



Stange, 97, has served as Senior Citizens secretary for 33 years

by Dorene Nelson

Elda Stange, a Groton area life-time resident, will be 98 years YOUNG on December 14th. This sweet lady with a wonderful smile and great disposition would love to receive greetings and birthday wishes on this amazing day. Elda's address is PO Box 305, Groton, SD 57445.

Elda, the youngest of nine children, was born and raised on her parents' farm, John and Emilie Stange, located southwest of Groton. She attended grade school at West Hanson Country School and was a member of St. John's Lutheran Church, West Hanson township.

Elda was a much-loved Sunday School teacher in this small country church. She was so sweet, kind, and sincere about her love for her Lord that her students listened attentively and never misbehaved!

She was also hired as a nanny for new mothers in the area. Dorene Sager Nelson was one of those newborns a long time ago!

Following her father's death, Elda and her mother lived with Ed and Leona Siek, one of Elda's older sisters, on the Siek farm. In



Elda Stange

1960 when Leona's husband passed away, the two sisters moved into Groton and shared the house where Elda still lives today.

Elda receives help from her neighbors since she is now living alone. Bill McKiver does snow removal for her, and Duane Flihs mows her lawn. Jodi Bull helps her with other tasks around the house and yard.

Her dear friend Sandy Strom goes out of her way to pick Elda up for church every Sunday. Sandy also helps her with some shopping, fixes her hair, and takes her to doctor appointments.

Eunice McColister provides rides for Elda in order for her to attend other church meetings and events. Elda is grateful for all of the help she receives and wants to thank all of her wonderful neighbors and friends who take such good care of her!

Elda is a member of St. John's Lutheran Church in Groton as well as being active in the LWML (ladies' aid) and the quilters. Even though she is 98, Elda still takes her turn serving at LWML. In addition to her delicious desserts, she also is handy with the needle on quilting days and keeps busy crocheting and doing other craft projects.

During the COVID pandemic, the quilters at St. John's couldn't meet together, so Elda worked at home, making quilt top after quilt top, about 35 altogether, for when the group could get together again and assemble the quilts.

Elda is also a member of the Groton Garden Club and of the Groton Area Senior Citizens. According to Ruby Donovan, Elda has been the secretary for the Senior Citizens for the past thirty-three years! That must be some kind of a record!



Groton Legion Post has annual fundraiser

The Groton American Legion Post #39 recently held its annual fundraiser. The event was not held last year due to the COVID-19 break-out, but this year, ticket sales went through the roof not in in Groton, but in other surrounding town fundraisers as well. Pictured in the top is Delbert Hinkelman who did the calling on the Paddle Wheel. In the bottom photo are Bruce Babcock and Robert Wegner overseeing a children's game. (Photos courtesy Bruce Babcock)



Northeast Conference All-Conference Volleyball Team

Two Groton Area players were named to the Northeast Conference All-Conference Team. They are Madeline Flihs and Sydney Leicht.

Others named to the team are Ella Hanson and Olivia Hanson from Aberdeen Roncalli, Jenna Werner from Britton-Hecla, Hallie Schulte and Rachel Schulte from Milbank, Hailey Nelson from Sisseton, Gerica Redday from Tiospa Zina, Haley Winter from Deuel, Morgan Jager from Webster, Ally Abraham, Grace Iverson and Kami Wadsworth from Hamlin, and Gracie Fast, Camryn Rohlf and Katie Rozell from Redfield. No one was named on the team from Clark/Willow Lake.



Trees and more at Wage Memorial Library

City Hall is decked out with trees set up and decorated by Groton businesses and organizations. One of them is the Groton OST tree in the top left photo. Kim Weber is putting the finishing touches on "The Grench" tree. On the right is April Abeln putting up a Dr. Seuss wall cling. (Photos by Paul Kosel)

Weekly Vikings Roundup

By Jack & Duane Kolsrud

Going into week 12, the Minnesota Vikings were tied with the San Francisco 49ers with 5-5 records and looking at a wild card playoff spot. Outside of a playoff win in that amazing Anthony Carter game in 1987, winning in San Francisco has never been easy.

The Vikings looked sharp in the first half, with Adam Thielen scoring two touchdowns - one on fourth down and another on a back-handed grab, the first time in his career where he scored twice in the first half. Once again, the defense fails to stop the opposition before halftime, only to give up a late touchdown in the first half to allow the Niners to tie the game at 14-14.

Taking that momentum into the locker room, the Niners returned in the third quarter to quickly move the ball down the field, running the ball effectively and scoring in the first two minutes to take a 21-14 lead.

On the very next play, Kirk Cousins throws an interception, and the Niners return it to the 3-yard line. One play later, it was 28-14. This three touchdown scoring surge all happened within four minutes off the clock.

The Vikings put together a nice drive to make it 28-20. Highlighted by a long Dalvin Cook run and then some uncharacteristic trickery - Cousins throws a screen to Justin

Jefferson, who then throws across the field to Cook, who followed a convoy down to the 5-yard line. One play later, Alexander Mattison runs it in.

The Vikings give up a field goal on the next drive. Then the excitement begins. Kene Newangu, the rookie from Iowa State, houses the kickoff from 99 yards and the Vikings cut the lead to 31-26.

The Vikings stopped the Niners on their next possession. On the Viking's first play, Dalvin Cook gets hit in the backfield, fumbles, and Niners recover. More importantly, Dalvin went down and had to be carted off the field with an apparent shoulder injury. The third quarter ends with a Niner field goal and a total of 32 points scored. Time to catch our breath and see if the heart medication is working for another Viking close game.

