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School Board Meeting, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, March 15

City Council Meeting, 7 p.m.

Thursday, March 17

Spring Break - No School

Friday, March 18

Spring Break - No School

Saturday, March 19

Mitchell Show Choir Competition

UpComing Events

Saturday, March 5

State Debate in Harrisburg

Tuesday, March 8

Boys SoDak16 - Groton Area vs. Mt. Vernon/
Plankinton, 7:30 pm in Redfield

Thursday, March 10

End of Third Quarter

Middle School Talent Show, 7 p.m., GHS Gym

Saturday, March 12

Show Choir at Aberdeen Competition

Sunday, March 13

Daylight Savings Time - turn clocks forward 1 hour

Monday, March 14

Vender Fair

A vendor fair has been organized in Groton for March 26, 2022, at the Groton Community Center, from 10 am. – 3 p.m. A variety of crafters and vendors will be available. Proceeds from an auction table will be donated to Make-a-Wish Foundation.

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton

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

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

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United Methodist Church

Groton and Conde

Sunday, March 6, 2022

Communion in Worship (white)
Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Sunday School 10:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM

Monday, March 7, 2022

Pastor Brandon Lent Study 7:00 PM

Tuesday, March 8, 2022

Bible Study 10:00 AM
Pastor Brandon Lent Study in Conde 6:00 PM

Wednesday, March 9, 2022

Community Coffee Hour 9:30 AM
Confirmation Snack Time 3:30 PM
Confirmation for 8th Graders Only 4:00 PM
UMYF 7:00 PM

Sunday, March 13, 2022

Conde Worship 9:00 AM
Confirmation Sunday 10:00 AM
Groton Worship 11:00 AM
Sunday School 11:10 AM

Emmanuel Lutheran Church

Groton

Sunday, March 6

9 am Worship/Comm
Milestones 7th & 8th grade
10:15 Sunday School
10:15 Grace Alone Study
7 pm Choir

Monday, March 7

6:30am Bible Study

Tuesday, March 8

6 pm Church Council

Wednesday, March 9

6 pm Soup Supper (Host Sunday School)
7 pm Lenten Service

Sunday, March 13

9 am Worship
10:15 Sunday School
10:15 Grace Alone Study
7 pm Choir

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

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, March 6

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's Worship with communion
10 a.m.: Sunday School
11 a.m.: Zion Lutheran Worship with communion

Wednesday, March 9

3:45 p.m.: Confirmation
7:00 p.m.: Ash Wednesday service

Sunday, March 13

8 a.m.: Bible Study
9 a.m.: St. John's Worship with confirmation
10 a.m.: Sunday School
11 a.m.: Zion Lutheran Worship

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

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This **FREE** event is
**OPEN TO
THE PUBLIC**



HPS is a *small* non-profit doing *BIG* things!
MISSION: to serve students, coaches &
communities through **the power of faith**
& **servant leadership** in 3 ways...
1.) Character Coaching
2.) Distracted Driving Presentations
3.) Therapy Dog Comfort Visits



GHS FCA brings an emotional & impactful presentation by:

Tim Weidenbach

Director of Higher Power Sports

Sunday, March 6th @ 3:30pm

United Methodist Church in Groton, SD

- **94%** of young drivers say they know it is dangerous to drive while using your phone, yet **70%** say they are able to use their phone without it impacting their ability to drive!

ALL ARE WELCOME to hear this engaging speaker,
as seen on **KELOLAND TV!**

GHS Fellowship of Christian Athletes... [www.grotonmethodistchurch.org](#)... [www.kejones.com](#)... [www.grotonmethodistchurch.org](#)...

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**SoDak16 Boys
Basketball on
GDILIVE.COM**



NO TICKET REQUIRED! FREE TO WATCH



Good Luck Tigers from the GDILIVE.COM sponsors

Allied Climate Professionals
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S & S Lumber
ThunderSeed with John Wheeting
Weismantel Agency of Columbia

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#518 in a series

Covid-19 Update: by Marie Miller

Late tonight we were showing decreases in all parameters. The seven-day new-case average was down to 51,599, well below yesterday and on a steady decline. The total cases since this pandemic began were up to 79,099,886, which means we've crossed another million mark. Here's that recent history:

January 19 – 68 million – 1 day
January 20 – 69 million – 1 day
January 21 – 70 million – 1 day
January 24 – 71 million – 3 days
January 25 – 72 million – 1 day
January 27 – 73 million – 2 days
January 29 – 74 million – 1 day
February 1 – 75 million – 3 days
February 4 – 76 million – 3 days
February 9 – 77 million – 5 days
February 16 – 78 million – 7 days
March 3 – 79 million – 15 days

See that over-two-week interval? That is amazing. Things really are getting better. For now. Hospitalizations are also well down to 44,785. And deaths are finally showing a drop we can detect at a less than seven-day interval at 1706. Total deaths are creeping up toward a million at 955,016. There isn't a family with a loss who's willing to dismiss this as "not all that bad."

According to the WHO, BA.2 continues to spread around the world. It was the dominant variant in 18 countries by last weekend and represents 35 percent of worldwide cases; that is an increase from 10 countries and 21 percent a week prior. In the US, the subvariant accounts for 3.8 percent of cases that are sequenced. So far, it's still not looking like it's going to cause a more severe disease, but it is likely to take over from BA.1 and to cause more cases, probably a lot more, but not another surge. Overall case numbers and hospitalizations continue to drop everywhere except the Western Pacific Ocean even as BA.2 becomes more common.

In December, we talked about the virus-like particle vaccine under development by the company Medicago in Canada. It's on an established platform and stores at refrigerator temperatures, so could be very useful. For details, see my Update #493 posted on December 8, 2021, at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/5393230314026664>. The company had applied for authorization in Canada, and Health Canada has now approved it under the name Covifenz for use in people ages 18 to 64. The Canadian regulatory agency approved the Novavax vaccine last week; so they have two new ones on tap. Because 82 percent of Canadians over 5 are already fully vaccinated, most of these doses are likely destined for other countries.

One of the questions that arises when we have a highly transmissible variant is how big the problem of household spread is going to be. We have one study on that now from the CDC. It turns out that it's difficult to eliminate spread within a household, but it's not impossible to limit it. The agency's researchers partnered with four public health jurisdictions to take a look at Omicron household transmission from November 2021 to February 2022. Of 183 households with one infected person (the index patient), 124 (67.8 percent) of them experienced transmission. Among 431 household contacts, 227 became infected, a 52.7 percent attack rate (AR).

Contacts of index patients under the age of 5 had the highest AR at 72 percent, and contacts of those from 5 to 11 had the lowest at 47.5 percent. I'm going to guess the high transmission rate from under-5 children is a combination of ineligibility for vaccines and the need of very young children for care from an adult which makes distancing impossible. ARs were lowest (44 percent) when the index patient was vaccinated and boosted or had completed full vaccination less than five months prior compared to 64 percent when the index was unvaccinated. Practices that were associated with substantially lower ARs

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were isolation of the index patient in a separate room at least part of the time (reduction from 68 to 41 percent) and masking by the index patient all or some of the time (reduction from 69 to 40 percent). So if someone in your household is infected, there are things you can do to reduce the likelihood of transmission to other members of the household.

I've pretty deliberately stayed out of the war on where this virus came from, simply reporting whatever evidence comes along; I am in no way equipped to opine on the fine points of the matter. That said, we do have two studies which just dropped that seem to go a fair distance toward settling the issue. Both are still in preprint, which means neither has been peer-reviewed yet.

The first from a multi-national team from the US, the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Scotland, and Australia used spatial analysis to evaluate early cases in China with particular reference to the Wuhan Wholesale Seafood Market, the now infamous wet market from whence the virus has been said to have emanated. They looked at the residential locations of early cases and their distance from the Market, densities of case locations across Wuhan, how the clustering of cases in December contrasts with the clustering of cases during January and February 2020, and a comparison of the spatial pattern of December 2019 cases in Wuhan with population density patterns in the city using epidemiological, genomic, commercial, photographic, location, social mobility, and survey data from a range of sources to investigate the origins of the pandemic. Yes, this was a complex analysis.

The researchers concluded that the Huanan market was the epicenter of Covid-19 emergence because cases were geographically distributed near and centered on the market and the cases linked to the market specifically linked to the western section where live-mammal vendors were located, whether or not they realized or acknowledged this link. The researchers found that the coronavirus was highly likely to have been in live mammals sold there in late 2019, and their analysis also suggested the virus spilled over into shoppers or workers at two separate times. The authors wrote, "We conclude that the Huanan market was indeed the epicenter of COVID-19 emergence." Cases were geographically distributed around the market, and of cases epidemiologically linked to the market, they were specifically linked to the western section where the live mammal vendors were located. Vendors were selling animals that are known to be susceptible to the virus, including Asian raccoon dogs, hog badgers, and red foxes. When scientists visited and tested surfaces at the market, one stall in particular had a large number of positives, including a cage where raccoon dogs had been kept; maybe there's your smoking gun. Findings also clearly linked two early lineages of SARS-CoV-2 to the market. The conclusions of this study say, "Collectively, these results provide incontrovertible evidence that there was a clear conduit, via susceptible live mammals, for the zoonotic emergence of SARS-CoV-2 at the Huanan market towards the end of 2019." They also said they found no support for the theory that the virus escaped from a Wuhan lab. This is not proof it did not—and in fact, you cannot prove a negative—but it does weaken any assertions to that effect.

The second study is from a different but somewhat overlapping set of researchers, also at multiple institutions in various countries including the US, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, and Scotland. They took a look at what scientists call phylogeny, that is the "family tree" of genomic relationships among early versions of the virus after its emergence in human infection. They used what they call phylodynamic rooting methods that examine epidemiological, immunological, and evolutionary processes that acted on and possibly shaped viral divergence from the initial emergent strain by paying attention to transmission dynamics and their effect on genetic variation. This incorporates what's happening in cells within an infected host, in the hosts in a population, and in whole populations of hosts as well. So they looked at these factors and, as I understand it, worked backward from known variants, incorporating accumulated information to analyze the pattern and origin of genomic diversity early in the pandemic, and then testing their hypotheses by running epidemic simulations to see whether those accord with their hypotheses: So if we have formed a hypothesis that lineage B was introduced in this particular way at this particular time, here's what the pattern of transmission would look like. Now how does that accord with the actual pattern of transmission that occurred?

The big finding is that there were "at least two separate cross-species transmission events into humans."

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Note the "at least." The simulations indicate there were likely more introductions with forms of the virus that failed to establish in humans and went extinct; the resulting calculations place the total number of introductions needed to establish at least two separate continuing lineages at five. They found two distinct viral lineages, A and B, with no transitional variations having been found. Transitional variations would be intermediate forms between A and B which indicate a development from one to the other. The dearth of transitional variations means A and B derived from different introductions rather than one deriving from the other.

Lineage B is more common than A; it was exclusively associated with the Huanan market early, which "strongly suggests that lineage B was an independent jump into humans at the Huanan market in late-November or early-December 2019." The earliest lineage A genome cited in this study (but see note below) came from a person who lived just south of this market, and the next came from a person who stayed at a hotel near the market. "This geographic proximity is consistent with lineage A emerging from the same location as lineage B, but starting at a later point in time. Hence, the Huanan market is the most likely source of the lineage A introduction as well, likely in early-to-mid December 2019."

Note: This next information is the "see note below" stuff I mentioned above. It appears this introduction could have even been at the market too: A "Note added in proof" at the bottom of the paper indicates there was one lineage A environmental sample discovered in the market on January 1, 2020, which would support a separate introduction at the market itself rather than simply near it. I am not clear on the timeline here—when the sample was collected versus when it was reported. This could be the second introduction rather than those reported near the market. In either case, according to the authors, "These findings define the narrow window between when SARS-CoV-2 first jumped into humans and when the first cases of COVID-19 were reported."

Given how promiscuous this virus is as to hosts (something that is quite rare among viruses), the scientists point out "the urgent need to pay attention to situations in which animals and humans interact closely on a daily basis." Robert Garry, professor of microbiology and immunology at Tulane Medical School and co-author on this paper, told CNN, "We need to do a better job of farming and regulating these wild animals and invest in infrastructure in places where viruses spill over." Michael Worobey, professor and head of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Arizona, lead author on the previous study and a co-author on this one (told you there was overlap), told CNN, "This is not the last time this happens." Cheery thought.

This pair of studies, if they hold up, seem likely to establish a presumption that the virus entered the human population naturally—as opposed to some deliberate act (already mostly debunked) or an accidental introduction of a lab virus (still viable), artificially enhanced by gain-of-function research or not—which will be difficult to overcome. Multiple introductions of multiple lineages, the evidence from the market, the pattern of geographic spread centered on the market, the change in pattern after the first couple of months: All of that looks just the way a naturally-introduced virus would look and would be difficult or impossible to replicate if the introduction occurred by another less natural means. We should note, however, that what we do not have and will almost certainly never have is an actual animal from the market at that time which was infected with this virus; by the time Chinese authorities went in to investigate, those animals were all long gone. This means that, unless someone turns up an animal purchased there during the proper time frame in a home freezer somewhere—and provides an impeccable provenance—we'll never have this kind of evidence. Both papers need peer review, and I'm sure all sorts of folks are going to weigh in over the next weeks and months, but as I said, if they hold up, making a different case may be tough. I guess we'll see.

There's a new study of ECMO treatment of Covid-19 from Vanderbilt University just published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine. ECMO, you may recall from our earlier conversations, is extracorporeal (outside the body) membrane oxygenation, a process of circulating your blood outside your body through a machine that oxygenates it and removes carbon dioxide waste across a membrane in a similar way to your lungs' method. It also pumps the blood as well. This means a per-

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son on ECMO can give their lungs and heart a complete rest for a period of time that may allow them to heal. Before the pandemic, it was used quite infrequently for those with seriously damaged lungs and there were few machines in the country; with the demand created by severe Covid-19 cases, that number jumped up, but has never met the need. ECMO requires not only specialized equipment, but also highly trained staff. Nursing staffing for an ECMO patient is one on one, that is, one nurse for each patient, a nurse who treats only that patient, and there is also a team of respiratory therapists and physicians who monitor the therapy. At the worst times, it as a pure crap-shoot whether there would be a machine and bed available for a patient in need.

Now with the numbers of people who were sick and dying, even with mechanical ventilation or ECMO, something that's difficult to get a handle on is whether these interventions are actually saving lives or not. That's because people have to be so very, very ill to receive them that many of them die even with the intervention. The usual way to determine how well they work would be to set up a controlled study with some patients receiving the intervention and others not, but it's ethically fraught to deny seriously-ill patients a potentially life-saving intervention. There are a lot of ethical hurdles to designing this sort of thing—as there should be. Studies have been tried in the past before the pandemic, but the need to avoid denying treatment has complicated these to the point that it is difficult to draw valid conclusions from them.

Well, it turns out the pandemic designed that study for us. When an intervention is in such short supply that it is a matter of random chance whether a given person receives the intervention or not—first come, first served, as it was in this pandemic—we can treat those who were unable to find an available machine as a control group and those who were able to find one as the experimental group and run the numbers. So that's what nurse Whitney Gannon, director of quality and education for the adult ECMO program at Vanderbilt University Hospital did. She and her team followed every patient who was referred to them for ECMO. Due to the shortage of available spaces, the hospital had been using a strict set of criteria to qualify patients for ECMO: age, body mass index, previous time on a ventilator, presence of brain damage, chronic lung disease, cancer, failing organs, time of hospitalization, time since diagnosis. The result of this rigorous screening is that the folks included in either arm of the study were disproportionately young and previously healthy people who had not deteriorated too significantly due to Covid-19, a fairly homogeneous group.

Out of 90 patients who had been referred and classified as medically eligible for treatment, only 35 could be admitted due to resource limitations. Among patients receiving ECMO, 43 percent died in the hospital, while among the control group who did not receive ECMO, 89 percent died; so findings were that the use of ECMO in this group reduces the risk of dying by about half. That's fairly impressive given the serious condition of the patients referred. This provides evidence that ECMO is indeed life-saving for those who need it. We do not have data for those with more significant risk factors who were screened out of the eligible population for the treatment.

So we have new CDC rules on precautions; they're telling us we need not mask up indoors in all situations. Now if you live where I live, you will not see a difference going forward whatever you choose to do because folks around here have not been masking up in approximately forever; this thing was over for them a year (or longer) ago. But there are locations in the US where the rules are changing and folks will note changes. Mandates are ending, both those imposed by states or municipalities and those imposed by private businesses or organizations. That still leaves you with a decision to make about your own practice going forward; it's not like the rules say you CAN'T mask, only that you don't have to. So what do you do?

