Black, the longtime state agriculture commissioner, and would-be candidates like Loeffler and Carter.

Loeffler, who had been the Senate's wealthiest member, has traveled the state since her defeat to pitch her new political organization, Greater Georgia. She bills it as a conservative retort to Democrat Stacey Abrams' Fair Fight group.

The former senator also met recently with McConnell to talk about running again. A Republican close to Loeffler described the conversation as encouraging and suggested McConnell is intrigued by Loeffler's ability to self-fund. The Republican spoke on condition of anonymity to speak frankly about Loeffler's plans.

To be sure, national Republican leaders are not clamoring publicly for a Walker candidacy. The National Republican Senatorial Committee, which Florida's Scott leads, has no plans to take sides in any open primary, according to aides. McConnell, who has his own political operation and fundraising network, has made no such commitment.

Loeffler and Carter, meanwhile, are already deferring to the potential celebrity candidate: Carter has said publicly he wouldn't run if Walker does, and Loeffler's allies say it remains unlikely she'd be willing to tangle with him either.

Still, that doesn't mean Republicans are ready for a coronation.

"Herschel is the ultimate wild card -- high upside, but plenty of risk," said Chip Lake, a Republican strategist in Georgia and around the South.

Randy Evans, a Georgia Republican and U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg under Trump, argued that Walker, who is Black, could expand the GOP's appeal among Black votes in a general election, denting a Democratic advantage that helped elect Warnock. Other Republican players say that notion is exaggerated.

In the smoothest scenario, Walker would leverage his statewide fame and business success — he owns a Georgia-based poultry supplier, among other interests — to bridge the gap between the Trump's strident base and the more moderate middle that helped tilt Georgia to Democrats in 2020.

"If Herschel runs, Donald Trump will come to Georgia as many times as Herschel will have him," Evans predicted.

Tanenblatt countered: "That cuts both ways."

Indeed, Walker could sail through a primary as Trump's preferred choice but fall short in November in the Atlanta suburbs where the former president's imprimatur is a liability and where Republicans lost electoral votes and two U.S. Senate seats.

"There are traditional Republicans and donors who are still salty about losing those Senate seats, and they blame the president," said Tanenblatt.

Then there are the worst-case scenarios some Republicans muse about privately: Walker could simply wilt under the pressures of a nationalized campaign. He has written previously about his struggles with mental illness and likely would have to discuss that again, while also facing scrutiny on policy matters he's never had to address in detail. He could end up either a weak nominee or a primary flame-out who leaves the GOP scrambling for an alternative.

"This whole thing just captures the issue for Republicans right now in Georgia," said Lake. "We have a whole lot of Republicans who love Donald Trump and everyone who supports him. And we have a faction that just wants to move on. To win, we have to get those two groups to vote for the same person without realizing it. Can Herschel Walker or anybody else do that?"

UK health minister resigns after breaching coronavirus rules

By FRANK GRIFFITHS and JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — U.K. Health Secretary Matt Hancock, who has led the country's response to the coronavirus, resigned Saturday, a day after apologizing for breaching social distancing rules with an aide with whom he was allegedly having an affair.

Hancock had been under growing pressure since the tabloid Sun newspaper published images showing

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him and senior aide Gina Coladangelo kissing in an office at the Department of Health. The Sun said the closed circuit television images were taken May 6 — 11 days before lockdown rules were eased to allow hugs and other physical contact with people outside one's own household.

In a resignation letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Hancock said the government owed it "to people who have sacrificed so much in this pandemic to be honest when we have let them down."

"And those of us who make these rules have got to stick by them and that's why I've got to resign," he wrote.

Sajid Javid, who was the U.K. Treasury chief earlier in Johnson's government before resigning in February 2020, will replace Hancock as health secretary. Javid was also home secretary in then Prime Minister Theresa May's government.

Johnson said he was sorry to receive Hancock's resignation and that he "should leave office very proud of what you have achieved — not just in tackling the pandemic, but even before COVID-19 struck us."

Johnson had earlier expressed confidence in Hancock despite widespread calls to fire him.