The fourth quarter begins with a long, seven-minute drive only to end on a fourth-down pass incomplete to Justin Jefferson from 4-yards out.

The Niners marched it down the field to get to the 2-minute warning, only to see Robbie Gould push a field goal to the right and give the Vikings a breath of hope. After moving the ball down past mid-field, Kirk Cousins misses Jefferson over the middle on fourth down and, the game is over. After the flurry of scoring in the third, there was no scoring in the fourth, and the game ends 34-26. The Vikings fall to 5-6, while the Niners move ahead in the wild card race.

Takeaways from the game;

1. The Vikings gave up over 200 yards on the ground and three rushing touchdowns. Being without their starting defensive line proved costly.
2. Kirk Cousins sets a new Viking record with his 25th consecutive game with a touchdown pass.
3. Adam Thielen ties two other receivers with his 10th touchdown of the year.
4. Injuries continue to mount as Anthony Barr, Dalvin Cook, and Christian Darrisaw leave the game due to injuries.

Onto next week, and a visit with the Motor City Kitties (aka Detroit Lions). The Lions come into the game looking for their first victory, which is never a fun environment for a team like the Vikings needing to win at least five of their last six to assure themselves a playoff berth.

Roadside Assistance

Things seem to go in streaks. Celebrity deaths. Baseball. Here, back at the ranch last week, the dishwasher died, the furnace quit, and my Roomba, RoboCop, threw himself down the stairs in a desperate plea for help. But how would you feel if it was your job to bump around in the night sucking up pet fur?

Well, my long lucky streak with tires has come to an end, too. I had another flat last week. I'm guessing it had been 25 years since I'd had one, but then, in October, I took a trip to West River country, and those infamous scoria roads got me the first day.

When I lived in Hettinger, ND, I got flats regularly, especially when we lived out in the country. I bought a new Explorer from RZ Motors one day and had a flat on the way home. (Roland Zimmerman was kind enough to give me a new tire.) But when I replaced the tires on my Bronco with a lesser quality, those scoria roads and their sharp rocks, taught me a hard lesson. Don't cheap out on tires. My God, I became NASCAR-quick from all the practice.

The flat in October took place at sort of a think tank retreat. I suppose you're wondering how I came to be invited. Me, too. It was about problem-solving. I may have been there as an example of what's wrong with the world.

Anyway, immediately after arrival at the main cabin, I noticed a rear tire on my Ford truck had gone flat. As I was staring at it, Clay Jenkinson walked up to greet me. He's an Oxford alum and noted historian who's appeared in countless Ken Burns films. Clay graciously offered to help me change the tire.

Well, thaaat was a bit uncomfortable because earlier this year, I publicly excoriated Clay after his appearance on CBS Sunday Morning during which he kiddingly called North Dakota "a loser state." But he was so nice I figured he hadn't read my column. I didn't turn my back when he had the tire iron in his hand, though.

As you might imagine, after a quarter of a century in retirement, I was unfamiliar with all the new places they hide jacks and tires these days, and the convoluted process involved just to lower the tire. I won't bore you with the excruciating details of our feeble yet eventually-successful effort, but I will say if I ever meet a Ford engineer, there's going to be a fight.

As Clay and I were struggling with the aluminum rim that seemed welded tight to the hub, someone walked by and cracked, "How many Rhodes Scholars does it take to change a tire?" At that point, we weren't even sure it was possible.

The emotional scars and feelings of inadequacy hadn't even healed when last week, a couple of miles from Ashley, I got a flat on my Audi. If Ford's process had been torturous, can you imagine what the Germans have up their sleeves? I immediately tapped out.

My chances of finding a Rhodes Scholar were zilch, so I called Triple J Auto, just two miles down the road, because I know Jesse Kaseman often works Saturdays. No answer. So, I hitched a ride to town and bought some Fix-A-Flat, which I usually keep in my car, anyway. Tire fixers hate the stuff, but with small holes, it works, and it's better than changing a tire when it's -30F and the wind is howling.

While I was at Link's Do It Best Hardware, my cell rang. It was Jesse. I hadn't even left a message, but he'd seen Caller I.D. and guessed correctly that I could use a hand.

Why do we live here? That's why.

The Krautmobile's hub gave Jesse momentary pause but he figured it out way faster than a Rhodes Scholar would've. The jack wasn't up to the reputation of German engineering so Jesse used a floor jack that was probably made in China. I feel like we're surrounded.

I used to change tires daily when I worked for the Cenex station back home as a teenager. That's when everyone was still riding around on polyester tires which were nothing more than glorified balloons. Plus, there was a gravel pit nearby so I often had to fix split rim and solid rim tires.

Hated it. Don't miss it one bit.

With my car outfitted with a new set of quality radials, I hope to slink back into retirement. I'm better at that, anyway.