Thing is, most of us are not going to wear masks forever, so we have choices ahead of us. Now I am aware there is a fair number of immunocompromised people who might be facing a different reality, who maybe are going to be wearing masks into the foreseeable future. I wish I could fix that. I am hoping that the supplies will improve for drugs like Evusheld, that long-acting antibody that protects most, maybe all, folks who can't mount a protective response for themselves; it will be a game-changer for many of these folks. Details are available at my Update #493 posted December 8, 2021, at <https://www.facebook.com/marie.schwabmiller/posts/5393230314026664>. I know companies are working on the supply problem, and I would guess there are other similar products still in development. As long as I continue to report here,

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I will keep my nose to the ground and let you know what I hear.

I read a recent discussion NPR had with several public health and infectious disease experts about how they're going to make decisions about precautions for themselves. These included Dr. David Dowdy, epidemiologist at Johns Hopkins University; Dr. Robert Wachter, chair of the department of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco; Dr. Ali Khan, dean of the school of public health at the University of Nebraska; Dr. Lisa Maragakis, senior director of infection prevention at the Johns Hopkins Health System; Dr. Abraar Karan, infectious disease physician at Stanford University; Dr. Jose Romero, health secretary for the state of Arkansas; and Seema Lakdawala, virologist at the University of Pittsburgh. I'll summarize the high points here.

First, if you are at high risk for infection and/or for serious disease, you're probably going to want to be cautious for a while yet and continue to wear a mask in public settings, maybe some private ones too, likewise if you have children under five, too young to be vaccinated, in your home or if you live with or have regular indoor contact with older or other vulnerable individuals.

One metric to track is community transmission in your location. New case rates are one good way to do that. The experts talked a lot about just what level of new cases they'd be comfortable with, and they were a little bit all over the map—one saying below 20, another below 10, and one going for 1 to 5. Those who are healthy with low or no risk factors indicated they're going to be willing to begin dropping the mask for activities they personally deem important, for example, eating in a restaurant. Others said they still don't want to get sick, miss work, or risk long-Covid so they're going to be waiting longer. A factor here is that so many tests these days are at-home tests, and those results tend not to be reported in the official numbers. Still, they say decreased transmission, particularly when those numbers stay low, are a pretty useful indicator that hospitals are not going to be overwhelmed and, that if you need a treatment, you will most likely have access. They suggest you pick a number based on your own risk and that of the people in your household, and run with it.

To assist you in your assessment of your local community's risk, the following linked CDC web page provides a tool to look up your county. Based on hospital beds in use, hospital admissions, and total new cases in the area, the risk for your county is classified as high (orange), medium (yellow), or low (green), which should provide you with a fairly well-rounded assessment of just what the local community level, as they're calling it, looks like: <https://www.cdc.gov/.../your-health/covid-by-county.html>. It's very simple to use and based on constantly-updated information.

Another piece of information to factor in is test positivity rates in the community. You may recall that this is the percentage of tests done that come back positive, and the lower it is, the more likely it is that spread in the community is not going undetected. If you're testing enough for the amount of spread you have, then positivity rates will be low. The experts say sustained test positivity below one percent is a good sign there is a very low chance of a new community outbreak. Most state departments of health online Covid-19 dashboards post this information on a county-by-county basis. My state's dashboard, for example, shows a map of the state on which, if you hover your cursor over your county, a box pops up containing all kinds of information including the test positivity rate over the past week. Explore your state's website so that, when you need this information, you can find it.

I read another take on these decisions in an interview with Dr. Leana Wen, emergency physician and professor of health policy and management at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health and CNN medical analyst. She has two young children (too young to be vaccinated) at home, which informs her personal decisions. She said those in high transmission (orange) areas should continue to mask in indoor public spaces as before, especially if the location is crowded or poorly ventilated or you are immunocompromised or have risk factors.

In low transmission (green) areas, she recommends immunocompromised people continue to mask indoors around those of unknown vaccination status and that others should decide based on their own risk tolerance and how important it is to them to be able to go without a mask, which is pretty much what the experts talking to NPR had to say. Risk tolerance assessments should include the consideration of long-

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Covid as well as the more immediate risks of infection and severe disease, remembering even low-risk people with mild or moderate infections are at risk for long-Covid.

With respect to children and schools, she invoked each family's particular circumstances and risk tolerance. She did remind us that children are less likely to become severely ill, but also mentioned that household members who are medically vulnerable will tilt the balance on this. Her thoughts on other children's activities are that at high transmission (orange) levels, she'd cut down nonessential social activities and move indoor activities outdoors as much as possible, and at yellow, she'd loosen up considerably if the household is healthy, preferring interactions only with vaccinated individuals unless masks are worn.

At low levels (green), she says, "there can be more latitude to have indoor playdates and sleepovers, understanding that the risk is still there but the benefit of the activity to your children might outweigh potential risks."

What's quite likely over the next few weeks—barring a new ugly variant turning up—is that rates of transmission, hospitalization, and test positivity will continue to decrease, finally more or less plateauing. At that point, unless the plateau is an unacceptably high one, something I will repeat we have no reason to expect, then you're going to decide either to drop the mask or keep it up in perpetuity. Your call either way. And something else pointed out is that this does not have to be an all-or-nothing decision—either throw away the masks forever or wear them forever. Instead, you may well decide certain kinds of activities are low-risk enough that you don't feel you need a mask while others are not. You may stop and then again start up if there's a spike in cases. Some of these folks said they'll probably have a mask with them in most situations and don it when the environment seems risky.

And what do you do if you're the lone masked person in a crowd of bare faces? Remember that a high-quality mask—an N95, KN95, or KF94—is highly protective to the wearer even in the presence of unmasked others. While it would be safer if everyone wore them forever, everyone's not going to; so be aware of the steps you can take when you need to do so.

That's it for today. Be well, make good decisions, and we'll talk again.

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THE ILLUSTRATED BIBLE



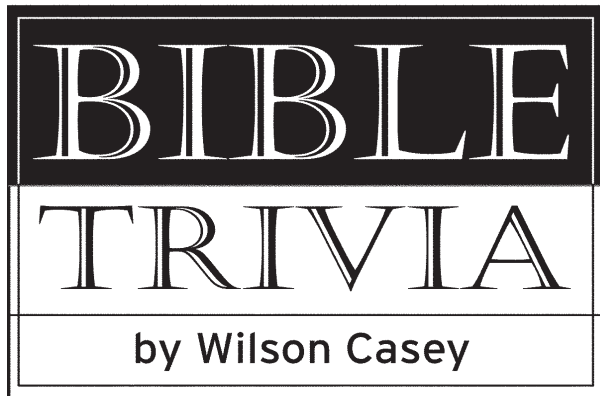
"A Rooster"
by Pablo Picasso
(1938)

...Those who stood by came up and said to Peter, "Surely you also are one of them, for your speech betrays you." Then he began to curse and swear, saying, "I do not know the Man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So he went out and wept bitterly.

MATTHEW 26: 73-75 ©

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by Healthy Exchanges

Meatballs and Gravy on Colcannon

On St. Patrick's Day, you don't even have to be Irish to be part of the clan! Just wear green, put a shamrock in your hair and stir up this great dish. Before you know it, your "Irish Eyes" will be smiling!

16 ounces extra-lean ground sirloin beef or turkey breast

6 tablespoons dried fine breadcrumbs

1 teaspoon dried parsley flakes

1 (12-ounce) jar fat-free beef gravy

3 cups hot water

3 cups shredded cabbage

2 cups instant potato flakes

2 teaspoons dried onion flakes

1/4 cup fat-free sour cream

1. In a large bowl, combine meat, breadcrumbs and parsley flakes. Mix well to combine. Form into 24 (1-inch) balls. Place meatballs in a large skillet sprayed with butter-flavored cooking spray. Brown meatballs on all sides. Spoon gravy evenly over meatballs. Lower heat, cover and simmer while making colcannon.

2. Meanwhile, in a large saucepan, bring water and cabbage to a boil. Remove from heat. Stir in potato flakes and onion flakes. Add sour cream. Mix gently just to combine.

3. For each serving, place 2/3 cup potato mixture on a serving plate, arrange 4 meatballs on potato mixture and evenly spoon gravy over top. Makes 6 servings.

* Each serving equals: 247 calories, 7g fat, 18g protein, 28g carb., 502mg sodium, 2g fiber; Diabetic Exchanges: 2 Meat, 1 1/2 Starch, 1/2 Vegetable.

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

2. According to church tradition dating from the 2nd century, who wrote the book of Acts? *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John*

3. Which book's first verse is, "How doth the city sit solitary, that was full of people?" *Judges, Ruth, Ezra, Lamentations*

4. Who is the only Old Testament person mentioned as being buried in a coffin? *Adam, Eve, Moses, Joseph*

5. From Hebrew 7, what priest was without a mother or father? *Jehoiada, Melchizedek, Eleazar, Leviticus*

6. Who ended many of his letters, "Grace be with you"? *James, Paul, Titus, Jude*

ANSWERS: 1) Neither; 2) Luke; 3) Lamentations; 4) Joseph; 5) Melchizedek; 6) Paul

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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OUR STORY SO FAR...

AS KING BARIN'S RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE U.R.M.* FIRMLY TAKE PRECEDENCE...

...A RIFT WITH QUEEN AURA QUICKLY BECOMES A WIDENING GULF.

*UNITED REPUBLICS OF MONGO

UNTIL ULTIMATELY, WHERE ONCE THERE WAS LOVE - NOW ONLY HOSTILITY AND RESENTMENT.

FLASH GORDON

By JIM KEEFE

2-27

ALONE-RAGE GIVES WAY TO TEARS.

HE DOESN'T EVEN NEED ME ANYMORE...

WHO SAID THAT? WHO DARES INTRUDE UPON THE QUEEN!

THAT VOICE...

...MY CHILD...

UPON RECEIVING WORD THAT AN AUDIENCE WITH HER OWN HUSBAND HAS BEEN DENIED, QUEEN AURA LASHES OUT!

INFORM BARIN THAT HIS PRESENCE IN THE ROYAL BEDCHAMBERS WILL NO LONGER BE TOLERATED!

KRAK!


YOU'VE BEEN TAKEN FOR GRANTED FOR FAR TOO LONG.

HOW CAN YOU STOMACH BEING NOTHING MORE THAN A TROPHY TO THAT WITLESS PRETENDER TO THE THRONE?

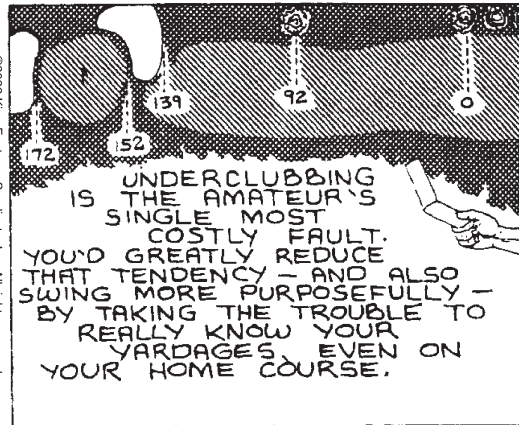
IT'S TIME YOU RECLAIMED THAT WHICH IS YOUR BIRTH-RIGHT...

TO BE CONT'D

Play Better Golf with JACK NICKLAUS



WHY DO TOUR PLAYERS GO TO SUCH TROUBLE TO OBTAIN EXACT YARDAGES FOR ALL APPROACH SHOTS?? BEYOND PROPER CLUB SELECTION IS THE CONFIDENCE THAT COMES FROM **KNOWING** RATHER THAN **GUESSING** THE DISTANCE OF THE SHOT.



UNDERCLUBBING IS THE AMATEUR'S SINGLE MOST COSTLY FAULT. YOU'D GREATLY REDUCE THAT TENDENCY - AND ALSO SWING MORE PURPOSEFULLY - BY TAKING THE TROUBLE TO REALLY KNOW YOUR YARDAGES, EVEN ON YOUR HOME COURSE.

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Family History Includes Puzzling Advice About Oranges



DEAR DR. ROACH: Sixty years ago, I married into a family that included a woman doctor in the generation before mine. My mother-in-law was always lamenting that she had never understood a little ditty that Aunt Doctor would always say: "Oranges are gold in the morning, silver at noon, and lead at night."

I finally solved the riddle. Every night I drink orange juice, I experience sleep disturbances all night. I shifted to orange juice in the morning: No more problems. Years later, I have been in two hospitals and rehab facilities that served oranges or orange juice at night. Changing to morning could have a positive effect on the comfort of many hospital patients. -- G.R.

ANSWER: From my research, it appears this saying may have been intended to keep people from stealing oranges at night. However, oranges do have acid, which could predispose to heartburn, which might in turn affect sleep. The sugar load in an orange can cause short term high blood sugar, but in some people, the body's response can cause a temporary low blood sugar as well.

If eating oranges at night doesn't bother you, there is no reason not to stop, but oranges are on the long list of things which might cause sleep disturbance.

DEAR DR. ROACH: I am an 86-year-old man in good health. My arms, from the wrist to my elbows on the top side, started turning black and blue two years ago. I've been to two doctors: One said he didn't know why; the other said it was age-related. What can I do for this so I can start wearing short sleeve shirts again? -- R.K.

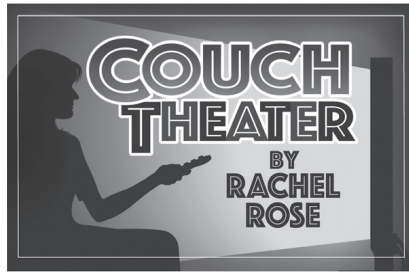
ANSWER: While an exam is necessary to confirm this diagnosis, the location suggests a condition called "solar purpura." The name suggests that sun damage is a cause of the condition, predisposing to bruising. One study found that bioflavonoids, found in many fruits and vegetables, may help. A topical vitamin A-derived cream, such as tretinoin, may help with the appearance. It is otherwise not dangerous.

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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Surviving Paradise: A Family Tale (NR) — You thought you had a bad 2020-21? Try being a hyena in the Okavango Delta, where merely surviving is considered success. Narrated by Rege-Jean Page (the dreamy Duke of Hastings on “Bridgerton”), this documentary showcases the unique ways different species in this African region rely on their packs and prides to hunt, thrive and grow. They know their greatest weapon in their fight to survive is each other. Stunning action footage and bird’s-eye views of the landscapes make for an enthralling visual experience. The stories of each pack are fascinating and yet relatable to us humans and how we depend on each other. In this land, family is everything! (Netflix)

The Postcard Killings (NR) — Starring the man who strangely has never been named People Magazine’s Sexiest Man Alive, this 2020 crime thriller is new to Prime this month. Jeffrey Dean Morgan plays Jacob Kanon, a New York City detective investigating his own newlywed daughter’s murder in London. There he enlists a Sweden-based American journalist to help him investigate a subsequent string of similar murders happening across Europe. Based on the novel “The Postcard Killers” by James Patterson, it also features Morgan’s co-star from “The Good Wife,” Cush Jumbo, as the journalist. Famke Janssen, who has made a film career out of playing mothers of kidnapped/murdered/otherwise “Taken” daughters, plays Jacob’s wife, Valerie. (Amazon Prime Video)

Turning Red (PG) — Those of us of a certain age used to pretend as kids that we would turn into the Tasmanian Devil when we got mad or excited. In this Pixar Studios animated film,

main character Mei Lee (Rosalie Chiang) turns into a red panda whenever she gets anxious ... which often commences when her overbearing mother (voiced by Sandra Oh) shows up at inopportune times. Mei is an otherwise typical, nerdy, boyband-loving tweener when she finds out that her family has a long, mystical connection with red pandas. Her challenge then becomes not only learning to live with this familial oddity, but using it to her advantage. Points for the clever incorporation of a popular *NSYNC song. Premieres March 11. (Disney+)



Courtesy of Netflix

Scene from “Surviving Paradise”

Embrace the Panda: Making Turning Red (PG) — As a special add-on to “Turning Red,” this feature goes behind the scenes of the story, the soundtrack and the groundbreaking all-woman production team. Meet the cast and embrace your inner panda. Debuts the same day as the feature film. (Disney+)

Legacy: In the Shadow of Greatness (NR) — Anyone who grew up following a smarter/prettier/more athletically talented sibling can understand the weight of unfair expectations sometimes placed upon kids. That pressure is multiplied when the one you’re following is your parent, and they are a world-famous athlete. In this six-part docuseries, children of superstars like basketballer Dwayne Wade and boxing champ Evander Holyfield discuss how living within a parent’s spotlight has hindered, helped or otherwise influenced their own athletic goals (Spoiler: of course it helped!). (Discovery+)

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1. What was Brook Benton's final No. 1 chart-topper?
2. Name the Irish artist who wrote and released "Alone Again (Naturally)" and "Clair."
3. Who was "Stewball" in the song by Peter, Paul and Mary?
4. Who wrote and released "Green Onions"?
5. Name the song that contains this lyric: "They're cousins, Identical cousins all the way, One pair of matching bookends, Different as night and day."