Jonathan Ashworth, health spokesman for the opposition Labour Party, said "it is right that Matt Hancock has resigned. But why didn't Boris Johnson have the guts to sack him and why did he say the matter was closed?"

Some lawmakers from the governing Conservatives had also called on Hancock to quit because he wasn't practicing what he has been preaching during the pandemic.

"The last thing I would want is for my private life to distract attention from the single-minded focus that is leading us out of this crisis," Hancock, who is married, said in his letter of resignation.

"I want to reiterate my apology for breaking the guidance, and apologize to my family and loved ones for putting them through this," he said. "I also need (to) be with my children at this time."

Hancock, 42, is the latest in a string of British officials to be accused of breaching restrictions they imposed on the rest of the population to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The government is also facing questions about the circumstances in which Hancock hired Coladangelo, a university friend who was appointed to his department last year. She was initially employed as an unpaid adviser and this year became a non-executive director at the Department of Health, a role that pays about 15,000 pounds (\$21,000) a year.

Johnson's Conservative government has been branded a "chumocracy" by critics for hiring special advisers and contractors from outside the civil service without long-customary levels of scrutiny.

Hancock's department has been accused of waiving procurement rules to award lucrative contracts for protective equipment and other medical essentials, often to personal contacts. Hancock has said he was driven by the need to secure essential supplies quickly at the height of the outbreak.

Hancock has faced weeks of pressure since the prime minister's former top aide, Dominic Cummings, accused him of botching the government's response to the pandemic. Cummings, now a bitter critic of the government he once served, told lawmakers last month that Hancock "should have been fired" for alleged lies and errors. He also published a WhatsApp message in which Johnson branded Hancock "totally (expletive) hopeless."

Cummings himself was accused of breaking the rules and undermining the government's "stay home" message when he drove 250 miles (400 kilometers) across England to his parents' home during the spring 2020 lockdown. Johnson resisted pressure to fire him, but Cummings left his job in November amid a power struggle in the prime minister's office.

Big Pride parade in Paris; Turkish police stop marchers

By FRANCES D'EMILIO and JOHN LEICESTER Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Police in riot gear on Saturday blocked streets to try to thwart gay Pride marchers in Istanbul, while thousands turned out joyfully in Paris and elsewhere in Europe after pandemic privations — although setbacks against LGBT rights tempered some of the celebratory air.

Authorities have banned Istanbul Pride events since 2015, citing public security, and more recently, CO-

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VID-19 pandemic restrictions. The Cumhuriyet newspaper said at least 25 people were detained.

Pandemic concerns forced cancellations of Pride events in Lisbon and postponement of London's usually heavily attended event.

In Berlin, demonstrators set off on three routes toward the central Alexanderplatz in a format meant both to avoid bigger gatherings during the pandemic and to reflect the diversity of the LGBT community.

In Italy, thousands of Pride celebrants rallied in Rome and in some smaller cities.

With a proposed law to combat hate crimes against LGBTQ people stalled in the Italian Senate for months, the Vatican and right-wing political leaders have been lobbying to eliminate some of the provisions, citing fears the legislation will crimp freedom of expression.

After it became public that the Vatican earlier this month had raised objections to Italy's embassy to the Holy See over some of the bill's aspects, the Holy See tried to defuse anger by insisting it doesn't want to block passage. But its No. 2 official, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, expressed concern that the legislation could leave open to prosecution those expressing opinions about "any possible distinction between man and woman."

Proponents of the law retort that the threshold for prosecution is inciting hatred or violence against the protected classes. If approved, the Italian law would also combat discrimination and hate crimes against women and persons with disabilities.

A new Hungarian law prohibits sharing content on homosexuality or sex reassignment to people under 18 in school sex education programs, films or advertisements. The European Union nation's government says the law aims to protect children and insists it doesn't target gays. Critic says the law links homosexuality with pedophilia.

Camille Fois, 25, traveled to Paris from the Alpine city of Annency to take part in her first Pride march. Speaking about the Hungarian law, she expressed concerns shared by many rights advocates in the European Union.

"It can happen to us very quickly. It's not as far away as that," she ventured.