That's Life

by Tony Bender

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Groton Independent ♦ Wed., Dec. 01, 2021 ♦ 3



Food Drive Held

The Groton FCCLA members organized a community food drive. FCCLA members helping are pictured above: Karsyn Jangula Carly Guthmiller, Shea Jandel, Abby Jensen, Emily Overacker, Emma Bahr, Advisor, Lindsey Tietz. In back helping to load the bags are Dwight Zerr and Justin Cleveland. (Courtesy photos)



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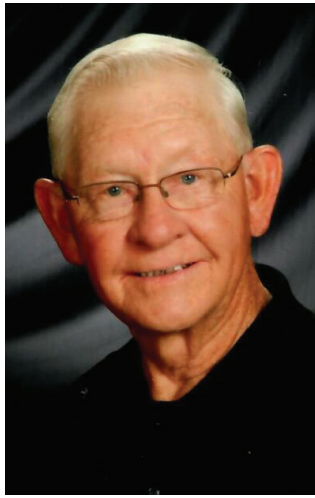


Wage Library hosts painting class

The Wage Memorial Library was the site for a canvas painting class held by Jan Hoffman. Pictured in back, left to right, are Laurie LaMee, Sophie Doeden, Becky Hunter and Wynella Abeln; in front, left to right, are Becky Hearnen, Liz Doeden and Jan Hoffman (Photos by Keillie Locke)



The Life of Carroll "Spike" Nehls



Funeral services for Carroll "Spike" Nehls, 86, of Groton will be 10:30 a.m., Thursday, December 2nd at St. John's Lutheran Church. Rev. Larry Johnson and Pastor Craig Grams will officiate. Burial with military honors will follow in Groton Union Cemetery under the direction of Paetznick-Garness Funeral Chapel, Groton.

Visitation will be held for one hour prior to services at the church. There will be no prayer service.

Spike passed away November 27, 2021 at his home in Groton.

Carroll Lee Nehls was born on October 12, 1935 near Andover to Fred and Dora (Hoops) Nehls. He was baptized and confirmed at St. John's Lutheran Church. Spike attended school in Groton and graduated in 1953. Throughout school, he was involved in many sports and held a track record for many years. Spike enlisted in the US Marines and upon his honorable discharge returned to South Dakota. He continued his education at SDSU and later at Northern State University. On July 15, 1961, he was united in marriage with Helen Patricia "Pat" Vig in Claire City, SD.

Spike worked construction and later began his own business. Spike had a passion for hunting and fishing. He loved the sport of baseball and played for Groton for many years. Spike's wife, Pat, also loved baseball and fell in love with one special player (Spike). He liked all sports and hardly missed any home games whether baseball, basketball, football or track.

Celebrating his life is his wife, Pat of Groton, sons, Scott (Susan) Nehls of Tucson, Arizona, Lance (Arlene) Nehls of Tucson, Arizona, four grandchildren, Alexa Brown, Lacey (Isaak) Matzdorff, Logan Nehls, Brock Nehls and his brother, Maurice Nehls of Langford.

Preceding him in death were his parents and six siblings.

Honorary Casketbearers will be his four Grandchildren.

Casketbearers will be Dennis Flihs, Dick Donovan, Dale Grenz, Lance Hawkins, Ken Zens, Lynn Vig, Brad Elliott, Paul Price, Troy Larson and Mike Nehls.

Groton Prairie Mixed

Nov. 24 Team Standings: Shih Tzus 9, Coyotes 9, Chipmunks 9, Cheetahs 9, Foxes 7, Jackelopes 5

Men's High Games: Roger Spanier 227, 202, Ron Belden 199, Randy Stanley 196

Women's High Games: Sue Stanley 188, 170, Nicole Kassube 187, 168, Lori Giedt 166

Men's High Series: Roger Spanier 618, Brad Larson 522, Lance Frohling 509

Women's High Series: Nicole Kassube 497, Sue Stanley 495, Darci Spanier 458

Conde National League

Nov. 29 Team Standings: Mets 33, Cubs 26, Pirates 25, Tigers 23, Braves 19, Giants 18

Men's High Games: Ryan Bethke 214, Tony Waage 188, Joe Greblinhoff 171

Men's High Series: Chad Furney 485, Ryan Bethke 475, Tony Waage 475, Russ Bethke 448

Women's High Games: Nancy Radke 208, Michelle Johnson 179, Vickie Kramp 178

Women's High Series: Nancy Radke 457, Vickie Kramp 457, Michelle Johnson 455, Joyce Walter 434

Nov. 22 Team Standings: Mets 29, Cubs 24, Tigers 23, Pirates 21, Braves 19, Giants 16

Men's High Games: Ryan Bethke 223, 217; Tony Waage 189; Russ Bethke 184

Men's High Series: Ryan Bethke 617, Tony Waage 484, Butch Farmen 476

Women's High Games: Vickie Kramp 169, 161; Deb Fredrickson 149; Joyce Walter 146

Women's High Series: Vickie Kramp 478, Joyce Walter 420, Sam Bahr 406

UpComing Events

Thursday, Dec. 2

LifeTouch Pictures Retake at Elementary, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m.

8:30 a.m. to Noon: ACT Practice Test JH GBB at Northwestern (7th at 6:30 p.m. followed by 8th)

Friday, Dec. 3

State Oral Interp at Huron

8:30 a.m. to Noon: ACT Practice Test

Saturday, Dec. 4

State Oral Interp at Huron

10 a.m.: JH GBB Jamboree in Groton

10 a.m.: Wrestling Invite at Clark-Willow Lake

Monday, Dec. 6

4 p.m.: School Board planning/work session JH GBB hosts Langford. 7th at 6 p.m. with 8th to follow

Tuesday, Dec. 7

GBB hosts Flandreau Indian. Varsity only at 6 p.m.

JHGBB at Tiospa Zina (7th at 4 p.m. with 8th to follow)

Thursday, Dec. 9

7 p.m.: MS/HS Christmas Concert

Friday, Dec. 10

GBB hosts Britton-Hecla. JV at 6 p.m. with Varsity to follow

Saturday, Dec. 11

8 a.m. to Noon: ACT testing at GHS

10 a.m.: Wrestling Tourney at LaMoure

Boys Basketball at Britton-Hecla. JV at 1:30 p.m. followed by varsity game.