Answers

1. "Rainy Night in Georgia," 1970 on the R&B chart. The song first appeared on Benton's "Today" album.
2. Gilbert O'Sullivan, in 1971 and 1972. In the 1990s,

he was involved in a lawsuit against a rapper who had sampled one of O'Sullivan's songs without permission. He won, and it increased copyright protections for songwriters everywhere.

3. Stewball was a famous racehorse in 18th-century Britain and was originally called "Squball" or "Skuball," as well as Stewball. "Skewball" likely comes from "Skewbald," a tri-color coat pattern in horses.

4. Booker T. & the MG's, in 1962.

5. "Cousins," the theme song for "The Patty Duke Show" (1963-1966). Actress Patty Duke played dual parts in the show: American and Scottish cousins. In 2009 Duke created public service announcements for the Social Security Administration, again playing two roles.

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Just Like Cats & Dogs by Dave T. Phipps



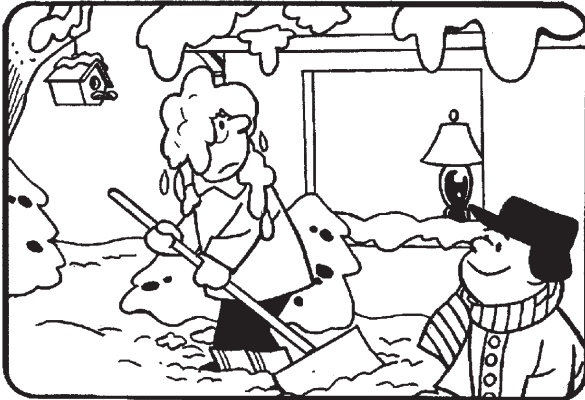
GRIN and BEAR IT ^{by Wagner}



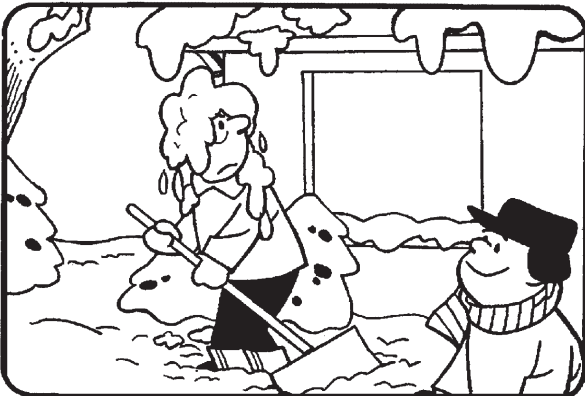
"Prove my innocence ... or else!"

HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Birdhouse is missing. 2. Handle is shorter. 3. Jacket is shorter. 4. Lamp is missing. 5. Scarf is shorter. 6. Buttons are missing.

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- Lettuce will last longer if you store it in the crisper drawer in a clean paper bag.

- “Try using an empty glass wine bottle (remove the label) for rolling out pie crust or any dough. It is the best thing I’ve ever used ... nothing sticks to the glass, unlike my wooden rolling pin, which is now in the back of my cabinet for good after using it for decades!” — *L.F. in Texas*

- Peas, spinach, sweet potato, squash and carrots can be pureed and added to baked goods to increase fiber and nutrients. They are especially useful in soups to thicken a broth without adding fat. You can sneak some veggies into unexpected places, too — like cookies, pancake batter and pasta dishes, or make a flavorful sandwich spread.

- “When you get a new pair of running shoes, treat the insides with spray starch. We have always done this, and it keeps them fresher longer.” — *S.M. in Indiana*

- Tubes make it easy to access toothpaste when they are full, but it’s sometimes hard to get that last bit out. Here’s a tip from C.W. in Oregon: “To get the last bit of a tube of toothpaste to come out, run the tube under warm water for a few seconds. There’s more still in there than you think!”

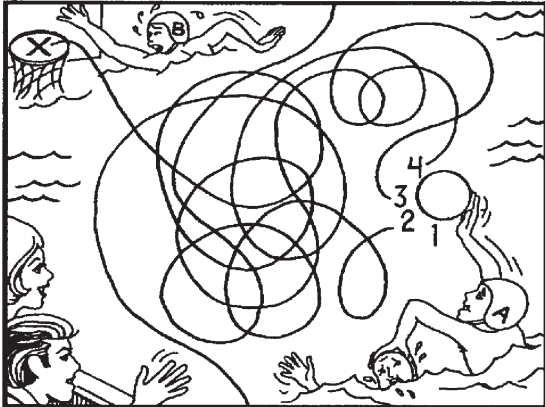
- It’s easy to sort hardware using a muffin pan. If you get a pan that has 12 depressions, you can line up nails and screws and such according to size, making it even more convenient.

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

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WATER WAYS! Which path does the ball take to reach the net at top left? Take a guess, then see if you are right.

Junior Whirl

by Hal Kaufman

1	W	I	N						
2	W	I	N						
3	W	I	N						
4	W	I	N						
5	W	I	N						
6	W	I	N						
7	W	I	N						

A WIN-WIN-WIN PUZZLEMENT

IT'S a win-win-win, etc., situation for those who participate in this word-finder exercise. Object is to identify progressively longer WIN words in accord with the following definitions:

1. Hit the jackpot (WIN, in place).
2. Rhyming partner word of dine.
3. Buffalo appetizer.
4. Pitcher's pre-toss arm move.
5. —Salem, N.C.
6. Plane dimension.
7. Factor cited in cold weather reports.

How quickly can you find all seven words?

Time limit: 2 minutes.

1. Win. 2. Wine. 3. Wings. 4. Windup. 5. Windspan. 6. Windchill. 7. Windmill.

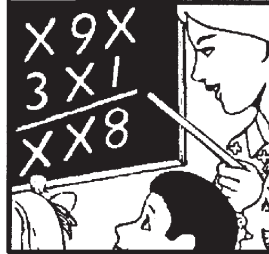
PENNY ANTE! Asked how many pennies he has, Junior declared: "If I divide them by 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6, I always have one left over." How many does he have?

He has sixty-one.

ADD LIB! Five of nine consecutive numbers (1 through 9) have been replaced by X's in the addition problem on the board at right. You are asked to put these five missing numbers back in place.

For starters, fill in the number in the upper right-hand corner — obviously a seven — and then deal with digits 2, 4, 5, 6, to complete the sum.

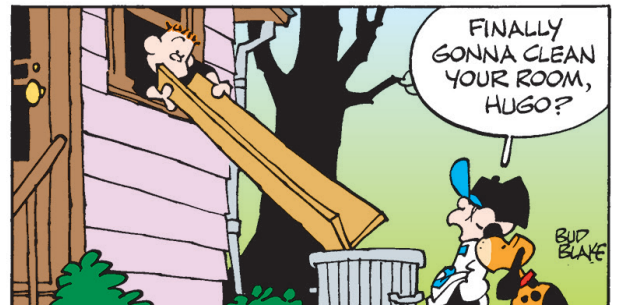
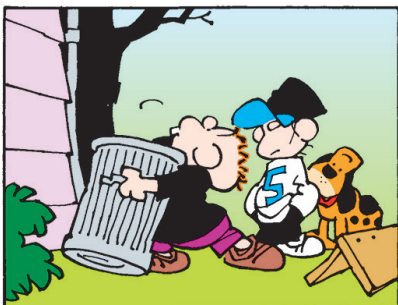
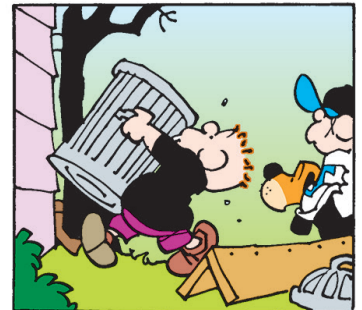
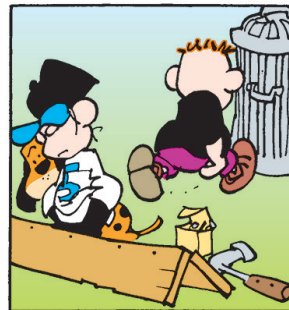
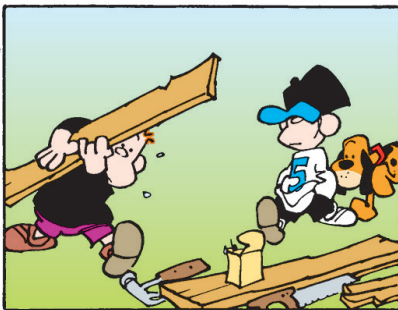
Remember, it is a problem in simple addition. Use trial and error to solve it.



Two, nine, seven plus three, five, one totals six, four, eight.

TIGER

by BUD BLAKE



BUD BLAKE

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King Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Taj Mahal city
- 5 Chatter
- 8 Pugilist's weapon
- 12 Regrets
- 13 Half of bi-
- 14 Bygone Peruvian
- 15 Diamond parts
- 17 Miles away
- 18 Thai or Korean
- 19 Oscar contenders
- 21 Leaves
- 24 Medit. nation
- 25 Buckeye State
- 28 Take five
- 30 Yoga pad
- 33 Mafia boss
- 34 Emulate Lincoln
- 35 Bedazzle
- 36 Dict. info
- 37 Nick and Nora's pet
- 38 Arm bone
- 39 Fireplace residue
- 41 Luminary
- 43 Charlton Heston film
- 46 Seraglio
- 50 Aware of
- 51 Endless time or space
- 54 Burning heap
- 55 Automobile

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15				16					17			
18							19	20				
			21		22	23		24				
25	26	27			28		29			30	31	32
33				34					35			
36				37					38			
		39	40			41		42				
43	44				45			46		47	48	49
50					51	52	53					
54					55				56			
57					58				59			

- 56 Sci-fi fleet
- 9 Casual planet
- 40 Loafers, e.g.
- 57 Declares
- 10 Cicatrix
- 42 Sashimi fish
- 58 Lock opener
- 11 Old salts
- 43 Conks on the head
- 59 Faxed
- 16 Rock's Brian
- 20 Refer to
- 22 Messes up
- 23 Plane assignments
- 44 "May It Be" singer
- 25 Peculiar
- 45 "Casablanca" cafe owner
- 26 Garden tool
- 47 Teeming
- 27 Foot soldiers
- 48 Harrow rival
- 29 Sports figure?
- 49 Island in a computer game
- 31 Bristle
- 52 Scot's refusal
- 32 Chai, e.g.
- 53 Saute
- 34 Diamond Head locale
- 38 Seventh

DOWN

- 1 Met solo
- 2 Weaponry
- 3 Mortgage again, for short
- 4 Italian cheese
- 5 Actor Brynner
- 6 Moreover
- 7 Galileo's birth-place
- 8 Decrees

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— King Crossword —

Answers

Solution time: 24 mins.

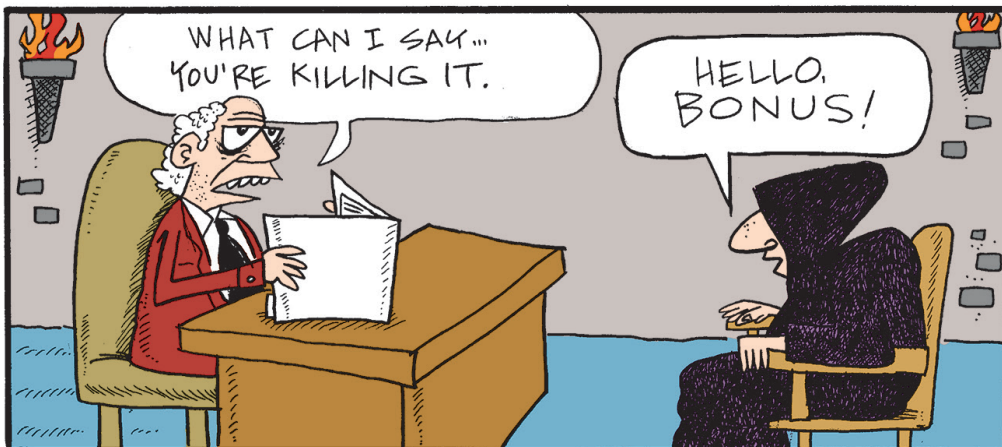
A	G	R	A		Y	A	P		F	I	S	T	
R	U	E	S		U	N	I		I	N	C	A	
I	N	F	I	E	L	D	S		A	F	A	R	
A	S	I	A	N			A	C	T	O	R	S	
			G	O	E	S		I	S	R			
O	H	I	O		R	E	S	T		M	A	T	
D	O	N			O	R	A	T	E		A	W	E
D	E	F			A	S	T	A		U	L	N	A
			A	S	H		S	T	A	R			
B	E	N	H	U	R			H	A	R	E	M	
O	N	T	O			I	N	F	I	N	I	T	Y
P	Y	R	E			C	A	R		U	F	O	S
S	A	Y	S			K	E	Y		S	E	N	T

LAFF - A - DAY

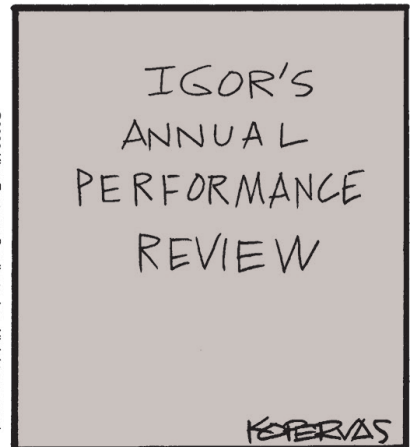


"She's going home to visit her mother."

Out on a Limb

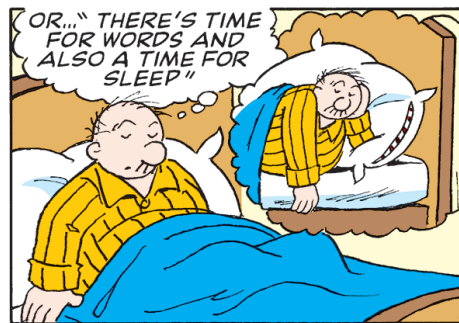
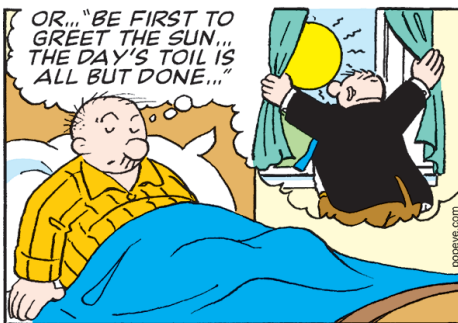
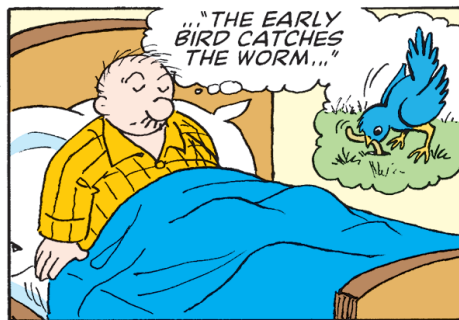
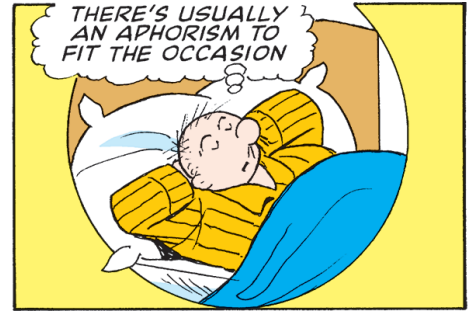
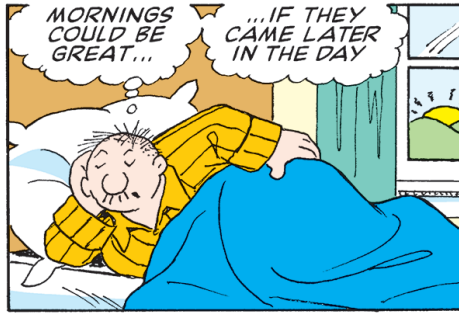
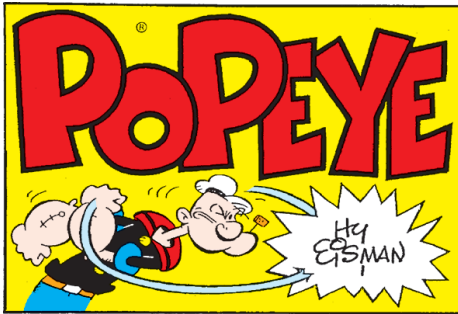


by Gary Kopervas



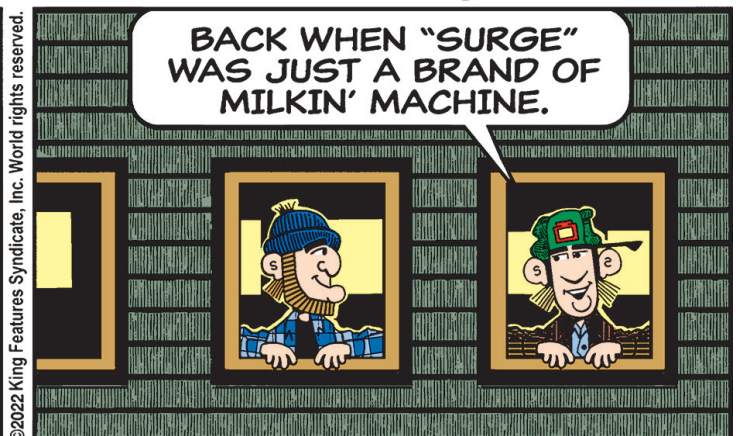
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R.F.D.