The overarching mood among tens of thousands of participants at the Paris event was of celebration after nearly a year-and-a half of pandemic-triggered restrictions on gatherings and socializing.

Singing along to "I Kissed a Girl" by Katy Perry, people danced in one of the Metro trains that carried them to the rallying point. With half of French adults now having had at least one vaccine jab, many no longer felt the need for face masks and partied with abandon.

"Being locked away was hard," said Georges Gregoire, 33, who came with his partner from Lille. "I wanted to have fun." Gregoire, a nursing student, moved to France from Haiti, where, he said, he was so miserable and ostracized as a gay man that he contemplated suicide.

Salv, who didn't want to give his full name because he doesn't want it widely known that he is HIV-positive, marched with a placard that read: "40 years of waiting for a vaccine." He said he is optimistic that research poured into coronavirus vaccines will boost prospects for a vaccine against HIV.

Milan Mayor Giuseppe Sala, at that city's march, said he was concerned that those raising objections to the bill to combat homophobia are seeking to discuss it only to stall and ultimately kill it.

Sala said he was championing a push for passage of the law and "the just rights for all this marvelous community."

Many participants in Paris expressed alarm about rollback of rights in Hungary and Poland, two EU nations led by right-wing governments.

"If European leaders tolerate this, what's to stop them from tolerating that at home? said Mornia Paille—Pichon, a 26-year—old illustrator.

Last year, Poland's president declared that the term LGBT didn't mean people but an ideology more dangerous than communism, a reference to that nation's several decades in the Soviet bloc.

In North Macedonia, hundreds of people marched through the capital, Skopje, as the Balkan country hosted its second-ever Pride parade. The crowd carried a large rainbow banner, blew whistles and cheered and danced to music playing from a vehicle with loudspeakers.

The parade was held under the motto "Out of the walls!" No violence or similar incidents were reported.

Last year, North Macedonia's parliament adopted an anti-discrimination law, seen as the cornerstone

of a decade-long struggle by civil society to ensure the protection of the country's most vulnerable and marginalized communities.

Victims in Miami condo collapse came from around the world

By REGINA GARCIA CANO, ROXANA HEGEMAN and JOCELYN GECKER Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — A Filipino-American who loved to play the piano and her Chilean husband lived on the 10th floor of the building. One flight down were Cuban immigrant grandparents who had dreamed of retiring at the beach. And just a week ago, a young Paraguayan arrived to work as a nanny.

The Champlain Towers South condominium was a true reflection of Miami's international mix — South American immigrants, Orthodox Jews, foreign retirees. The 12-story building's stunning collapse on Thursday quickly became a symbol of international tragedy, as families around the world hoped for news of loved ones in a terrified state of limbo.

Among them is Richard Luna, who is praying for a miracle but already speaking of his sister in the past tense. Lady Vanessa Luna Villalba, a nanny newly come from rural Paraguay, is among the 159 people still missing in the disintegration of the condominium into a smoldering heap of twisted metal and concrete in Surfside, Florida, just north of Miami.

"She had many hopes of progressing and helping our parents," said Richard Luna, who is anxiously watching news reports in Paraguay. "We are emotionally devastated."

A child of farmers, the 23-year-old Luna had studied nursing, but was looking after the three children of a Paraguayan family who helped her get a passport. The children are also missing along with their parents, Sophia López Moreira Bó and Luis Pettengil. Sophia López Moreira Bó is the sister-in-law of the president of Paraguay and the first lady flew to Miami.

Officials on Friday still didn't know exactly how many residents or visitors were in the building at the time. A clearer picture emerged from diplomatic dispatches and overseas news reports: Israeli media said the country's consul general in Miami, Maor Elbaz, believed that 20 citizens of that country are missing. Another 22 people were unaccounted for from Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay and Paraguay.

By Friday evening, authorities had helped family members from over a dozen countries get visas to travel to Florida, Sen. Marco Rubio said in a tweet.

The horror of seeing hard-to-watch video of the tower's collapse was compounded by the shock of its location: America.