Strom/Dresbach married

Sandy Strom and Steve Dresbach were united in marriage on November 11, 2021, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Lawrence, Kan. Steve, a former Groton graduate, recently sold his home in Lawrence and returned to Groton, where the couple now resides.

Groton Garden Club

The Groton Garden Club met November 15, 2021, at the Groton Community Center with Elda Stange and Eunice McColister hosting. Pledges were recited in unison. Nine members answered roll call with "What they were thankful for."

A sign was made for the city park with the names of the three Groton ladies who were the state president of the South Dakota Federation of Garden Clubs. It will be installed in the park next spring.

Linda Gengerke will host the Christmas party, December 20, 6:30 p.m. with a potluck supper.

Laurie Mitchell gave the program on "Texas Hill Country."

Gov. Noem to Deliver 2021 Budget Address on Tuesday

PIERRE, S.D. – On Tuesday, December 7, Governor Kristi Noem will deliver the 2021 Budget Address, updating the people of South Dakota on budget plans for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2022 and Fiscal Year 2023.

The address will take place at 1pm CT/12pm MT in the South Dakota House of Representatives. The address will be livestreamed on South Dakota Public Broadcasting, SD.net, and Facebook.com/GovNoem.

South Dakota Ranked Top-5 in "Freedom in the 50 States"

PIERRE, S.D. – Today, the CATO Institute announced that South Dakota is now ranked in the top-five states in their "Freedom in the 50 States" index. The index ranks South Dakota as the most-improved state in the nation when comparing 2018 to 2019, Governor Noem's first year in office. The most recent edition, published in 2018, ranked South Dakota eighth. Governor Noem issued the following statement celebrating South Dakota's success:

"South Dakota has freedom in abundance. In the few short years since I took office as governor, we've already propelled South Dakota from a top-10 freest state status to a top-five status. I believe that we respect freedom more than any state in America, but this ranking indicates that we have more work to do. I look forward to working with the legislature to advance policies that protect freedom, cut red tape, and promote continual growth for our state."

The rankings are based on state laws as of January 1, 2020 and state budgets through FY 2020. Of note, this ranking did not take COVID-19 response into account. In the early months of the pandemic, Governor Noem was the only governor in America to never order a single business or church to close.

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Brrrrrr ... Ready for Winter? Keep It Up

Winter is coming and so are many changes. Who is adapting or what is being adapted for harsher weather? Check out the answers in the crossword puzzle.

How Do We Cope With Changes?

Sure enough...changes in the weather are coming and we cannot stop them! We have to cope with whatever Mother Nature sends our way. How do we deal with these changes? Here's how you should have matched up each part:

1. C, 2. A, 3. D, 4. F, 5. B, 6. H, 7. E, 8. G.

I love my blanket. I like to tunnel under it to warm up after a long walk in the brisk air.

How Can We Help Pets?

1. C, 2. D, 3. A, 4. E, 5. B.

This activity is easier to do when the weather is warm because there is so much to do outside. However, it is just as important to keep doing this during the colder or snowy season because we need to keep strong and healthy. The activity is...

Oh, that blanket looks so comfy. I can use it at night when the dog is sleeping.

When the cold weather is coming, mice get fatter and store seeds away. Some mice, like deer mice, stay active all winter. I like to find a nice, cozy house with a big attic.

Cheer someone up! Send a balloon

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To get ready for colder weather...



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...we check the windows for drafts.



Kids: color stuff in!

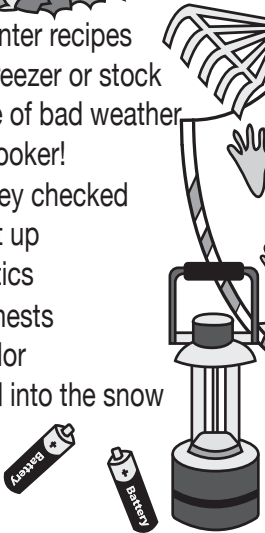


Ready for Winter?



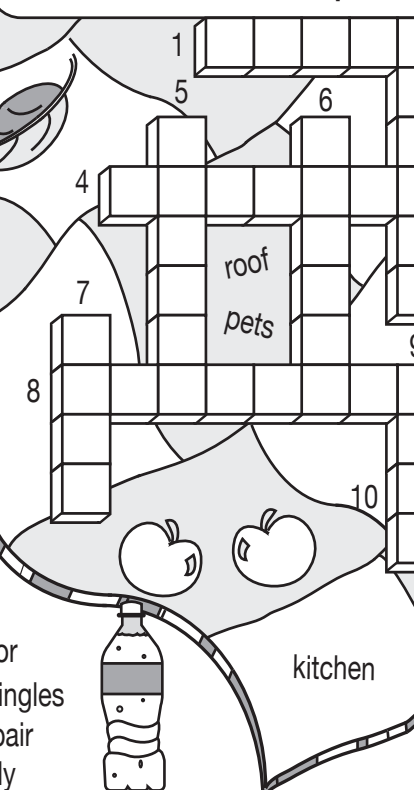
Winter is coming. Most areas of the country will have cold temperatures, snow and ice. Families prepare their houses, cars and clothes to adapt to the changes that winter will bring.