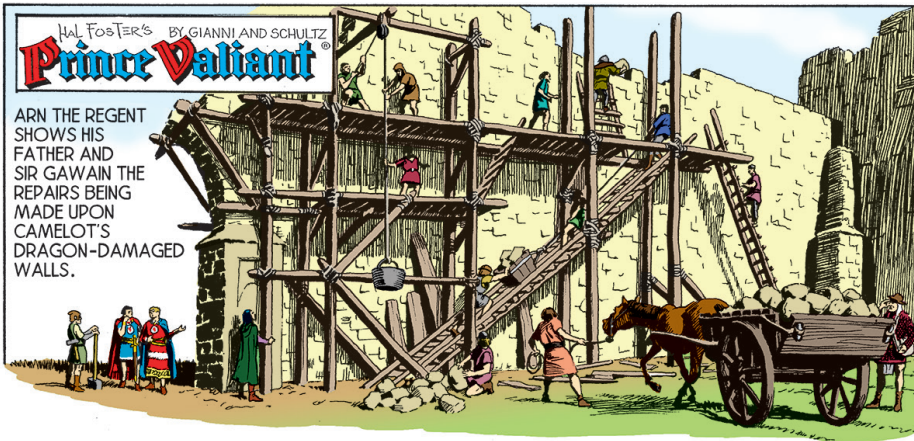
by Mike Marland



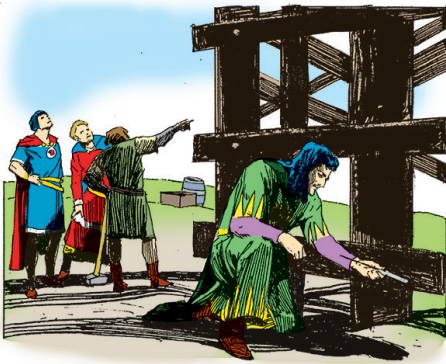
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GAWAIN SOON GROWS BORED WITH ALL THE TECHNICAL ASPECTS, UNTIL SOMETHING IN THE SCAFFOLDING CATCHES HIS EYE.

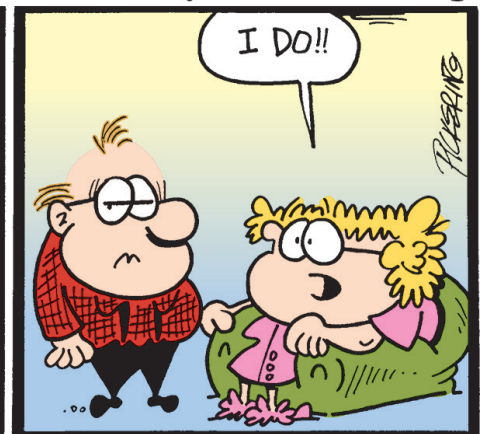
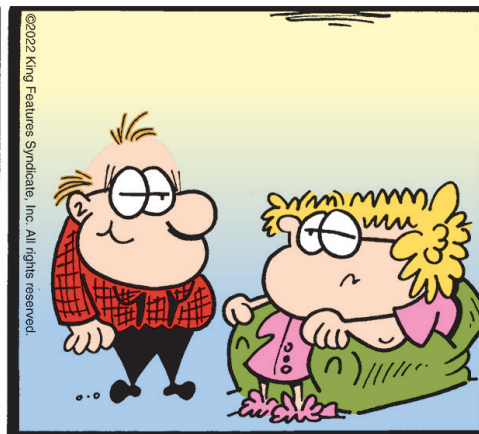


HE PEERS CLOSER, FASCINATED - RAPS THE HILT OF HIS DAGGER ON THE OAKEN TIMBERS...



The Spats

by Jeff Pickering



SENIOR NEWS LINE

by Matilda Charles

Before You Sign Up for Senior Discounts

We all want to save a dollar every place we can. Discounts aimed at seniors are a good way to get our attention, but now and then it's just not a good idea to sign up.

For example, if you're low income, Amazon Prime offers a reduced-price membership. With Prime you get free shipping, access to movies and music, and more. Your membership is only \$5.95 per month — after you furnish an image of your Social Security, Medicaid (not Medicare), TANF or SNAP card. You'll need to renew this every year to keep getting the discount to ensure you're still on the program. You can stay on this reduced rate for four years.

The dilemma is that you're providing your personal information — Medicaid number, Social Security number and so on — to people you don't know. Where does that information end up? If you cancel your membership, is that information destroyed?

Reduced prescription costs are available at certain drugstore chains, but generally on a limited basis, perhaps one day per month. One chain will offer to let you link a new account with them to your existing AARP membership. With another one, should you prefer not to give them your email address, they're more than happy to take your name and phone number instead.

A number of phone companies have reduced plans for seniors. But they do verify your age. With two of them you need to go into the store with a valid ID. With another they'll use the information they already have on file from when you started your original service with them. How securely have they kept that information?

Before you snap up a senior discount deal, consider what you need to give up to get that discount. Think about whether the information you give can be used for identity theft.

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1. What sports venue, demolished in 1999, did ESPN's Chris Berman nickname "The Big Sombrero" due to its unique shape?

2. What Hockey Hall of Famer from Finland won five Stanley Cup championships with the Edmonton Oilers from 1984-90?

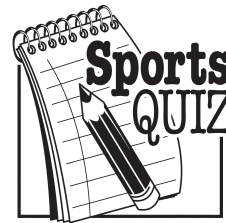
3. What name did the Boston Braves baseball team begin using in 1936 until reverting to Braves in 1941?

4. What was the name of the dive executed by Thornton Melon (Rodney Dangerfield) in the 1986 comedy film "Back to School"?

5. What Spanish tennis player won three French Open singles titles and a U.S. Open singles title during her pro career from 1985-2002?

6. What martial art from Brazil incorporates elements of dance, acrobatics and music?

7. What Basketball Hall of Famer compiled a 5-11 record as head coach



by Ryan A. Berenz

of the Los Angeles Lakers in 1994?

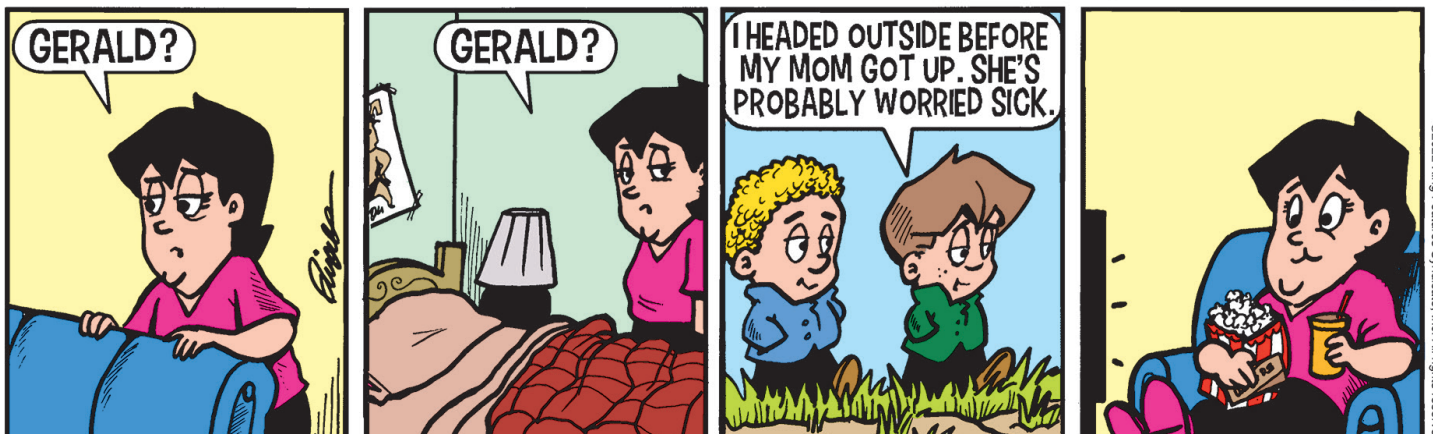
Answers

1. Tampa Stadium.
2. Jari Kurri.
3. The Boston Bees.
4. The Triple Lindy.
5. Arantxa Sanchez Vicario.
6. Capoeira.
7. Magic Johnson.

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Amber Waves

by Dave T. Phipps





Surrendering a Pet

DEAR PAW'S CORNER: When my grandmother passed away last fall, she left behind two beautiful cats. No one else in the family wanted to take care of them, so I took them in. However, I'm financially unable to care for them long-term, and the apartment complex I live in does not allow pets. I'm on borrowed time (and money) at this point, and praying that my apartment manager doesn't find out about the cats. I contacted a shelter nearby to find out if they will accept the cats. They said there is a "surrender fee" of \$200. No way can I pay that; I'm on a fixed income. What alternatives do I have? — *Sherrie R., via email*

DEAR SHERRIE: I'm sorry to hear about your predicament. You have extended your home and finances to

care for two cats in need, and I salute you for it. But you're right: the current situation is not ideal for you or the cats.

When preparing to surrender a pet, the receiving shelter will request that you try every possible option first. Many shelters will provide advice and limited assistance for pet owners going through this. One option would be for you to contact family members and friends directly (not on public social media posts) to ask if they would be able to adopt the cats.

If a surrender to the shelter is the last resort, contact your family to see if they can chip in for the surrender fees. After all, you've already taken on the cost of food, supplies and maybe medical care for them. You've taken on the risk of losing your lease, too. Speak calmly with your relatives about sharing the cost. Best of luck.

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

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Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

* The shamrock, called the "seamroy" by the Celts, was considered a sacred plant that symbolized the arrival of spring. According to legend, St. Patrick used it as a visual guide when explaining the Holy Trinity. By the 17th century, it had become a symbol of emerging Irish nationalism.

* There's a doughnut shop in Clare, Michigan, that's owned entirely by cops.

* A long-haired tortoiseshell cat named Towser holds the Guinness World Record for catching mice -- an estimated 28,899 in 24 years -- as the pest

control expert at the Glenturret whiskey distillery in Scotland.

* Between 1912 and 1948, Olympic medals were given out for sporting-inspired masterpieces of architecture, music, painting, sculpture and literature.

* Subaru WRX owners are the most likely in the U.S. to have a prior speeding citation.

* The average energy expended during the ladies Wimbledon tennis final match adds up to 1.56kWh, which is enough power to keep an iPhone charged for a year.

* Hackers were prevented from stealing nearly \$1 billion after misspelling the word "foundation" as "fandation" on a payment transfer. However, they were still able to swipe roughly \$80 million before their typo tipped off the banks.

* Nineteen-year-old Shayla Wiggins, of Wyoming, found a man's corpse in a river while she was playing Pokemon Go.

* In 2014, South Korea produced an alternative version of their national anthem "Aegukga," which was two keys lower in order to make it easier for kids in school, especially boys going through puberty, to sing.

* When actor Dwayne Johnson was in high school, his height of 6-foot-4 and weight of 225 pounds had some of his classmates suspecting he was an undercover cop.

Thought for the Day: "One who knows how to show and to accept kindness will be a friend better than any possession." -- Sophocles

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VETERANS ★ POST ★

by Freddy Groves

Top-Secret Ghost Army: The Stuff of Legends

It takes a certain kind of soldier to create diversions on the spot, pretend to be a much larger unit than they are and believably impersonate others, but that's exactly what the top-secret Ghost Army did in World War II. Over 1,000 men, with their actions, saved the lives of an estimated 30,000 soldiers during the war.

Their deceptions were stuff of legend, with 1,000 men pretending to be over 20,000. The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133rd Signal Service Company created make-believe headquarters, whole divisions and fake convoys, all with the purpose of deceiving the enemy about the size and location of Army units. Using recordings, they created the impression of large armored units and faked radio traffic, even copying the Morse code style of others. They used inflatable airplanes, rubber tanks,

troops and jeeps that they'd pump up with air compressors, laid down fake tank tracks in the dirt and told tall tales in local cafes to spread false information to the enemy. They could turn on a dime, suddenly appearing miles closer than the enemy believed they were.

Now, years after the fact, they are finally being acknowledged and recognized. In February, the Congressional Gold Medal Act was signed, awarding the medal to both groups, after they were declassified in 1996.

To read more about the Ghost Army, go to the Ghost Army Legacy Project (www.ghostarmylegacyproject.org). Be sure to see the Archives for journals kept by the soldiers from those units, as well as the Secrecy and Leaks file. See ghostarmy.com for even more information. (Don't miss the pictures of all their gadgets and equipment.) Look for "The Ghost Army" documentary on PBS stations and on Netflix. It was first shown in 2013. Additionally, look for the future film that's to be directed by Ben Affleck.

At this writing, there are only nine surviving Ghost Army veterans, all of them nearly 100 years old.

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



ICYMI—A STATE OF THE UNION RECAP

On Tuesday, President Biden visited the U.S. Capitol to address both chambers of Congress while 37 million Americans tuned in at home to listen to the annual State of the Union.

While the current outlook of our nation and the world may appear bleak to many, I was proud to see Republicans and Democrats alike stand in unity to support Ukraine and its people at the start of his address.

RUSSIA – UKRAINE: This was President Biden's first major point in his State of the Union address. He spoke of increased sanctions on Russia and Russian oligarchs and closing off American airspace to all Russian flights, further cutting off Putin and the Russians off from the rest of the world and the global economy. We must continue to support Ukraine by escalating our economic response with unrelenting sanctions. The U.S. should set its sights on bringing back the energy independence we gained during the last administration. Putin should reap the consequences for what he's done.

BORDER SECURITY: "We need to secure the Border and fix the immigration system," President Biden said. He mentioned new technology that better detects drug smuggling, as well as new joint patrols with Mexico and Guatemala to stop human traffickers. This was surprising to hear from the President. For the last year, the administration's actions have basically been the opposite of the President's State of the Union remarks. President Biden has the tools at his disposal to secure the border—like the REMAIN in Mexico Act, the Finish the Wall Act, and the Transparency of Migration Act – he just needs to take action.

CRIME: President Biden urged that instead of defunding the police, the answer is to "fund the police." This is a major turnaround. I agree with this, which is why I proudly cosponsored the Invest to Protect Act, a bill that makes critical investments in local police departments for training, body cameras, mental health resources, recruitment, and retention that are needed resources for our local communities.

INFLATION: While there was no talk of inflation being a result of overspending, President Biden did call out the ocean carriers that are driving up prices due to port backlogs and unfair shipping practices. I know this impacts more than just ocean carriers and port employees, but its effects reach all the way to consumers, manufacturers, family farms, and small businesses in South Dakota. That is why I led the Ocean Shipping Reform Act that passed the House in December and is on track to pass in the Senate soon. The quicker this gets signed into law by the President, the sooner American companies, producers, and consumers will start to feel some relief of high prices.