"You don't think that can happen here in the United States," said Sergio Lozano Jr., whose grandparents Antonio and Gladys Lozano, both in their 80s, are among the missing.

The couple emigrated from Cuba years ago, and the elder Lozano, now retired, worked in banking. Until a day ago, they were living out their dream in unit 903 of the seaside tower.

"My grandfather always said when he retired, he wanted to retire on the beach," said Lozano Jr. "He wanted to be able to walk out on his balcony and look at the beach."

Their son, Lozano Jr's father, lived just two buildings away. On Thursday night, the family ate dinner together.

Lozano Jr. said his father woke up at 1:30 in the morning to a thundering noise that sounded like a tornado and went to his balcony to bring in the outdoor furniture. He looked out at the condo.

It was no longer there.

He called Lozano Jr. and woke him up with these words: "They are gone."

Juan Mora Sr. and his wife Ana were also immigrants from Cuba, and part of a tight-knit Cuban American community. Their son Juan Jr., was born in the U.S. and worked as an executive for Morton Salt in Chicago. Throughout the pandemic, he stayed away from his elderly parents, but was visiting when the building collapsed.

"He was doing his best to keep them safe," said longtime friend Danny Ugarte, who grew up with Juan Jr. He was the envy of his friends as a child, Ugarte said, because his mother worked for Delta Airlines and he got to travel the world.

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Ugarte's mother, Jeanne, was close with Ana Mora, who did so much for her community, her children, and her church — many times all at once. They took their sons as children to Santo Domingo on missionary trips to help build churches and bridges.

"She was a very devout Catholic, a genuinely caring and loving person," said Ugarte, in an emotional telephone interview. "We would sleep on the ground on mats, and she was so dedicated."

The Ugartes are trying to stay positive, but Jeanne is resigned.

"I know they're not going to find them (alive)," she said. "It's been too long."

Among six missing Colombian natives is a family of three that came to the U.S. weeks ago to get the COVID-19 vaccine and have a vacation.

Luis Fernando Barth, 51, the director of a nonprofit organization; his wife Catalina Gómez, a 45-year-old lawyer; and their daughter Valeria Barth, 14, are from the western Colombia city of Medellín. They were renting apartment 204 and were not supposed to be there. They had traveled to another beach location and planned to return to the rental on Thursday.

"Unfortunately, they decided to advance the trip, and arrived at the apartment again on Wednesday," said the woman's brother-in-law, José Luis Arango, who last spoke to them Wednesday evening.

For the Velasquez family, this was supposed to be a time of togetherness after the coronavirus pandemic had kept them apart.

Theresa Velasquez traveled from California to visit her parents, Julio and Angela. All three of them were in the building when it collapsed, said her uncle, Fernando Velasquez.

Julio, 66, born in Colombia, was a devout Catholic retired from the insurance industry. He enjoyed soccer and traveling with his wife, Angela, who owned a clothing store. He was also writing a book about religion, said his brother, who spoke to him on the phone almost every day.

"He was a breath of fresh air. He was a peacemaker. He was a joy," said Fernando Velasquez, who lives in Elmhurst, N.Y. He called his sister-in-law, Angela, "a beautiful person,...always smiling, always ready to assist in any way, shape or form."

Fernando had returned from an evening mass when he heard of the collapse and picked up the phone.

"I called, and of course you don't get any answers," he said. "That's how you know."

Fernando said he and his wife visited in April and slept in the condo, but he didn't notice anything wrong.

"It could have been us," he said. "It could have been all of us."

Also among the missing South Americans was a prominent Argentinian plastic surgeon, his husband and their young daughter.

Dr. Andrés Galfrascoli, 45, has an office in Buenos Aires, but took his family to Miami because he couldn't work in Argentina's capital during the pandemic. His husband, Fabián Núñez, 55, is a producer and theater director.

"Andrés is one of the best surgeons in the country, very low profile, very honest," a friend, Flavia Martínez, told a local TV station. "I spoke to him the day before yesterday, he told me that he was fine, that he was resting."

The family had been in Miami since April and had enrolled their 6-year-old daughter, Sofía, in a local school. They were one of the first same-sex Argentine couples to have a baby by surrogacy, and had said they were eager for another child.