- stock spices for winter recipes
• store more in the freezer or stock some items in case of bad weather
• dust off the slow cooker!
- furnace and chimney checked
• storm windows put up
• insulation put in attics
- store food in their nests
• fur may change color
• feathers may blend into the snow
- harvest the crops
• plant spring bulbs
• save seeds
- clear out space to be able to park the car
• check the shovels
- warmer clothes
• blankets, quilts, comforters
• enjoy more hot drinks
- grow thicker fur coats
• brought inside in cold weather
• may need more food in their bowls



- batteries
• flashlights
• water and food
- snow tires
• sand
• antifreeze for radiator
- no missing roof shingles
• gutters in good repair
• drains flowing freely

Brrrrrr ...
Who is adapting or what is being adapted for harsher weather?
Read the clues to fill in the puzzle.



To stay strong and healthy all winter long, be sure to...



Use the Morse Code key below to fill in the boxes with letters.

A	•••	J	••••	S	•••
B	••••	K	•••	T	—
C	•••••	L	••••	U	•••
D	•••	M	—•	V	••••
E	•	N	—••	W	—••
F	•••••	O	—••	X	•••••
G	—••	P	•••••	Y	•••••
H	•••••	Q	—•••	Z	•••••
I	••	R	—••		

How Do We Cope With Changes?



Sure enough, changes in the weather are coming and we cannot stop them! We have to cope with whatever Mother Nature sends our way. **How do we deal with these changes? Match up each:**

- cold temperatures
- dark outside earlier
- fewer fresh foods
- snow
- slippery ice
- less time spent outdoors
- ponds freeze
- need a break from the ice and cold



- turn on the bright lights
- sand, salt, heat
- heat the house
- use canned or packaged foods
- skate, ice fish
- shovels, snowblowers, plows
- vacation in warmer area
- exercise class, indoor sports, visiting friends, club activities

Let's get that salt and sand off.



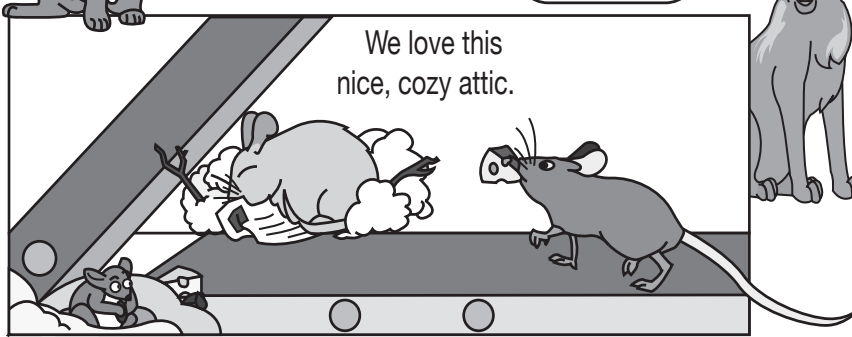
How Can We Help Our Pets?

Our pets may need a little extra help or care as it's getting colder outside. **Match up each of these ideas:**

- wipe their feet when coming inside...
- keep them inside more so they...
- put a dry, cozy, warm blanket or bed...
- give them a bit more food for energy...
- pets can get lost easier in the winter...

- away from drafts
- so keep on leash, tag
- to take off ice, salts
- don't wander into areas that they shouldn't
- if they go out in the cold

Do I hear something?

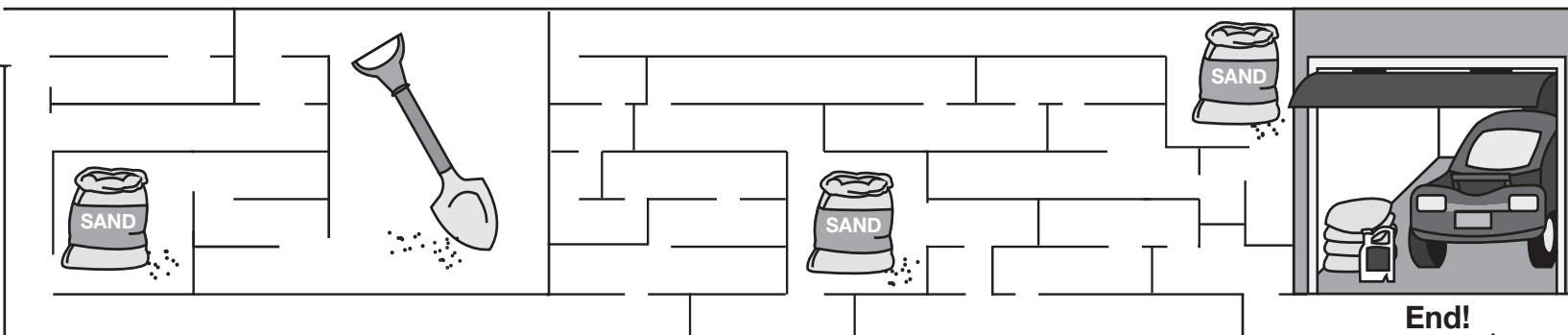


Shoveling Sand

Forest is taking a break. His Dad wants him to fill 3 bags with sand for icy conditions that will come when the weather turns colder and sleet falls or puddles of water freeze. Forest needs to pick up the shovel first, then the 3 bags, and then put them in the garage. **Can you help him find his way? (Do not cross paths.)**



Uh-oh!
I know the fable "The Ant and the Grasshopper." I'd better get busy filling bags with sand.



End!

Home heating costs high and getting higher in South Dakota

Bart Pfankuch

South Dakota News Watch

Many South Dakota consumers already facing high prices for gasoline and groceries should also expect to pay far more to heat their homes this winter, with prices for propane and heating oil already far higher than last year and rising fast.

Some experts worry the high prices could push some families to take unsafe measures to provide household heat, raising the risk of fires or other emergencies.