There is a lot that Congress—as well as the President—can be working on to get us through the crises we are facing as a nation. President Biden signaled he would support legislation that both parties can agree on – time will tell if that proves to be true.

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South Dakota Governor

Kristi Noem



South Dakota: *Under God, the People Rule*

Two Years Later...

They say hindsight is 20-20. Looking back at the year 2020 in hindsight, we now can say that South Dakota consistently made the right decisions during the pandemic.

After all, our path has led us to the strongest economy in America, and we took care of people along the way. But with the two-year anniversary of COVID in South Dakota coming up, I want to dive deeper into how I made those pandemic-related decisions at the time I made them – without the benefit of hindsight.

Melissa Klemann, our long-time health policy advisor, walked into a staff meeting on March 10 of that year and informed me that the first COVID cases had arrived, as well as our first COVID-related death. The news was bleak, and we did not know what was next.

I focused on what we did know. We had prepared for the virus for nearly two months. Our emergency operations center would help us monitor the situation and keep South Dakotans informed. And I knew that we would get through this if we worked together.

I stayed focused on what my authority as Governor was – and that, most importantly, I did not have the authority to close our state down. I advised the people of South Dakota to stay home if they were able, but we did not mandate it. On that first day, I said, “I encourage all South Dakotans to take this seriously. Now is the time to prepare and stay informed.”

As the weeks passed, I focused on absorbing new information. I talked to medical professionals, my state epidemiologist, my general counsel, and other constitutional attorneys. I spent countless hours on the phone – and I hate talking on the phone! I kept gathering science, facts, and data because I knew the people of South Dakota were looking to me as their elected leader for guidance.

We focused on Facts – not Fear. And over the next two years, we stayed true to that approach. We were the only state to never order a single business or church to close. The results speak for themselves.

Those decisions were not easy – but they were simple. They were built on my trust in the people of South Dakota and on the principles that built our great nation.

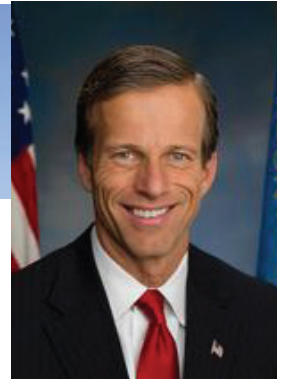
In the two years since, we have seen new variants of the virus come and go. As tends to happen as viruses mutate, COVID has become more transmissible over time – but it has also become less deadly. We have developed treatments and therapeutics. Vaccines became available in record time. And we have learned to adapt the virus – though it took other states much longer to figure that out than South Dakota.

On that first day, I was asked, “How should South Dakotans handle this moving forward?” Today, the answer to that question is straightforward: exactly as we have been. New variants may come in the future. New variants of the flu come every year, too.

I hope that other states can look to South Dakota and realize that they do not have to go too far when responding to any future variants. We have set an example that other states should follow. We have the strongest economy and the best educational outcomes of any state, and we have taken care of people along the way. We balanced freedom and personal responsibility. We focused on Facts – not Fear. In hindsight, I am glad that we did.

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John Thune
U.S. SENATOR - SOUTH DAKOTA



Our National Security Depends on Restoring American Energy Independence

Over the last few weeks, the world has watched in horror as Russia has invaded Ukraine, and the videos and pictures we see on social media and the news are heartbreaking. The people of Ukraine continue to be in my thoughts and prayers, and although this is Ukraine's fight, the implications of Vladimir Putin's unprovoked aggressions against Russia's neighbor are reverberating around the world. I believe that the United States and other free nations must match the resolve of the Ukrainian people and respond with swift and severe consequences for Putin and his cronies.

The lifeblood of Russia's economy is their energy sector, and right now, the United States imports around 700,000 barrels of crude oil and other petroleum products per day from them. Under the Biden administration, U.S. imports of Russian energy have surged, and we can tragically see how Russia is spending its export profits in real time.

The conflict in Ukraine is a timely reminder that energy independence is not only a component of economic security, but it is also critically important to national security. In the United States, we cannot waste another second in terms of getting our energy producers off the bench and into the game. American energy independence, which we had during the last administration, and for the first time in my lifetime, means we don't have to rely on foreign regimes for energy supplies.

Unfortunately, since taking office, President Biden has pursued a radical agenda that is hostile to conventional energy production. He set the tone on his first day in office when he canceled the Keystone XL pipeline – an environmentally responsible pipeline project that was already underway. The project was being paired with \$1.7 billion in private investment in renewable energy to fully offset its operating emissions. Also, the president almost immediately froze new oil and gas leases on federal lands – sending a clear signal to oil and gas producers that his administration would be reluctant to work with them to increase American energy production.

President Biden seems to think that he can hurry along the clean energy future he dreams of by discouraging oil and natural gas production here at home, but frankly, clean energy sources are simply not at the point where they can solely power American homes and our economy. As we are seeing now, the only effect of curbing conventional energy production is to either force Americans to pay more for their energy or rely more on foreign sources, like Russia, for oil and natural gas. The more we rely on energy from abroad, the more vulnerable Americans are to energy price spikes and global shortages. Relying on foreign sources of energy also often means doing business with tyrannical governments and volatile areas of the world.

The only acceptable American energy policy is an all-of-the-above energy policy that invests in both clean energy technologies and conventional energy sources. That's the only way to keep energy prices down and ensure that Americans' energy needs are met – no matter what is going on in oil-producing countries around the globe. If the president really wants to lower energy prices for our families, as he indicated in

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his State of the Union address, he could reverse his rejection of the Keystone XL pipeline, which would be a much-welcome recognition that liquid fuels will be part of meeting our domestic energy needs well into the future. He can also unlock our abundant energy reserves here in the United States by allowing responsible development on federal lands.

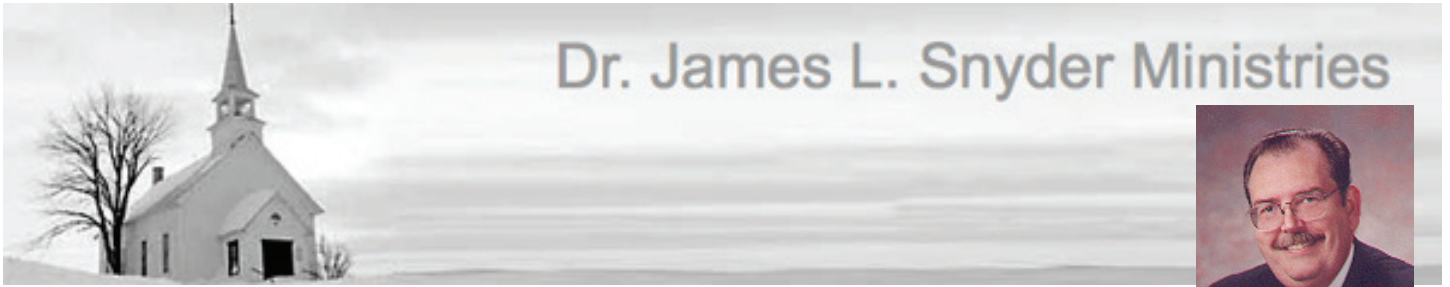
I am calling on President Biden to get serious about leveraging American agriculture as an energy solution, specifically restoring integrity to the Renewable Fuel Standard. This means not only setting robust blending targets and rejecting unnecessary and counterproductive small refinery exemptions, but also approving advanced fuels from corn kernel fiber and restoring the year-round sale of E15. These measures, and others like them, combined with clean-energy investment, would help lower energy prices now and in the future – and help put our nation on a path to long-term, full energy independence. It's the best decision President Biden could make for American families struggling with high energy prices, and it's the best decision he could make for the long-term security of our country.

I hope that the president will rethink his hostility to conventional energy production and spend the next year of his administration embracing the kind of all-of-the-above energy strategy our nation needs.

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One Mouth Too Many Words



I read somewhere where the average woman speaks 20,000 words a day, and the average man speaks 7,000 words a day. I'm not sure if that's true because I never believe everything I read, particularly on my computer, unless I write it.

If this is true, who came up with it and how did they get to this conclusion?

I can't remember any day in my life when I spoke 7,000 words. At least out loud. I probably thought that many words, but they didn't all touch my tongue.

The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is a different story. As long as we have been married, I have never tried to count how many words she spoke on any single day. So keeping up is very difficult for someone like me. In its use.

Usually, when she has something to say she says it and it turns out to be true.

A friend of mine once told me that in his church many years ago, he had a woman he described as someone who never entertained an unspoken thought. I'm sure she was a delight to be around. I might know some people just like that.

If I, for example, spoke 7,000 words on any given day, I would be exhausted by the end of that day. So what in the world would I use those 7,000 words to say? And, to whom?

If I spoke 7,000 words a day, that would be about five words a minute for 24 hours. I'm not sure that's something I could ever do.

Most people have a lot to say, but what they say doesn't really mean a lot. And, not just politicians.

My maternal grandfather was very selective when it came to speaking. It took him quite a while to get a sentence out, and he never used a word that wasn't necessary. I sometimes couldn't understand what he was saying, but he would never repeat himself. But when I asked him to repeat himself, he would just look at me and smile one of his grandfatherly smiles.

Having something to say is very important. The trouble is most of what people have to say isn't important.

There's the other side to this: sometimes what I say gets me into trouble. I may be meaning one thing, but the person listening may understand it entirely differently. This has been my trouble throughout the years.

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When I'm silent, I rarely get into trouble. When I open my mouth and start speaking, I get into trouble. Sometimes speaking is automatic, and I don't realize what I'm saying out loud. Keeping my thoughts to myself has been a hard discipline for me throughout the years.

Recently, The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage was coughing a little bit, and finally said to me, "My throat is very sore today."

Not realizing that my mouth was open and expelling words, I said, "That's strange because my ears are sore today."

Looking at me, I realized I had said that out loud. I said it out loud so that she could hear it, but I didn't want her to hear it. Her stare taught me a valuable lesson at that time.

I was now in trouble, and it was because of the words I said out loud.

After being married for over 50 years, you would think I would have mastered the skill of thinking but not speaking. I'm still working on that.

There is also the situation where you don't get enough words out.

The Pennsylvania Dutch have a saying, "Throw Papa down the stairs..." then they pause for a moment and finish it by saying, "... his hat."

If you don't get the last part of that sentence, you may end up throwing Papa down the stairs, which is not what that sentence is all about. I have trouble hearing the whole sentence at times, and because of that, I can't remember how many Papa's I've thrown down the stairs. (Sorry about that, Papa.)

I have noticed there doesn't seem to be a direct connection between my thoughts and my tongue. If only they could get together and stay on the same subject, I would not get into so much trouble.

So, when The Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage is exercising her 20,000 words per day, I can only process 7,000 of those words. So the problem I face is, which words am I going to process?

I have trouble with my 7,000 words a day. I can't imagine how anybody of the opposite gender can manage 20,000 words a day every day of the week.

To choose the right words, I have to listen to the words that have been coming my way. I don't always get it right. I try, and I'm getting better at it, but I still fail.

While thinking about this I was reminded of a very important passage of Scripture. "27 He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. 28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding" (Proverbs 17:27-28).

According to this, the more a person knows the less he speaks. This has been rather an important assessment of people. It's the people who are silent most of the time that probably no more than the people that are talking most of the time.

EARTHTALK ™



It's going to get harder and harder to find Nemo and other clown fish as the world's living coral reefs become more and more scarce. Credit: George Becker, Pexels.

Dear EarthTalk: How are the world's coral reefs doing these days? I haven't heard much about them lately despite all the recent talk about climate change's ill effects.
— Jo. S., Bowie, MD

Coral reefs are being hit by climate change in just about every way possible. Wildfire, drought and other land-based climate disasters have captured global headlines, but coral reefs have been bleaching at record levels, and as such their future is uncertain. The science of climate change's impact on coral reefs is simple. As humans pump greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, the ocean acts as a carbon sink, absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂) and dissolving it into acid. As a result, ocean acidity has increased by about 25 percent since the early 19th century, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). That acidity is incredibly harmful to coral reefs. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), ocean acidification "decreases growth rates and structural integrity" of coral skeletons, damaging their ability to support the diversity of life that makes up a reef ecosystem.

One of the most immediate threats to coral is ocean temperature increases. Coral reefs exist only in narrow bands of water that stay within a moderate temperature range, not too hot or cold. Even moderate temperature increases can cause thermal stress that contributes to coral bleaching and infectious disease. The ocean has warmed 1.3 degrees (F) since the Industrial Revolution, meaning many reefs are stuck in dangerously hot water. The stress on reef creatures has been immense. When coral polyps—small, anemone-like animals that form the living base of reefs—get stressed, they expel the symbiotic algae that grows on them and provides them with nutrients. This is what's called coral bleaching. With no algae to feed coral and give it its color, the abandoned coral turns white. That doesn't necessarily mean it's dead, but with no nutrient supply its ability to grow and fight off diseases is significantly hampered.

Warming water also causes stronger and bigger storms, which can destroy entire reef systems as they pass. Hurricane Dorian hit the Bahamas in 2019 and destroyed 30 percent of the islands' coral reefs. In 2005, Hurricane Rita caused extensive damage to coral reefs in the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary off the coast of Texas. Research suggests some storms may at times be beneficial for coral reefs by lowering water temperature. The influx of cool water can reduce heat stress on polyps, according to the Reef Resilience Network. But that temporary relief isn't enough to make up for long-term warming.

As surface temperatures increase, scientists hope that coral reefs might be able to slowly move themselves into cooler water—or that deep-water reefs already exist undiscovered. Researchers in Tahiti announced in February 2022 that they had found a nearly two-mile-long healthy coral reef in uncharacteristically deep water, leading to speculation that more deep-water reefs might exist in unexplored areas.

Still, the rate of human-caused warming far outpaces the speed at which coral reefs can move. Several start-ups and labs around the world are developing small, human-made coral systems, which could eventually be deposited in the ocean and grow into full reefs. But that technology is still a long way away. Until then, cutting emissions by driving less, using energy-efficient appliances and divesting from fossil fuel companies is the best way individuals can look out for the future of coral reefs.