A Chilean man, Claudio Bonnefoy, and his Filipino-American wife, Maria Obias Bonnefoy, lived on the 10th floor of the building. The husband, 85, a lawyer, is the second cousin of former Chilean President and High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet.

His wife Maria, 69, was an artist who loved to play the piano and was very close to her sibling, Dulce Obias Manno. Manno said throughout the pandemic, her sister was extremely cautious, going out just to buy food — only to suffer this unexpected tragedy.

"My sister is everything for me," said Manno, 66, who traveled from Virginia in hopes of finding her sister alive. "She is my brain, my conscience, my model."

Surfside is also home to a large Jewish Orthodox community, and families crowd the sidewalks before

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sunset walking to services for the Sabbath. In the Orthodox community, thoughts turned not just to the grim likelihood of multiple deaths but how to handle inevitable burials.

According to Jewish custom, true virtue or "Chesed Shel Emes" means the entire body and all its parts, including limbs, blood and tissue, must be collected for burial. Bodies are also not allowed to be left overnight or exposed in the open.

Zaka World, a volunteer organization in Israel, specializes in the painstaking work of collecting the entire body. International director David Rose, said in mass casualty disasters like that in Miami, they use DNA samples for blood and tissue, carefully collecting it from the concrete and other surfaces. In some cases, however, certain parts may not be matched to the deceased.

"Everything gets collected and everything gets buried," Rose said. "It might not be with the person it belongs to, but that's the most important thing — that it gets buried."

Rabbi Sholom D. Lipskar, the founder of The Shul of Bal Harbour, the Orthodox Jewish synagogue near the building collapse, said his community is still praying for miracles as rescue teams continued to search for survivors. He could not say exactly how many members of Surfside's Jewish community were unaccounted for.

"It's a very large group of people, unfortunately," he said. "The circumstances are very, very grim."

J&J agrees to pay \$230M to settle New York opioid claim

NEW YORK (AP) — Johnson & Johnson has agreed to pay \$230 million to New York state to settle claims that the pharmaceutical giant helped fuel the opioid crisis, Attorney General Letitia James said on Saturday.

The drugmaker also agreed to permanently end the manufacturing and distribution of opioids across New York and the rest of the nation, James said in a statement announcing the settlement.

The company "helped fuel this fire, but today they're committing to leaving the opioid business — not only in New York, but across the entire country," she said.

The deal involving a lawsuit brought by James in 2019 removes Johnson & Johnson from a trial that is slated to begin next week on Long Island — part of a slew of litigation over an epidemic linked to nearly 500,000 deaths over the last two decades.

In its own statement on Saturday, Johnson & Johnson downplayed the attorney general's announcement. It said the settlement involved two prescription painkillers — developed by a subsidiary and accounting for less than 1% of the market — that are already no longer sold in the U.S.

The settlement was "not an admission of liability or wrongdoing by the company," Johnson & Johnson said. It added that its actions "relating to the marketing and promotion of important prescription pain medications were appropriate and responsible."

The settlement was the latest development in the complicated universe of opioid-related lawsuits across the U.S. that has drawn comparisons to the multistate litigation against tobacco companies in the 1990s. It reflects a path being taken by some big drug companies that see settling as in their best interests, in part because that route would likely not cost as much as losing in court repeatedly.

Johnson & Johnson — along with distributors AmerisourceBergen, Cardinal Health and McKesson — made public last year that they were offering a total of \$26 billion over 18 years to settle all the cases they face, with the money going to abate the crisis.

States hesitant to adopt digital COVID vaccine verification

By DAVID A. LIEB Associated Press

Customers wanting to wine, dine and unwind to live music at the City Winery's flagship restaurant in New York must show proof of a COVID-19 vaccination to get in. But that's not required at most other dining establishments in the city. And it's not necessary at other City Winery sites around the U.S.

If City Winery tried doing such a thing at its places in Atlanta and Nashville, "we would have no business, because so many people are basically against it," said CEO Michael Dorf.