Prices for home heating fuels, from propane to natural gas to heating oil, all tend to peak in late fall or early winter when demand rises. But this year, prices have risen much earlier and much higher than normal, and experts expect the situation to worsen as colder weather arrives.

As with any household necessity, the price increases for home heating fuels will place disproportionate stress on low-income families or households on fixed incomes.

The high home fuel prices are adding to the financial burdens faced by all families in South Dakota, particularly those in rural or reservation areas where propane or oil is more commonly used to heat homes, said Eileen Shot, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe council representative from Parmelee who formerly ran the tribe's energy-assistance program.

"Surviving a harsh winter with the high fuel prices can be tough for our tribal members, and for everyone," Shot said. "As it is, gas prices are up and so are food prices, and now here's another thing you can't live without going up even higher in price."

Shot said high prices for propane and home heating fuel can push some families to make difficult decisions that increase risk of fire or lead to other potentially deadly conditions such as freezing or asphyxiation from improperly vented heating sources.

"If they can't afford their propane, they use electric heaters or the oven or whatever they can," Shot said. "It gets dangerous and can lead to fires."

Residential propane prices have risen sharply already this year, with the state averaging \$2.21 per gallon in late November, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration. The current price is 71% higher than last year, when propane cost \$1.29 per gallon in November, and is 92% higher than five years ago, when it was \$1.15 per gallon in November 2016.



Eileen Shot

As of late November 2021, the average price for a gallon of home heating oil in South Dakota was \$2.51, according to the federal government, up 68% from the same date in 2020 when it was \$1.55 per gallon. The price was as low as \$1.21 a gallon in March 2020.

Households that rely on natural gas for heat may see a jump of 30% in their annual heating costs, the energy administration has predicted, as natural-gas futures prices have jumped by 132% so far in 2021.

Electricity rates tend to be less volatile than prices for other fuels, and South Dakota is close to the national average of 13.31 cents per kilowatt hour of electricity, with an average rate of 12.39 cents per kWh in November 2021 compared to 12.57 cents per kWh in November 2020, according to the federal government.

"If they can't afford their propane, they use electric heaters or the oven or whatever they can. It gets dangerous and can lead to fires."
 -- Eileen Shot, Rosebud Sioux Tribe council member

High costs for propane and other fuels are a big concern for homeowners, but also for businesses and governments that rely on those products, said Mark Nielsen, owner of Long's Propane Service in Yankton.

"Homeowners have furnaces and fireplaces that run on propane, but a lot of restaurants do a lot of cooking and they heat water with propane," Nielsen said. "Road construction crews use propane to make asphalt and farmers use propane to power their motors or irrigation



Mark Nielsen, owner of Long's Propane Service in Yankton, said higher prices for propane have a negative effect on homeowners, business owners and governments. Photo: Courtesy Mark Nielsen

pivots."

Nielsen said the high prices are causing concern among many customers, especially those who buy their propane in bulk for the upcoming winter season. Nielsen and many other propane suppliers have minimum purchases of 200 gallons, which can mean a bill of \$400 to \$500 for a single delivery.

"It's about double the price from last year and they're pretty upset about it," he said.

Nielsen said propane dealers also suffer losses when fuel prices rise, due to higher transportation costs, reduced orders from customers who can't afford to buy in bulk and overall lower profit margins.

"Anytime the price goes up, your margin goes down, and more people don't pay or they have bad debt," Nielsen said.

Propane prices rose to nearly \$4 a gallon in 2014, and Shot said that many reservation families struggled at that time to keep homes heated. Reductions in federal funding for emergency fuel assistance can also push families into unsafe conditions, she said.

Shot recalled one incident in which a family whose propane furnace failed opened their oven to heat the home. As a pot of soup boiled on the stove, an infant crawled by, slammed the oven shut and caused the hot soup to fall on the child.

Shot said she recently paid about \$450 to buy 200 gallons of propane from a provider in Valentine, Neb. She said not everyone can afford a bulk purchase of propane, even in families where both parents work.



Maureen Nelson

Shot said some working families make too much to qualify for state or federal heating assistance, but not enough to make ends meet.

"Even if they have two incomes in a home, they're still getting hit hard," Shot said. "Nobody's comfortable, even if you work and have two incomes."

Maureen Nelson, a senior program director for Grow South Dakota, a community support agency that uses state and federal funding to encourage business development and provide rent and utility assistance to families in need, uses several strategies to help families stay warm and safe in winter.

Nelson is based in Sisseton, where her agency serves 17 counties in northeastern South Dakota. So far in 2021, the agency has provided more than \$236,000 in rent, utility and other assistance to 619 individuals in roughly 240 households. The agency also has provided about \$1.1 million in rent, utility and mortgage assistance through the South Dakota Cares housing program.

Nelson said rent assistance has been the primary need so far in the fall of 2021, but she expects the need for home fuel funding will rise as temperatures fall in the coming months.

"It's only going to get worse," Nelson said. "It was tough when propane or any heating cost was cheaper, and now I think you're going to see even more families struggling."

Inflation that has driven up consumer prices and supply-chain challenges that have limited access to goods and services are adding stress to the equation for families trying to keep homes heated.

"If your furnace does break down, it's hard to find the people or parts to fix it," she said. "That comes into play in rural south Dakota where you're having to ask a repairman from 50 to 100 miles away to come out and fix that, and that's if they have the parts they need right now."

One major federal program, the Low Income Heating and Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP, provides billions of dollars each year to qualifying low-income families across the country.