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South Dakota COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

57

Active Cases

3,754
-1,594

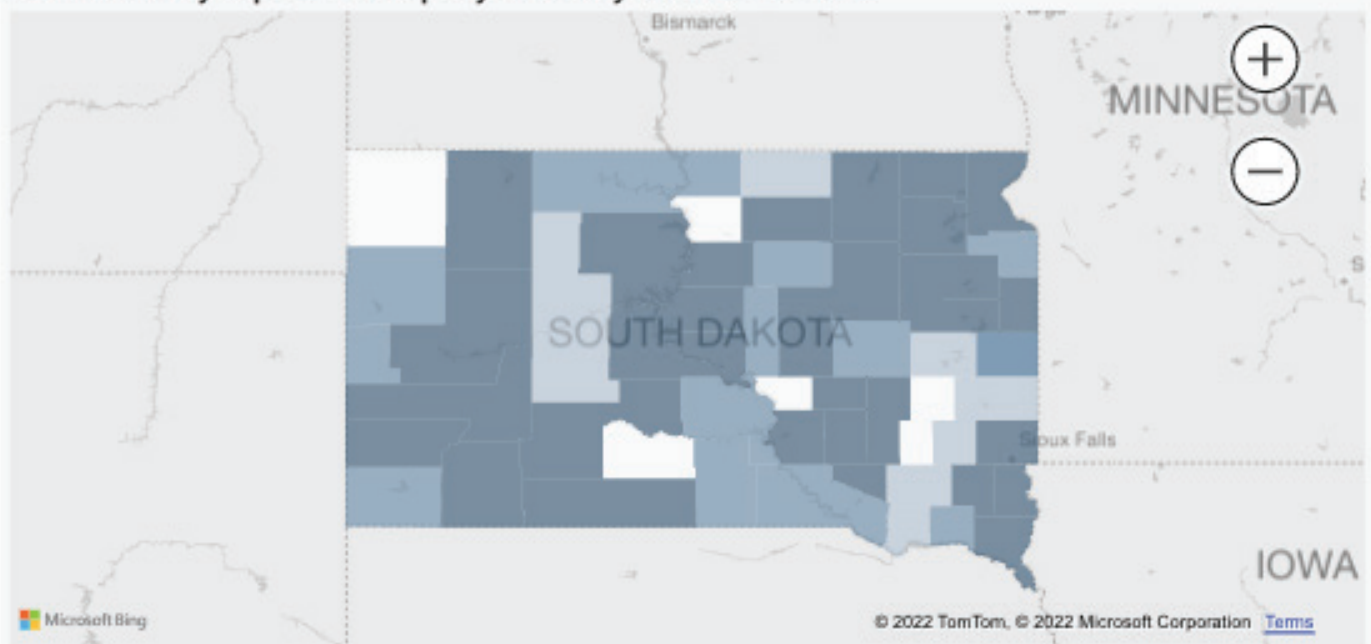
Recovered Cases

229,695

Currently Hospitalized

127

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



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

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

236,276

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

7.9%

2/24/2022 - 3/2/2022

Total Tests

2,101,802

Ever Hospitalized

10,580

Deaths Among Cases

2,827

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

423%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

169%

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

12%

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Brown County COVID-19 Report

New Confirmed and Probable Cases

3

Active Cases

218
-73

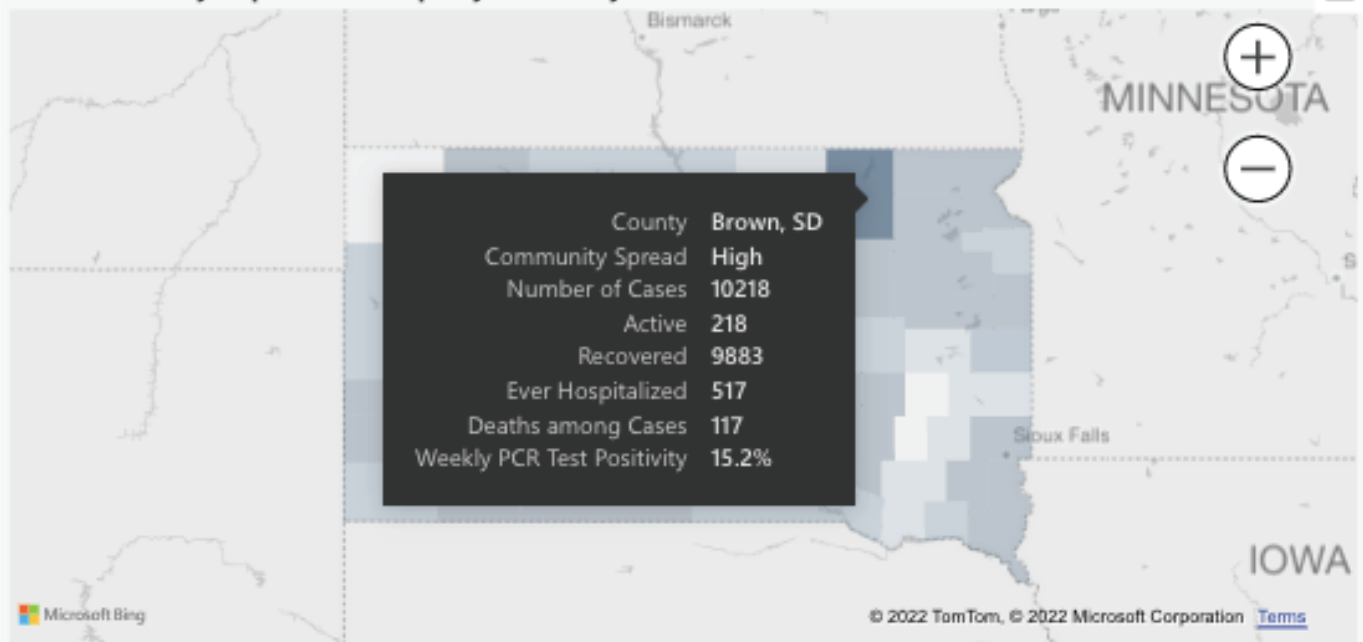
Recovered Cases

9,883

Currently Hospitalized

127

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread ● Low ● Moderate ● Substantial ● High

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

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases

10,218

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days

8.7%

2/24/2022 - 3/2/2022

Total Tests

101,022

Ever Hospitalized

517

Deaths Among Cases

117

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)

423%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)

169%

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)

12%

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Day County COVID-19 Report

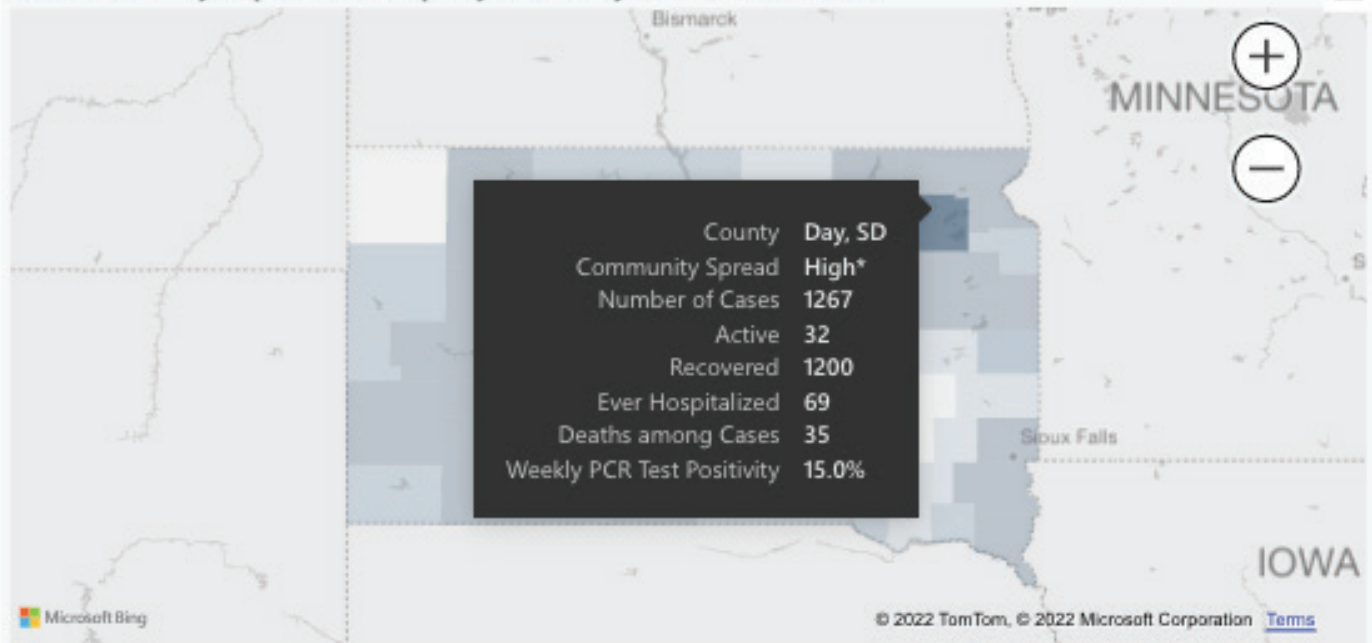
New Confirmed and Probable Cases
1

Active Cases
32
-7

Recovered Cases
1,200

Currently Hospitalized
127

Community Spread Map by County of Residence



Community Spread Low Moderate Substantial High

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

More information on U.S COVID-19 Community levels can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>

Total Confirmed and Probable Cases
1,267

PCR Test Positivity Rate, Last 7 Days
11.5%
2/24/2022 - 3/2/2022

Total Tests
16,556

Ever Hospitalized
69

Deaths Among Cases
35

% Progress (January Goal: 44233 Tests)
423%

% Progress (February Goal: 44233 Tests)
169%

% Progress (March Goal: 44233 Tests)
12%

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COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

Currently Hospitalized	-44	127
Deaths Among Cases	+25	2827
Active Cases		3754
Ever Hospitalized		10580
Recovered Cases		229695
Total Cases		236276

SEX OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Sex	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
Female	124898	1285
Male	111378	1542

VARIANT CASES OF COVID-19 IN SOUTH DAKOTA

COVID-19 Variant	# of Cases
Delta (B.1.617.2 & AY lineages)	1528
Omicron (B.1.1.529 & BA lineages)	713
Alpha (B.1.1.7)	176
Gamma (P.1)	4
Beta (B.1.351)	2

AGE GROUP OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Age Range with Years	# of Cases	# of Deaths Among Cases
0-9 years	15799	2
10-19 years	28685	2
20-29 years	41471	13
30-39 years	40171	49
40-49 years	33168	81
50-59 years	30370	214
60-69 years	25018	458
70-79 years	13092	664
80+ years	8502	1344

RACE/ETHNICITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA COVID-19 CASES

Race/Ethnicity	# of Cases	% of Cases
Asian / Pacific Islander	3246	1%
Black	5805	2%
Hispanic	10140	4%
Native American	30045	13%
Other	2004	1%
Unknown	4684	2%
White	180352	76%

Groton Area COVID-19 Report

Groton Area School District

Active COVID-19 Cases

Updated March 4, 2022; 9:37 AM

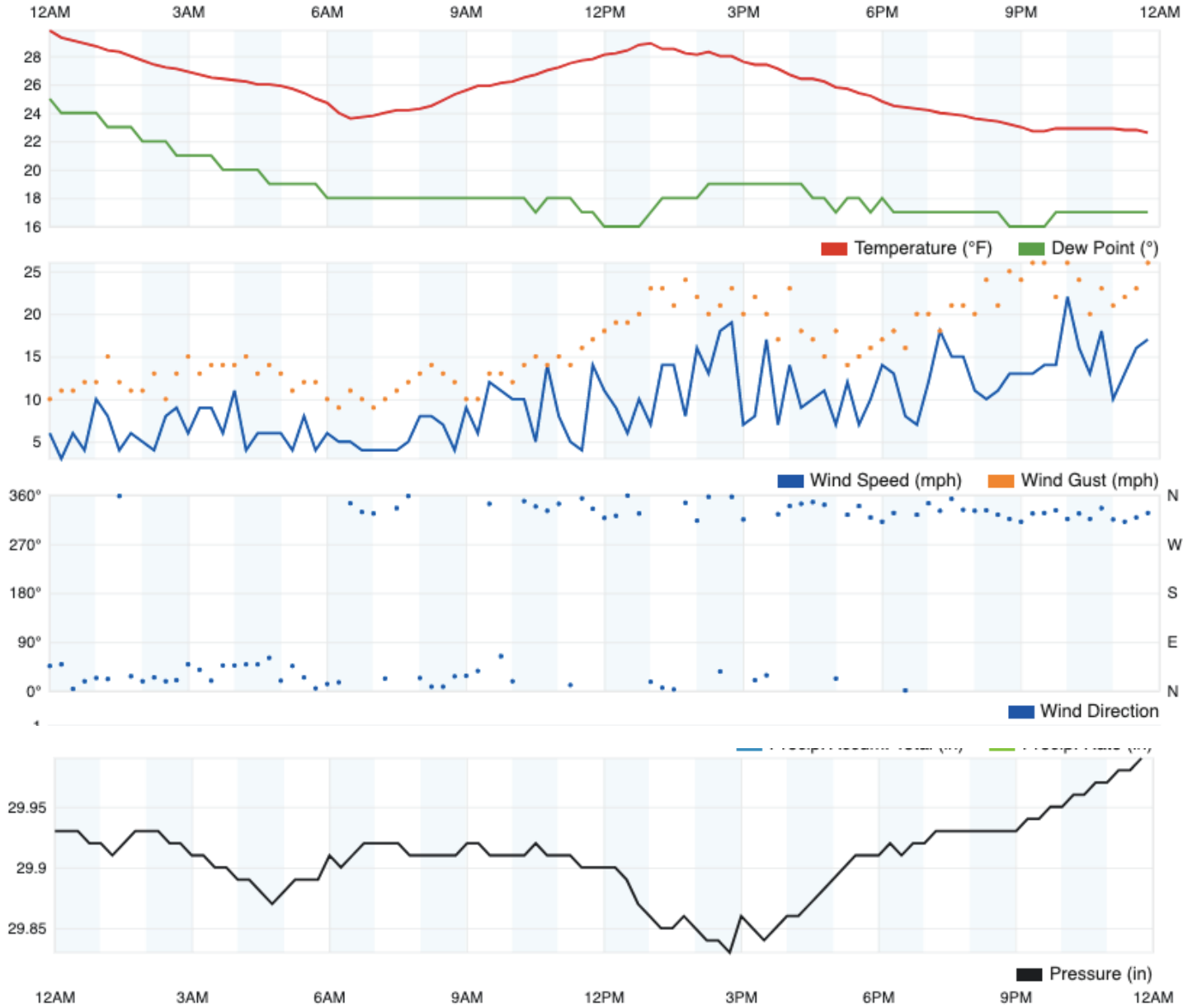
Same number as last week

J	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	1	1	S	T
K	G										0	1	2	t	o
														a	t
														f	a
														f	i
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Change	0	0	-1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	+1	0	0	0

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today



Mostly Cloudy and Blustery then Mostly Cloudy

High: 27 °F

Tonight



Decreasing Clouds

Low: 9 °F

Monday



Sunny

High: 34 °F

Monday Night



Mostly Clear

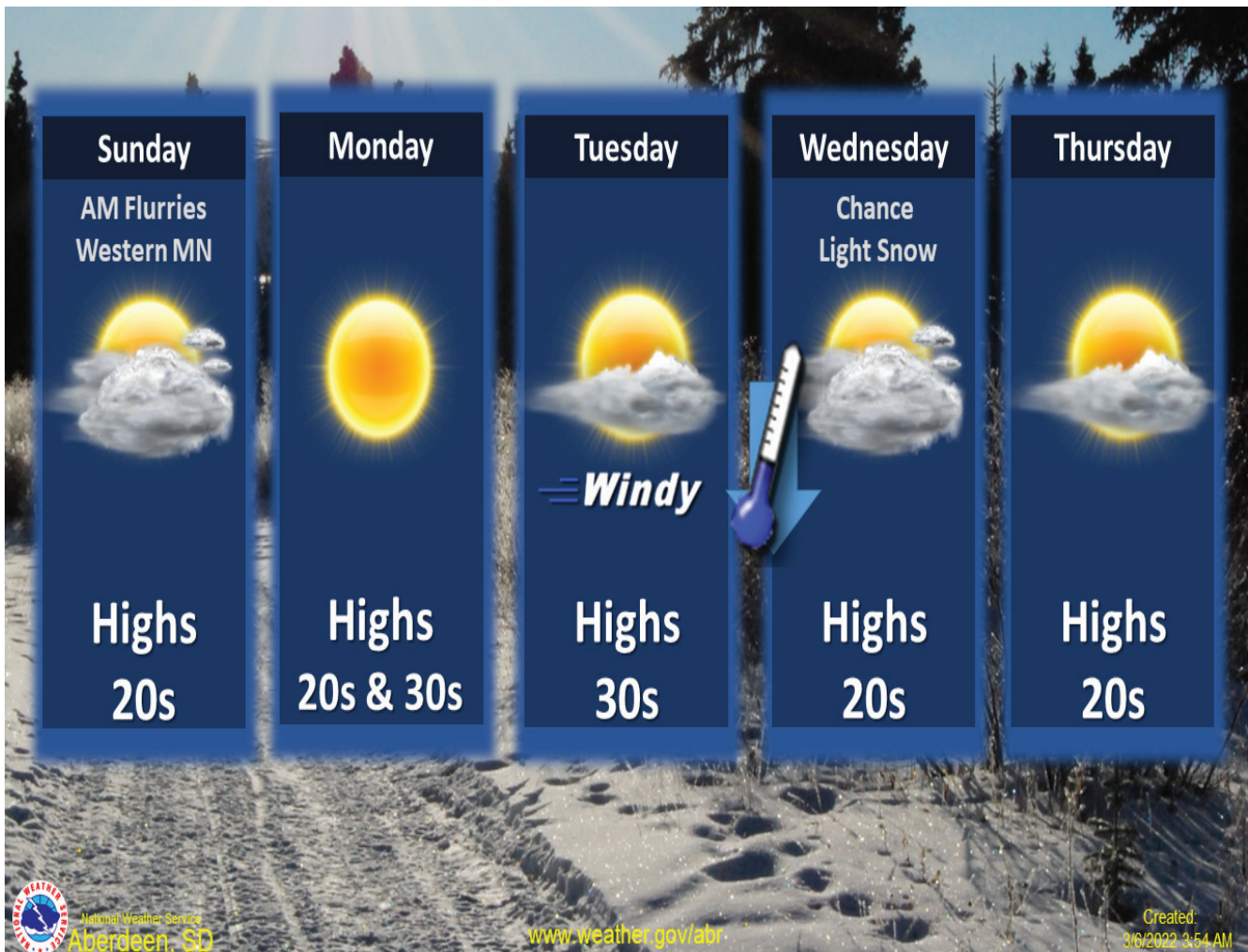
Low: 20 °F

Tuesday



Partly Sunny and Breezy

High: 34 °F



It will remain cold through the next several days with very little if any precipitation

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Today in Weather History

March 6, 1987: Twenty-eight cities in the north-central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Pickstown, South Dakota, was the hot spot in the nation with a reading of 83 degrees. The high of 71 at Saint Cloud, Minnesota, smashed their previous record by 21 degrees.