Across the U.S., many hard-hit businesses eager to return to normal have been reluctant to demand

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proof of vaccination from customers. And the public and the politicians in many places have made it clear they don't care for the idea.

In fact, far more states have banned proof-of-vaccination policies than have created smartphone-based programs for people to digitally display their vaccination status.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention still recommends masks when dining or gathering indoors for those who aren't fully vaccinated. But few states require it, and most businesses rely on voluntary compliance — even in places with low vaccination rates where COVID-19 cases are climbing.

Digital vaccine verification programs could make it easier to enforce safeguards and tamp down new outbreaks.

"But that only works when you have mass adoption, and mass adoption requires trust and actual buy-in with what the state health department is doing, which is not necessarily present in all states," said Alan Butler, executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, a Washington-based nonprofit organization.

Hawaii is the only state enforcing some version of a vaccine passport. It requires travelers to upload a photo or PDF of their Hawaii vaccination document or pass a pre-arrival COVID-19 test to avoid having to quarantine for 10 days.

Earlier this month, California became just the third state — behind New York and Louisiana — to offer residents a way to voluntarily display digital proof of their COVID-19 shots. None of those states requires the use of their digital verification systems to access either public or private-sector places.

By contrast, at least 18 states led by Republican governors or legislatures prohibit the creation of so-called vaccine passports or ban public entities from requiring proof of vaccination. Several of those — including Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Montana, North Dakota and Texas — also bar most businesses from denying service to those who aren't vaccinated.

"Texas is open 100%, and we want to make sure that you have the freedom to go where you want without limits," Gov. Greg Abbott said in signing a law against vaccine passports.

The prohibition doesn't apply to the demands employers make on their employees. Earlier this month, a federal judge in Texas threw out a lawsuit from 117 Houston hospital employees who challenged a workplace requirement that they get vaccinated. More than 150 were later fired or resigned for not getting their shots.

In Louisiana, under a Republican-passed bill facing a potential veto from Democratic Gov. John Bel Edwards, public facilities would not be allowed to bar unvaccinated people until the COVID-19 vaccines have received full approval from the Food and Drug Administration. The vaccines for now are being dispensed under emergency FDA authorization.

In May, Louisiana launched a program allowing residents using the state's digital driver's license, LA Wallet, to add a record of their COVID-19 vaccination.

But its reach is still limited. About 105,000 people have activated the COVID-19 verification function. That's about 14% of those with a digital license and less than 4% of Louisiana's 3.1 million people with valid driver's licenses.

Democratic state Rep. Ted James, who wrote the bill creating the digital driver's license, said he has used the feature just once — to show an Uber driver in Nevada that he didn't need to wear a mask. But James said he has never been asked to show it in Louisiana and doubts he ever will.

"Earlier in the year, I felt that at some point we would be limited in travel, going to certain places, unless we had the vaccine," James said. Now, "I don't foresee us ever having some type of requirement."

As a step in reopening, New York in March launched its Excelsior Pass, the first state system to provide digital proof of COVID-19 vaccination or a recent negative test. As of early June, more than 2 million people had gotten the digital pass — about one-fifth of those who have been vaccinated.

At the City Winery, most customers bypass the Excelsior Pass and instead show their paper CDC vaccination cards to gain entry, according to Dorf, who said patrons at the 1,000-person capacity venue "appreciate going into a bubble of safety, knowing that everyone around them is vaccinated."

Though larger ticketed events, like concerts at Madison Square Garden, require proof of vaccination,

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most businesses don't ask.

"Think of a bar," said Andrew Rigie, executive director of the New York City Hospitality Alliance. "You have four friends that go in — maybe two of them have it, the other two don't. You're going to turn the other two away when small businesses are struggling so much?"

Though most states have shied away from creating digital vaccination verification systems, the technology may soon become widespread nonetheless.

Vaccine providers such as Walmart and major health care systems already have agreed to make digital COVID-19 vaccination records available to customers. Apple also plans to incorporate the vaccination verification function into a software update coming this fall.

Within months, hundreds of millions of people across the U.S. will be able to access digital copies of their COVID-19 vaccination records, said Brian Anderson, chief digital health physician at the nonprofit MITRE Corp., part of a coalition of health and technology organizations that developed such technology.