In 2020, the program was allocated \$3.7 billion and provided heating, cooling, weatherization and crisis assistance to more than 5.6 million American households. A one-person household can qualify if annual income is less than \$25,760 or less than \$53,000 a year for a four-person household.

In South Dakota, the program allocated \$22.8 million in 2020 to more than 21,000 households.

Federal records show that less than a quarter of South Dakota fami-

Continued from previous page

lies that qualified for assistance last year received money, likely because they did not know about the program or did not apply. Also, advocates of the program note that LIHEAP is not an entitlement program and as such is subject to the fluctuations of congressional budget approval.

In 2017, former President Donald Trump floated elimination of the program, and though Congress kept the assistance in place, overall funding has dropped in recent years.

In South Dakota and on the federal level, allocations to LIHEAP have dropped by about 18% from Fiscal 2010 to Fiscal 2020, according to the National Energy & Utility Affordability Coalition.

LIHEAP remains an important part of the safety net for low-income families that have trouble paying for utilities in South Dakota, the coalition and local advocates said. In 2020, 77% of households that received LIHEAP payments in South Dakota included at least one person who was elderly, disabled or under 6 years old.

Nelson said the federal government has provided some new avenues for assistance for families affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has eased the financial burden on some families.

Nelson urged people who face financial uncertainty to reach out to the state energy-assistance program or to local community support agencies such as Grow South Dakota to see what funding help may be available. She also counsels families to talk directly with their energy providers to see if they can agree to a "budget billing" program where payments can be spread out over time in order for people to get through a cold winter.

Nelson said Grow South Dakota and other agencies that offer utility assistance are providing a critical service to South Dakota families in need.

"It's a great feeling when you're able to provide that assistance, to make that phone call that I'm going to be able to fill up your propane tank today, or we were able to cover that electric bill and get your lights turned back on," Nelson said. "It makes you feel warm inside, and that's what agencies like mine are here for."

Propane prices can vary significantly in South Dakota, and like gasoline prices, they tend to be higher in West River and remote rural areas. Recently, for example, retail propane cost about \$2 a gallon in Yankton in the southeast and nearly \$2.50 a gallon in Rapid City in the west.

The main reason all fuel prices are rising, including propane, heating oil, unleaded and diesel gases, is higher crude oil prices on the global market, said Mark O'Donnell, partner with Meridian Liquids Partners, a wholesale propane distributor in Yankton.

In the current crude oil market, higher prices for one type of fuel lead to higher prices for other fuels, O'Donnell said.

Much of that price increase is due to transportation costs, both in pipelines and in trucks that carry propane from pipeline hubs, he said.

Most of the propane used in the Midwest and Great Plains originates in an underground salt cavern in Conway, Kan., which is home to about 30% of the U.S. propane supply.

One pipeline from Kansas into South Dakota is accessible in Wolsey, west of Huron, O'Donnell said. The farther the fuel travels in pipelines, the more it costs wholesalers. Prices go up further as retail distributors truck the fuel around the state and directly to homes, paying more in diesel costs when traveling far to the west or north, he said.

"The further you get away from Kansas, where the pipeline originates, the higher the pipe tariff or the pipeline fee is to load from that terminal," O'Donnell said. "And not only is the price of the propane going up, the cost of the trucks bringing it to homes is much higher."

When it comes to retail pricing, cost increases borne by wholesalers and retailers are typically passed on to consumers, O'Donnell said.

But he noted that businesses at all levels of the supply chain like to see low prices for fuel, even if they pass most of the higher per-gallon costs to their customers.

"We hate to see prices go up this high because it's a natural instinct for people to cut back or look for alternative heating sources," he said. "We move more gallons when the price is cheaper, so as a wholesaler and a retailer, you want prices lower and more affordable so people aren't reducing propane use to save money."



ABOUT BART PFANKUCH
Bart Pfankuch, Rapid City, S.D., is the content director for South Dakota News Watch. A Wisconsin native, he is a former editor of the Rapid City Journal and also worked at newspapers in Florida. Bart has spent more than 30 years as a reporter, editor and writing coach.

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RESOURCES FOR THOSE IN NEED

Here are some phone numbers to call if you or your family need help paying for rent or utilities.

South Dakota Department of Social Services

General details and application to LIHEAP assistance program, call 605-773-3165

Tribal LIHEAP program

S.D. Community Action Agencies

Inter-Lakes Community Action

PO Box 268, Madison SD 57042-0268
Phone: 605.256.6518 or 1.800.896.4105
Fax: 605.256.2238

Counties Served: Brookings, Clark, Codington, Deuel, Grant, Hamlin, Kingsbury, Lake, Lincoln, McCook, Miner, Minnehaha, Moody, Turner.

GROW South Dakota

104 Ash St. E., Sisseton SD 57262-1551
Phone: 605.698.7654
Fax: 605.698.3038

Counties Served: Beadle, Brown, Campbell, Day, Edmunds, Faulk, Hand, Hughes, Hyde, McPherson, Marshall, Potter, Roberts, Spink, Stanley, Sully, Walworth.

Rural Office of Community Services

PO Box 547, Wagner SD 57380-0547
Phone: 605.384.3883 or 1.800.793.3290
Fax: 605.384.3737

Counties Served: Aurora, Bon Homme, Brule, Buffalo, Charles Mix, Clay, Davison, Douglas, Gregory, Hanson, Hutchinson, Jerauld, Jones, Lyman, Mellette, Sanborn, Todd, Tripp, Yankton, Union.