March 6, 2000: A grass fire of unknown origin was exacerbated by dry conditions and strong winds, burning 1500 acres of grassland northwest and north of Brandon in Minnehaha County. The fire threatened several homes, but no homes were damaged, although farmland and some equipment burned. In a separate event the same day, a controlled burn went out of control, exacerbated by the conditions and strong winds. The fire caused one fatality and one injury. The damage was confined to grassland.

1962: The strongest nor'easter of this century struck the Mid-Atlantic Region on March 5-9, 1962. It is known as the "Ash Wednesday Storm" and caused over \$200 million (1962 dollars) in property damage and major coastal erosion from North Carolina to Long Island, New York. In New Jersey alone, it was estimated to have destroyed or greatly damaged 45,000 homes. The Red Cross recorded that the storm killed 40 people. It hit during "Spring Tide." When the sun and moon are in phase, they produce a higher than average astronomical tide. Water reached nine feet at Norfolk (flooding begins around five feet). Houses were toppled into the ocean, and boardwalks were broken and twisted. The islands of Chincoteague and Assateague, Maryland, were completely underwater. Ocean City, Maryland, sustained significant damage mainly to the south end of the island. Winds up to 70 mph built 40-foot waves at sea. Heavy snow fell in the Appalachian Mountains. Big Meadows, southeast of Luray, recorded Virginia's greatest 24-hour snowfall with 33 inches and the most significant single storm snowfall with 42 inches. (Luray, Virginia reported 33.5 inches on March 2-3, 1994, making this later snow their maximum 24-hour snowfall total.) Roads were blocked, and electrical service was out for several days. Washington and Baltimore fell into the mixed precipitation zone. The Ash Wednesday storm is noteworthy for producing devastating tidal flooding along the Atlantic Coast as well as record snows and the interior of a Virginia. The extremely high tides and massive waves caused tremendous damage - worst in many of the hurricanes that have hit the region. Along the Atlantic Coast tide ran for 2 to 6 ft above average with 20 to 40 ft waves crashing ashore. National Airport received only 4 inches of snow with a liquid equivalent of 1.33 inches. However, close-in suburbs, such as Silver Spring, Maryland and Falls Church, Virginia and received 11 inches of snow. Outlying areas such as Rockville, Maryland received 19 inches of snow, and Leesburg, Virginia, received 20 inches of snow. Other snow totals included 15 inches at Richmond; 23 inches at Culpeper; 26 inches at Charlottesville; 32 inches at Winchester; and 35 inches at Fort Royal, Virginia, and Big Meadows on the Skyline Drive top the list with 42 inches of snow. [Click HERE](#) for more information from the Washington Post.

2014: The Great Lakes saw some of their worst ice cover in nearly four decades because of a frigid winter with months of below-freezing temperatures in large sections of the northern United States, the National Ocean, and Atmospheric Administration said. As of March 6, 2014, 92.2 percent of the five lakes were under ice, breaking a record set in 1973 but still short of the 94.7 percent established in 1979, the federal agency said.

1872 - A cold wave hit the East coast sending the mercury plunging to 8 degrees below zero at Boston. It was the most severe March cold wave in modern history. (David Ludlum)

1900 - A chinook wind blowing down the slopes of the Rockies through Havre MT raised the temperature 31 degrees in just three minutes. (The Weather Channel)

1954 - Florida received its greatest modern-day snowfall of record, with 4.0 inches at the Milton Experimental Station. Pensacola FL equalled their 24-hour record with 2.1 inches of snow. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Twenty-eight cities in the north central U.S. reported record high temperatures for the date. Pickstown SD was the hot spot in the nation with a reading of 83 degrees. The high of 71 at Saint Cloud MN smashed their previous record by 21 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - Wintry weather developed in the Rockies and the Plateau Region as arctic air swept in from the northwest. Blizzard conditions in southeast Idaho claimed the lives of two teenagers. Thunderstorms developed in Utah and Idaho. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

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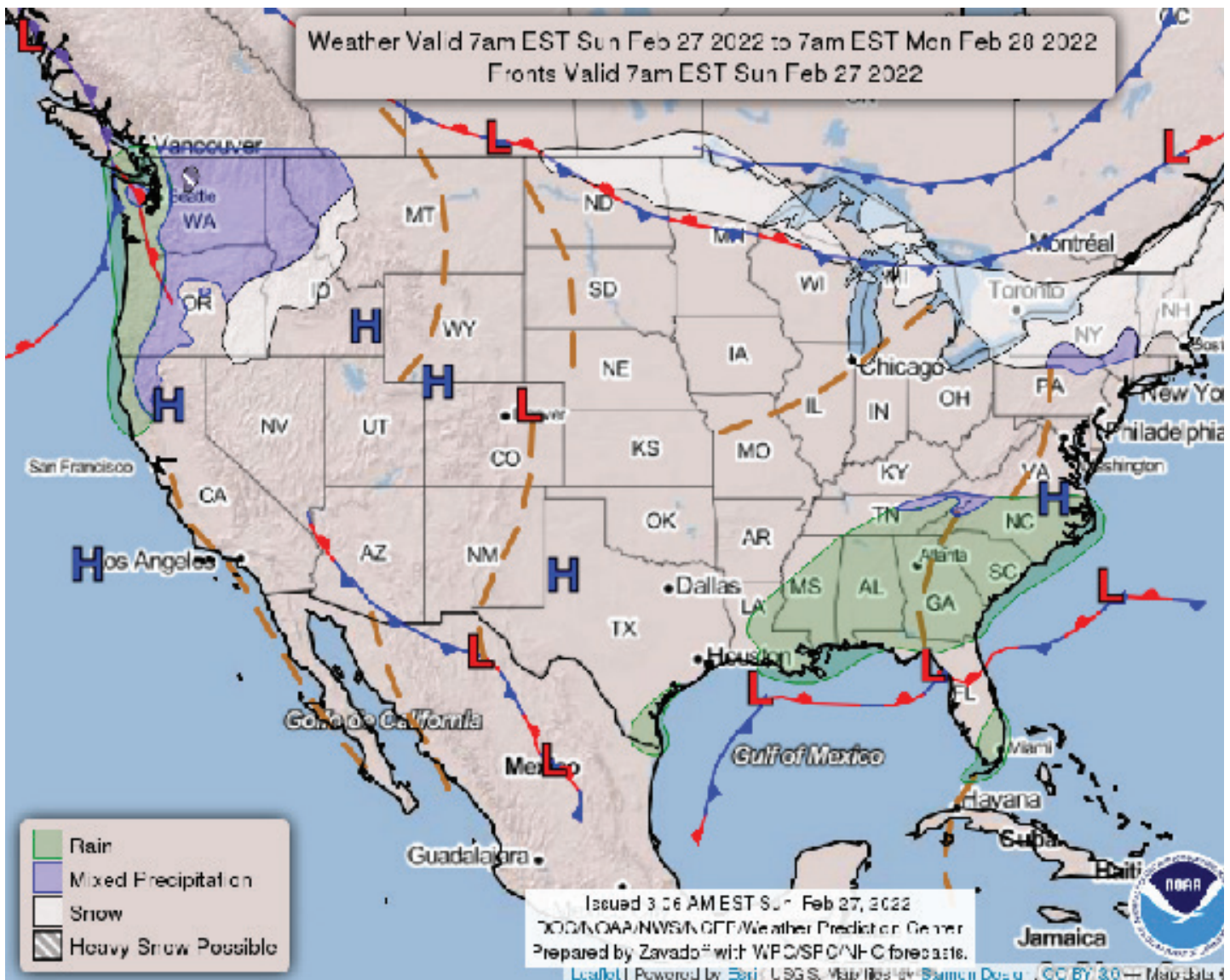
Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 30 °F at 12:00 AM
Low Temp: 22.6 °F at 11:46 PM
Wind: 26 mph at 9:30 PM
Precip: 0.00

Day length: 11 hours, 28 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 69 in 2000
Record Low: -16 in 1899
Average High: 36°F
Average Low: 15°F
Average Precip in Mar.: 0.14
Precip to date in Mar.: 0.00
Average Precip to date: 1.31
Precip Year to Date: 0.97
Sunset Tonight: 6:27:38 PM
Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:57:40 AM



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WHAT DOES IT MATTER?

We often hear that "the Bible is the best-selling book in the world." But having said that has little significance if it has no influence in and on the lives of its owners. It is one thing to own a Bible; it is quite another thing to live by its teachings, accept its plan of salvation and live a life that honors God.

There was a time in the history of the world when it was the most influential book ever written. It was the most honored book that was ever published and, more highly respected than any other book in the world. It was held in high esteem by everyone - whether they knew its Author or not.

With little doubt, the Bible has been relegated to an inferior role in the world. It has been replaced by books that promote scientific knowledge. If a fact cannot be proven, it cannot be believed. Often the factual foundation for what many believe may be badly flawed. They say with certainty, however, that what they believe will be proven someday - it will simply take time. Science, they profess, will prove them right.

It is interesting that many ridicule the Bible for scientific reasons. But consider this: The Bible was never written to teach science, but it is scientifically correct. It was not written to teach history, but its contents are historically accurate. It was not written to teach psychology, but its contents are psychologically sound.

The Bible was written to give us an understanding of God and His truth. "I have more understanding than all my teachers," said the Psalmist. "You have taught me."

Prayer: Help us, Father, to put our trust in You and Your truth. In Your word we find understanding, salvation, and life everlasting. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: I have more understanding than all my teachers. You have taught me. Psalm 119:99a & 119:102b

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2022 Community Events

- 01/30/2022 84th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
01/30/2022 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am – 1pm, Groton Community Center, 109 N 3rd St, Groton,
04/07/2022 Groton CDE
04/09/2022 Lions Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
04/09/2022 Dueling Pianos Baseball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
04/23/2022 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
04/24/2022 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
05/07/2022 Lions Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sales 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
St John's Lutheran Church VBS 9-11am
05/30/2022 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
Transit Fundraiser at the Community Center 4-7pm (Thursday Mid-June)
06/17/2022 SDSU Alumni & Friends Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm Start
06/18/2022 Groton Triathlon
Ladies Invitational at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration 10am Start
07/04/2022 Firecracker Couples Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Registration, 10am Start
(4th of July)
07/10/2022 Lions Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar 11am-1pm at the Groton Legion
Baseball Tourney
07/21/2022 Pro Am Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
Ferney Open Golf Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
How can we... "Love Groton"? United Methodist Church 9:30am
Moonlight Swim at the Swimming Pool 9-11pm for 9th grade to age 20
Golf Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course 11a-1pm
08/05/2022 Wine on Nine at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
08/12/2022 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
United Methodist Church VBS 5-8pm
Groton Firemen Summer Splash Day 4-5pm GHS Parking Lot
09/10/2022 Lions Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday after Labor Day)
6th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 3:30-5pm
09/11/2022 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 12pm
Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
10/14/2022 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am (2nd Friday in October)
10/01/2022 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
10/31/2022 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm (working day on or closest to Halloween)
10/31/2022 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
11/12/2022 Legion Post #39 Turkey Party 6:30pm (Saturday closest to Veteran's Day)
11/24/2022 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm (Thanksgiving)
12/03/2022 Tour of Homes & Holiday Party at Olive Grove Golf Course
Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9am-12pm

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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

04-07-25-29-35

(four, seven, twenty-five, twenty-nine, thirty-five)

Estimated jackpot: \$34,000

Lotto America

01-10-30-36-49, Star Ball: 3, ASB: 4

(one, ten, thirty, thirty-six, forty-nine; Star Ball: three; ASB: four)

Estimated jackpot: \$8.55 million

Mega Millions

Estimated jackpot: \$126 million

Powerball

08-23-37-52-63, Powerball: 13, Power Play: 2

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

Estimated jackpot: \$85 million

Wilson, S. Dakota St. beat Omaha 87-79 in Summit tourney

SIoux FALLS, S.D. (AP) — Douglas Wilson scored 22 points as South Dakota State topped Omaha 87-79 in the quarterfinals of the Summit League Conference Tourney on Saturday night.

Baylor Scheierman added 20 points for the Jackrabbits.

Wilson hit 8 of 10 foul shots. He added seven rebounds.

Matt Dentlinger had seven rebounds for South Dakota State (28-4). Alex Arians added eight rebounds.

Frankie Fidler had 34 points for the Mavericks (5-25). Felix Lemetti added 13 points. Akol Arop had 10 points and seven rebounds.

Saturday's Scores

The Associated Press

BOYS PREP BASKETBALL=

SDHSAA SoDak 16=

Class AA=

State Qualifier Game 1=

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 57, Sturgis Brown 19

Yankton 47, Aberdeen Central 44

State Qualifier Game 2=

Harrisburg 85, Spearfish 46

Mitchell 64, Rapid City Stevens 52

State Qualifier Game 3=

Sioux Falls Lincoln 47, Brandon Valley 40

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 79, Huron 51

State Qualifier Game 4=

Sioux Falls Jefferson 79, Pierre 74

Sioux Falls Washington 70, Watertown 63, OT

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Some high school basketball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Live updates: Erdogan urges cease-fire in call with Putin

By The Associated Press undefined

The latest developments on the Russia-Ukraine war:

ISTANBUL — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office says he has called for an urgent cease-fire in Ukraine in a telephone conversation with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In a statement following Sunday's one-hour call, the Turkish presidency said Erdogan had urged a halt to fighting to "address humanitarian concerns" and "seek a political solution" to the conflict. The war is now in its 11th day.

Erdogan called for the opening of humanitarian corridors and a peace agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

Turkey has extensive ties with both Russia and Ukraine and has sought to place itself as a mediator. It has invited both to a diplomatic forum in Antalya next week.

Erdogan's office said he told Putin that he was "ready to make every contribution" to resolving the crisis.

WARSAW, Poland — Poland's border guard agency says that over 922,000 refugees have crossed the border from Ukraine since Feb. 24, when Russia launched its invasion.

The agency said on Twitter that a record one-day number of over 129,000 crossed into Poland on Saturday, and almost 40,000 between midnight and 7 a.m. on Sunday.

A nation of some 38 million people, Poland is receiving the largest number of refugees among Ukraine's neighbors. Some who entered Poland have continued to other countries.

The head of the United Nations' refugee agency said Sunday that more than 1.5 million refugees have crossed from Ukraine into neighboring countries since Russia invaded.

SIRET, Romania — Romania's border police say more than 227,000 Ukrainian citizens have entered Romania in total since the crisis began and more than 155,000 of them have already left the country.

During a visit on Saturday to Romania's northern border at Siret, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis said that "no Ukrainian will be denied entry into Romania."

He said Romanian authorities believe that the situation "will continue for a long time, and the complications will worsen." The president added: "We believe that this humanitarian catastrophe will spread, that a lot of help will be needed here, but also in Ukraine."

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis says he has dispatched two cardinals to Ukraine, a highly unusual move.

The pontiff said Sunday that "the Holy See is willing to do everything to put itself in service for peace." The papal almsgiver, Cardinal Konrad Krajewski, has been dispatched with aid, along with Cardinal Michael Czerny, who is head of the papal office that deals with migration, charity, justice and peace.

Francis did not say where exactly the cardinals had gone, but said they represented him and all Christian people with the message that "war is madness."

Referring to Ukraine as "that martyred country," Francis called for a cessation of violence, the establishment of humanitarian corridors and a return to negotiations.

"In Ukraine, rivers of blood and tears are flowing. This is not just a military operation, but a war that sows death, destruction and misery," he said in his traditional Sunday blessing.

HELSINKI -- The top U.S. military officer says Ukrainian soldiers and civilians alike have put up an "extraordinarily courageous" fight since the Russian invasion.

Gen. Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke Sunday during a visit to an air base in Amari, Estonia. He is visiting the three Baltic nations to pledge U.S. and NATO support to Estonia, Latvia

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and Lithuania, former Soviet republics that border Russia.

Milley said that "the will of the Ukrainian people, the importance of their national leadership and the fighting skills of the Ukrainian army has come through loud and clear."