People will receive QR codes that can be stored on smartphones or printed on paper to be scanned by anyone seeking vaccine verification. Those who scan the codes won't retain any of the information — a protection intended to address privacy concerns.

The California Chamber of Commerce said it welcomes the state's new vaccine verification system as a way for employers to check on their employees. California regulations require most employees who aren't fully vaccinated to wear masks when dealing with others indoors.

Digital vaccine verification "allows an employer who really wants to make sure the workplace is vaccinated to require that without having the impossible problem of 'John says he's vaccinated but he lost his vaccine card. What do we do?' This solves that issue," said Rob Moutrie, a policy advocate at the California Chamber of Commerce.

Finland sees spike in virus cases from returning soccer fans

By JARI TANNER Associated Press

HELSINKI (AP) — Finnish health authorities have detected a spike in coronavirus cases that has been traced to soccer fans returning from neighboring Russia following European Championship matches in St. Petersburg.

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare on Saturday urged "all passengers who have traveled from St. Petersburg to Finland by any bus company to apply for a coronavirus test."

"Any bus or minibus may have been exposed," the institute said.

Finland played two of its Euro 2020 group games in St. Petersburg, facing Russia on June 16 and Belgium on Monday. At least 2,000 Finns are estimated to have traveled to the city for those matches.

The Finns finished in third place in their group and were eliminated. Russia was also eliminated after finishing last.

St. Petersburg hosted six games in the group stage of the tournament and will host one of the four quarterfinal matches on Friday.

Authorities in the Russian city tightened anti-coronavirus restrictions last week in an effort to curb a spike in new infections. That included closing food courts in the city's shopping malls and its Euro 2020 fan zone.

The Finnish health institute's director, Mika Salminen, told public broadcaster YLE that more than 120 virus cases have so far been detected from passengers returning from St. Petersburg, mostly soccer fans, and the number is likely increase.

Though the Finnish Border Guard was prepared for heavy return traffic from St. Petersburg, the key Vaalimaa border station got badly jammed Tuesday with lines of dozens of buses carrying soccer fans and hundreds of cars waiting for the required coronavirus test after border formalities.

As the queue got longer and the border station was to be closed, Finnish authorities decided to let passengers into the country without testing, on the condition they would take one at their respective home region after arrival.

Finnish health officials said earlier this week that they traced some of the infections to a German beer

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hall-style restaurant in St. Petersburg.

There are two main crossing points between the countries in eastern Finland, making it a trip of between 180-220 kilometers (112-135 miles) from the border to St. Petersburg.

The Russian city's population of more than 5 million nearly equals the entire population of Finland.

According to the latest information from Russia's national coronavirus taskforce, there were 8,457 new infection cases in Moscow and 1,247 in St. Petersburg detected in the past few days.

Finland is one of the least affected European countries by coronavirus with just under 95,000 cases and 969 deaths detected since the start of the pandemic. The 1,340-kilometer (832-mile) long Finnish-Russian land border has been closed for passenger travel from both sides since March 2020 and remains so with certain exceptions, such as traveling to Euro 2020 matches.

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, June 27, the 178th day of 2021. There are 187 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On June 27, 1950, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution calling on member nations to help South Korea repel an invasion from the North.

On this date:

In 1787, English historian Edward Gibbon completed work on his six-volume work, "The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

In 1880, author-lecturer Helen Keller, who lived most of her life without sight or hearing, was born in Tuscumbia, Alabama.

In 1942, the FBI announced the arrests of eight Nazi saboteurs put ashore in Florida and Long Island, New York. (All were tried and sentenced to death; six were executed while two were spared for turning themselves in and cooperating with U.S. authorities.)

In 1944, during World War II, American forces liberated the French port of Cherbourg (SHEHR'-boorg) from the Germans.

In 1955, Illinois enacted the nation's first automobile seat belt law. (The law did not require cars to have seat belts, but that they be made seat belt-ready.)