Western South Dakota Community Action

1844 Lombardy Drive, Rapid City SD 57701-4130
Phone: 605.348.1460 or 1.800.327.1703
Fax: 605.348.8440

Counties Served: Bennett, Butte, Corson, Custer, Dewey, Fall River, Haakon, Harding, Jackson, Lawrence, Meade, Perkins, Oglala Lakota, Pennington, Ziebach.

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EARTHTALK

Dear EarthTalk: How are Florida's manatees faring lately and what has the government and/or conservationists been doing to protect them? -- JoAnne B., Sumter, SC

Indeed, Florida's manatees have come back from where they stood on the brink of extinction in the late 1960s, when only a few hundred individuals remained in the wild. Today over 6,000 of the herbivorous "sea cows" swim the Indian River Lagoon and Florida's other near-shore waterways. But newer threats including the die-off of their preferred browse (seagrass), habitat destruction due to shoreline development and runoff, an uptick in commercial and recreational activities and global warming have put Florida's manatees back on the ropes, and conservationists are again ramping up efforts to protect them.

Given all we know about being respectful to wildlife and giving them space, it's hard to believe that 2021 has been the worst year in recorded history for manatees, with Florida wildlife officials reporting a whopping 1003 manatee deaths in state waters so far this year. That's a 37 percent increase in manatee deaths over 2020, when biologists recorded 637 kills.

More than half of 2021's deaths have been in the Indian River Lagoon, a 156-mile east central Florida coastal estuary that stretches across six counties. Manatees have long thrived in the Lagoon's warm, brackish waters and consumed its abundant seagrass. Over the past 20 years, however, tens of thousands of acres of seagrass have vanished; the University of Florida estimates that up to 95 percent of seagrass is gone from some areas of the Lagoon. The main culprit is runoff from fertilizer and septic systems, which has polluted the water and promoted toxic algae blooms. These blooms deplete the water's oxygen levels and cloud its surface, decreasing the amount of light available to seagrasses for photosynthesis.

While it is currently illegal in Florida to feed manatees in the wild, conservation groups like Save the Manatee Club are now considering taking matters into their own hands by providing "supplemental feedings" to halt the unprecedented starvations. Meanwhile, rescuing injured or starving manatees remains a top priority of the group, which has helped rescue upwards of 130 manatees in 2021 alone while also funding facilities to rehab injured manatees so they can return to the wild.

Meanwhile, biologists from the University of Florida, University of Central Florida and elsewhere are working to restore water-filtering oyster populations along the Lagoon. These bivalves consume and remove harmful contaminants from the water, nurturing otherwise dwindling seagrass communities that serve as the lifeblood and main nutrient of manatees.

Just four years ago, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) down-listed the manatee from endangered to threatened. In light of this year's population plight, Florida Congressmen Vern Buchanan and Darren Soto are currently backing the Manatee Protection Act, which would place the manatee back into endangered status under the Endangered Species Act. An upgraded endangered status would require the FWS to accelerate action on manatee repopulation efforts.

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.



Florida's manatees face a host of threats, not the least of which is boat strikes which have killed hundreds of them in the Indian River Lagoon alone this year. Credit: NOAA, Unsplash.

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'Tis the Season for Y93.2

The holiday season is here, and many wonderful activities are happening. As you hustle and bustle, be aware that accidents and injuries can occur. When you see a doctor, they record a diagnosis code explaining the purpose of the appointment. Some codes describe the actual injury and others describe what happened during the injury. For example, Y93.2 is the code for "activities involving snow and ice". So, if you went sledding, crashed into a tree, and broke your left femur or thigh bone, your medical chart would show these codes: S72.8X2A "other fracture of left femur, initial encounter for closed fracture", W22.0 "striking against stationary object", and Y93.2.

With this in mind, let's have some fun and review codes that would be used for mishaps from popular holiday songs and movies. For the grandma who was run over by a reindeer, we would use codes W55.32XA and V06.00xa defined as "struck by other hoof stock, initial encounter" and "pedestrian on foot injured in collision with other nonmotor vehicle in nontraffic accident", respectively. The song does not specify injuries received from this accident, but there is mention of drinking too much eggnog. Therefore, we might verify the diagnosis of R78.9 which is "finding of alcohol in blood".

In the holiday movie A Christmas Story, Ralphie wants a Daisy Red Ryder BB gun. His mother warns that he will end up with S05.90XA "unspecified injury of unspecified eye and orbit." Of course, that doesn't have the same ring to it as "You'll shoot your eye out!" Don't forget Ralphie's classmate who gets his tongue stuck to the frozen flagpole. His injury would be noted as T33.90 and S00.502A which are "superficial frostbite to unspecified sites" and "unspecified injury to oral cavity, initial encounter." Ouch!

I hope that Santa can avoid E73.0 and W13.2xxA which are "lactose intolerance" and "fall from, out of or through roof, initial encounter." Either of those situations would make Santa less merry and bright. And let's hope the jolly old elf has seatbelts in his sleigh because if Rudolph gets anxious in the fog and makes a sharp turn, Santa might have a V00.221A, "fall from sled, initial encounter".

May your stockings stay safely hung by the fireplace without X02.0XXA "exposure to flames in controlled fire in building or structure [fireplace], initial encounter". No one wants their holiday ruined by Z63.1 "problems in relationship with in-laws". And hopefully your children don't have any Z62.891 "sibling rivalry" issues.

My wish for all of you is a peaceful, silent night, preferably not due to H83.3 "noise induced hearing loss" from all the carolers at your door. And, in the New Year, may you only need to come to the clinic for Z00.00 "encounter for general adult medical examination without abnormal findings".

Happy Ho, Ho, Holidays and stay healthy out there people!



By Jill Kruse, D.O.