In 1957, Hurricane Audrey slammed into coastal Louisiana and Texas as a Category 4 storm; the official death toll from the storm was placed at 390, although a variety of state, federal and local sources have estimated the number of fatalities at between 400 and 600.

In 1974, President Richard Nixon opened an official visit to the Soviet Union.

In 1985, the legendary Route 66, which originally stretched from Chicago to Santa Monica, California, passed into history as officials decertified the road.

In 1988, at least 56 people were killed when a commuter train ran into a stationary train at the Gare de Lyon terminal in Paris.

In 1991, Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, the first Black jurist to sit on the nation's highest court, announced his retirement. (His departure led to the contentious nomination of Clarence Thomas to succeed him.)

In 2005, the Supreme Court ruled, in a pair of 5-4 decisions, that displaying the Ten Commandments on government property was constitutionally permissible in some cases but not in others. BTK serial killer Dennis Rader pleaded guilty to ten murders that had spread fear across Wichita, Kansas, beginning in the 1970s. (Rader later received multiple life sentences.)

In 2006, a constitutional amendment to ban desecration of the American flag died in a Senate cliffhanger, falling one vote short of the 67 needed to send it to states for ratification.

Ten years ago: Former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich (blah-GOY'-uh-vich) was convicted by a federal jury in Chicago on a wide range of corruption charges, including the allegation that he'd tried to sell or trade

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President Barack Obama's U.S. Senate seat. (Blagojevich was later sentenced to 14 years in prison; his sentence was commuted by President Donald Trump in February 2020.) International judges ordered the arrest of Libya's Moammar Gadhafi for murdering civilians. Venus and Serena Williams were eliminated in the fourth round of Wimbledon, the first time in five years that neither sister advanced to the quarterfinals at the All England Club.

Five years ago: The U.S. Supreme Court issued its strongest defense of abortion rights in a quarter-century, striking down Texas' widely replicated rules that sharply reduced abortion clinics. The Supreme Court overturned the bribery conviction of former Virginia Gov. Bob McDonnell, sending the case back to a lower court. (Prosecutors ended up deciding not to retry McDonnell.)

One year ago: Florida set another daily record for the state in the number of daily confirmed coronavirus cases, with more than 9,500 new cases. Thousands of people gathered outside a police building in suburban Denver to call for justice in the death of Elijah McClain, a 23-year-old Black man who'd been put in a chokehold by police in August 2019; he suffered cardiac arrest on the way to the hospital and was later declared brain dead. Princeton University said it would remove the name of former President Woodrow Wilson from its public policy school because of his segregationist views. French cosmetics giant L'Oreal said it would remove words like "whitening" from its skin care products following criticism of the company amid global protests against racism.

Today's Birthdays: Former Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt is 83. Singer-musician Bruce Johnston (The Beach Boys) is 79. Fashion designer Vera Wang is 72. Actor Julia Duffy is 70. Actor Isabelle Adjani is 66. Country singer Lorrie Morgan is 62. Actor Brian Drilling is 61. Writer-producer-director J.J. Abrams is 55. Former Sen. Kelly Ayotte (AY'-aht), R-N.H., is 53. Olympic gold and bronze medal figure skater Viktor Petrenko (peh-TREHN'-koh) is 52. Latin singer Draco Rosa is 52. Actor Edward "Grapevine" Fordham Jr. is 51. TV personality Jo Frost is 51. Actor Yancey Arias is 50. Actor Christian Kane is 49. Actor Tobey Maguire is 46. Gospel singer Leigh Nash is 45. Christian rock singer Zach Williams is 43. Musician Chris Eldridge (Punch Brothers) is 39. Reality TV star Khloe Kardashian (kar-DASH'-ee-uhn) is 37. Actor Drake Bell is 35. Actor Sam Claflin is 35. Actor India de Beaufort is 34. Actor Ed Westwick is 34. Actor Matthew Lewis (Film: "Harry Potter"; TV: "Ripper Street") is 32. Actor Madylin Sweeten is 30. Pop singer Lauren Jauregui (Fifth Harmony) (TV: "The X Factor") is 25. R&B singer H.E.R. is 24. Actor Chandler Riggs is 22.

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