He said Ukrainians have put up "an extraordinarily courageous and brave fight" and "they've been doing very, very well. But it's a little bit early to draw any definitive lessons."

Milley said the U.S. currently has no indications that Moscow is planning to attack on the Baltic countries and "we want to make sure it stays that way."

LVIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is pushing his call for foreign countries to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine.

Establishing a no-fly zone would risk escalating the conflict by involving foreign militaries directly. Although the United States and many Western countries have backed Ukraine with weapons shipments, they have sent no troops.

Zelenskyy said in a video address on Sunday that "the world is strong enough to close our skies."

NATO countries have ruled out policing a no-fly zone, which would bar all unauthorized aircraft from flying over Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin said Saturday that Moscow would consider any third-party declaration of a no-fly zone over Ukraine as "participation in the armed conflict."

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel's prime minister says his country will continue to assist in finding a diplomatic solution to the Ukraine crisis, even if the chances for success are few.

Naftali Bennett spoke Sunday to a meeting of his Cabinet, hours after he returned from a surprise meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, where the two discussed the war with Ukraine. He then traveled to Germany where he met Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Bennett revealed no details from his talks with Putin, but called the country's mediation efforts "our moral duty." Earlier, his office said he and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy spoke by phone Sunday morning, the third such call between the two leaders over the past day.

Bennett also told his Cabinet Israel was readying for a wave of Jewish immigration from Ukraine. Israel is also preparing to allow entry to a small number of non-Jewish Ukrainians fleeing the conflict.

Israel is one of the few countries that has good working relations with both Russia and Ukraine.

LVIV, Ukraine — An official in one of Ukraine's pro-Russia separatist region says Russian forces will observe a temporary cease-fire Sunday in two Ukrainian cities. An agreement to allow civilians to evacuate collapsed a day earlier amid continued shelling and the flight of refugees to neighboring nations.

Eduard Basurin, a spokesman for the military in separatist-held Donetsk, said safe passage corridors for residents of the besieged port city of Mariupol and the city of Volnovakha would reopen Sunday. He did not say for how long nor whether a cease-fire would accompany the evacuation.

Ukrainian officials confirmed that evacuations from Mariupol would take place starting from 12 p.m. local time. Pavlo Kyrylenko, head of the Donetsk regional military administration, said a ceasefire would be in effect between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m.

BERLIN -- The head of the United Nations' refugee agency says that more than 1.5 million refugees have crossed from Ukraine into neighboring countries since Russia invaded.

Filippo Grandi, the U.N. high commissioner for refugees, tweeted on Sunday that it is "the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II."

His agency didn't immediately give a more precise update on the refugee figures. Grandi is visiting countries that border Ukraine.

PRAGUE — Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty says it has suspended its operations in Russia after Moscow intensified a crackdown on what it deems to be "fake" reports and tax authorities initiated bankruptcy

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proceedings against it.

The U.S.-funded, Prague-based broadcaster's president and chief executive, Jamie Fly, said "this is not a decision that RFE/RL has taken of its own accord, but one that has been forced upon us by the Putin regime's assault on the truth."

The broadcaster, which has had a physical presence in Russia since 1991, plans to continue reporting on Russia and the war in Ukraine from abroad.

The announcement came after Russia on Friday passed a law foreseeing prison sentences of up to 15 years for spreading what is deemed to be fake information about its armed forces.

In addition, RFE/RL said that Russian authorities initiated bankruptcy proceedings on Friday. It said it is seeing "the culmination of a years-long pressure campaign against RFE/RL."

BERLIN — Austrian energy company OMV says it has decided not to pursue any future investments in Russia and is starting a "strategic review" of its stake in the Yuzhno Rosskoye gas and oil field, which could result in its exit.

OMV said in a statement late Saturday that "Russia will no longer be a core region" in its business. CEO Alfred Stern said that "the war in Ukraine is a tragic and perilous situation that is causing great suffering for many and that we view with the utmost consternation."

OMV holds a 24.99% stake in Yuzhno Rosskoye. It said that the review it has now launched "comprises all options including possibilities to divest or exit." It said that it expects to take costs of 500 million-800 million euros (\$547 million-875 million).

It said it also will take a charge of 987 million euros related to financing for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline, whose certification was suspended by Germany last month, which "may be unrecoverable."

The Austrian company has already ended negotiations with Russia's Gazprom about the potential purchase of a stake in the Urengoy gas field in Siberia.

CHISINAU, Moldova - U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is in Moldova pledging America's support to the small Western-leaning former Soviet republic that is coping with an influx of refugees from Ukraine and warily watching Russia's intensifying war with its neighbor.

Blinken was meeting on Sunday with senior Moldovan officials who are appealing for international assistance in dealing with more than 120,000 refugees from Ukraine that it is now hosting while also seeking security reassurances against potential Russian aggression. More than 230,000 people have fled into Moldova from Ukraine since the war began 11 days ago.

Blinken said Moldova's welcoming of refugees is an inspiration to the world.

"We admire the generosity of hospitality, the willingness to be such good friends to people who are in distress, and, indeed, I want to do everything we can to help you deal with the burden that this has imposed," he said.

Russia already has troops in the country of 2.6 million that are stationed in the disputed territory of Transnistria and are being closely watched as Russian President Vladimir Putin presses ahead with the invasion of Ukraine. Although it has no plans to try to become a member of NATO, Moldova formally applied to join the European Union just three days ago in a fast-track bid to bolster its ties with the West.

LONDON — British military officials on Sunday compared Russia's tactics in Ukraine to those used in Chechnya and Syria, where cities were bombarded and heavily damaged after Russian forces faced unexpected resistance from their defenders.

The strength of Ukrainian resistance continues to surprise Russian forces and they have responded by targeting populated areas, including the cities of Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Mariupol, Britain's Ministry of Defense said in its daily intelligence briefing.

"This is likely to represent an effort to break Ukrainian morale," the ministry said in a statement. "Russia has used similar tactics in Chechnya in 1999 and Syria in 2016, employing both air and ground-based

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munitions.”

Russia’s advance has been slowed by attacks on its supply lines, the ministry said. As a result, there is a “realistic possibility” that Russia is now trying to disguise fuel trucks to reduce losses.

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel’s prime minister has returned from a surprise trip to Russia where he met President Vladimir Putin and discussed the war in Ukraine.

Naftali Bennett flew to Moscow on Saturday, where he met the Russian leader for three hours. The trip was made “in coordination and with the blessing” of the Biden administration, according to Bennett’s office.

Bennett spoke to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy after his meeting with Putin. He then flew to Germany to meet Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

Bennett landed in Israel on Sunday morning and is expected to convene his Cabinet for its weekly meeting later in the day.

Bennett’s trip was the latest attempt at diplomacy in the Russia-Ukraine crisis. Israel is one of the few countries that has good working relations with both Russia and Ukraine. Israel has delivered humanitarian aid to Ukraine, but also maintains ties with Moscow to make sure that Israeli and Russian warplanes do not come into conflict in neighboring Syria.

KYIV, Ukraine — A Ukrainian paramedic who was shot while on her way to evacuate injured people from the outskirts of Kyiv was buried in the country’s capital on Saturday.

Valentyna Pushych was known locally as “Romashka,” which means “Daisy.” A friend described her as a “daredevil,” who was never afraid to “get under bullets.”

She was always “running to the most dangerous places” to rescue the injured, Nataliia Voronkova said.

Pushych used to be a well-paid worker at a transport and logistic company. But in 2016, she joined the army as a paramedic in response to the separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine.

Several women, including some dressed in camouflage jackets, cried as her body lay in a casket at a service. A portrait of Pushych was on a wall nearby.

At the cemetery, red roses were placed on Pushych’s body. After she was buried, the dirt was covered with the flag of Ukraine.

Ukraine civilians race to evacuate under 11-hour cease-fire

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian authorities prepared Sunday for a second attempt to evacuate civilians from a southern city pounded by a week-long Russian attack as economic pressure on Moscow intensified and diplomats shuttled around Europe to try to end the war.

Evacuations from the port city of Mariupol were scheduled to begin at noon local time (10 a.m. GMT) during a 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. local ceasefire, Ukrainian military authorities said. A similar cease-fire planned there and in the nearby city of Volnovakha collapsed Saturday, trapping women, children and older under more shelling and aerial bombardment by Russian forces.

The revived announcement came after Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and a Russian-speaking member of his Cabinet traveled to Moscow and spoke with Ukraine’s president in hopes of brokering a broader deal to stop the fighting, now in its 11 day.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spent the weekend visiting NATO member nations in Eastern Europe that have seen 1.5 million refugees stream across their borders since Russia invaded Ukraine on Feb. 24. The head of the U.N. refugee agency called the exodus “the fastest-growing refugee crisis since World War II.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reiterated a request for foreign protectors to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine. Russian President Vladimir Putin warned Saturday that Moscow would consider a third-party declaration to close Ukrainian airspace to be a hostile act, and the West so far has rebuffed Zelenskyy’s pleas, fearing a confrontation with Russia.

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"The world is strong enough to close our skies," Zelenskyy said in a video address on Sunday.

As Russian forces surrounded several Ukrainian cities and maintained a convoy outside the capital, Kyiv, Zelenskyy appeared on television Saturday night wearing what has become a habitual military green T-shirt and rallied his people to remain defiant.

"Ukrainians in all of our cities that the enemy has entered -- go on the offensive!" Zelenskyy said. "You should take to the streets! You should fight! ... It is necessary to go out and drive this evil out of our cities, from our land."

After the cease-fire in Mariupol failed to hold, Russian forces intensified their shelling of the city and dropped massive bombs on residential areas of Chernihiv, a city north of Kyiv, Ukrainian officials said.

In Mariupol, bereft mothers mourned slain children, wounded soldiers were fitted with tourniquets and doctors worked by the light of their cellphones as bleakness and desperation pervaded.

"The city is in a very, very difficult state of siege," Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boychenko told Ukrainian TV. "Relentless shelling of residential blocks is ongoing, airplanes have been dropping bombs on residential areas. The Russian occupants are using heavy artillery, including Grad multiple rocket launchers."

Russian President Vladimir Putin continued to pin the blame for the war on the Ukrainian leadership, slamming their resistance to Russian forces.

"If they continue to do what they are doing, they are calling into question the future of Ukrainian statehood," Putin said Saturday. "And if this happens, it will be entirely on their conscience."

He also hit out at Western sanctions that have crippled Russia's economy and sent the value of its currency tumbling. Meanwhile, more companies are suspending operations in Russia, including Mastercard and Visa.

"These sanctions that are being imposed, they are akin to declaring war," he said during a televised meeting with flight attendants from Russian airline Aeroflot, which on Saturday suspended all international flights except to Belarus. "But thank God, we haven't got there yet."

The World Health Organization on Sunday condemned attacks on healthcare workers in Ukraine, saying it verified at least six such attacks that have killed six people and injured 11 others.

Attacks on healthcare workers are a violation of international humanitarian law, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Twitter.

British military officials on Sunday compared Russia's tactics in Ukraine to those used in Chechnya and Syria, where surrounded cities were pummeled with airstrikes and artillery after Russian forces faced unexpected resistance.

The strength of Ukrainian resistance continues to surprise Russian forces, and they have responded by targeting populated areas, including the cities of Kharkiv, Chernihiv and Mariupol, the U.K. Ministry of Defense said in its daily intelligence briefing.

"This is likely to represent an effort to break Ukrainian morale," the ministry said. "Russia has used similar tactics in Chechnya in 1999 and Syria in 2016, employing both air and ground-based munitions."

The death toll of the conflict is difficult to measure. The U.N. human rights office said at least 351 civilians have been confirmed killed, but the true number is probably much higher. Russian and Ukrainian defense officials have not provided information on their military casualties.

Ukraine's military is vastly outmatched by Russia's, but its professional and volunteer forces have fought back with fierce tenacity. In Kyiv, volunteers lined up Saturday to join the military.

Even in cities that have fallen, there were signs of the resistance Zelenskyy requested.

Onlookers in Chernihiv cheered as they watched a Russian military plane fall from the sky and crash, according to video released by the Ukrainian government. In Kherson, hundreds of protesters waved blue and yellow Ukrainian flags and shouted, "Go home."

But the struggle to enforce temporary ceasefires in Mariupol and Volnovakha on Saturday showed the fragility of efforts to stop the fighting across Ukraine.

A third round of talks between Russia and Ukraine will take place Monday, according to Davyd Arakhamia, a member of the Ukrainian delegation. He gave no additional details, including where they would take place.

Previous meetings were held in Belarus. Those talks led to the ceasefire agreement that failed Saturday

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and was revived Sunday.

Russia has made significant advances in southern Ukraine as it seeks to block access to the Sea of Azov. Capturing Mariupol could allow Moscow to establish a land corridor to Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014 in a move that most other countries considered illegal.

Meanwhile, the head of the Chernihiv region said Russia has dropped powerful bombs on residential areas of the city of the same name, which has a population of 290,000. Vyacheslav Chaus posted a photo online of what he said was an undetonated FAB-500, a 1,100-pound (500-kilogram) bomb.

"Usually this weapon is used against military-industrial facilities and fortified structures," Chaus said.

The West has broadly backed Ukraine, offering aid and weapon shipments and slapping Russia with vast sanctions. But no NATO troops have been sent to Ukraine, leaving Ukrainians to fight Russian troops.

"Ukraine is bleeding, but Ukraine has not fallen," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in a video released Saturday.

Zelensky sought to rally support from U.S. lawmakers on Saturday, speaking to more than 300 members of Congress via a video link. He pleaded for additional help, specifically fighter planes to help secure the skies over Ukraine, even as he insisted Russia was being defeated.

Russian troops were advancing on a third nuclear power plant, Zelenskyy said. They have already taken control of the Zaporizhzhia plant in Ukraine, as well as Chernobyl, the site of the world's worst nuclear disaster.

U.S. President Joe Biden called Zelenskyy early Sunday, Kyiv time, to discuss Russia sanctions and speeding U.S. assistance to Ukraine. The White House said the conversation also covered talks between Russia and Ukraine but did not give details.

Blinken on Sunday was in Moldova, where he pledged support for the western-leaning former Soviet republic that is coping with an influx of refugees and warily watching Russia's moves in Ukraine.

Moldovan officials are appealing for international assistance on the refugee crisis while also seeking security assurances in the event of any Russian aggression. More than 230,000 people have fled into Moldova from Ukraine since the fighting began.

The U.N. said it would increase its humanitarian operations both inside and outside Ukraine, and the Security Council scheduled a meeting for Monday on the worsening situation.

The U.N. World Food Program has warned of an impending hunger crisis in Ukraine, a major global wheat supplier, saying millions will need food aid "immediately."

Foreigners who fled Ukraine team up to help others escape

By CHINEDU ASADU and CARA ANNA Associated Press

Jarred by discriminatory treatment and left to evacuate themselves from Ukraine, people from African, Asian and Latin American countries who succeed in getting out are forming impromptu networks to help thousands of others hoping to flee.

Stepping into the gap was an easy decision for Alexander Somto Orah, 25, a Nigerian student in Ukraine who, like some others, described xenophobia and threats of violence as he approached the border with Poland shortly after Russia's invasion.

Ukrainian border guards "separated Africans, together with Indians, from the rest and directed us to the Romanian border" scores of miles away, Orah said. "They told us that if we try to push our way through, they are going to shoot us." Video shared with The Associated Press shows the confrontation.

United by fear and outrage after days in the freezing weather, the young foreigners started to protest. "We raised our hands and told them we are students and just want to go home," Orah said. Eventually, they were allowed to cross.

Since reaching Poland's capital, Warsaw, he has returned to the border multiple times to help other foreigners leave Ukraine, drawing on his experience.

Almost 80,000 third-country nationals from 138 countries have fled, the International Organization for Migration said Friday.

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Some have reported being denied access to bomb shelters, transportation and even access to consulates of their countries of origin in neighboring countries, the U.N. special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, Tendayi Achiume, said Thursday, calling the racist and xenophobic treatment "life-threatening."

The experiences are shaping the grassroots efforts to help others leave.

Ojonugwa Zakari, 21, a medical student from Nigeria, said she and hundreds of other foreigners remain stuck in Sumy, a city in northeastern Ukraine. As they wake to the sound of shelling, their phones now fill with tips on how to escape: Phone numbers of friendly locals across the border. Guidance on emergency supplies and what documents to show at checkpoints.

"Basically, the basic war advice," said Zakari, who's never been in war before.

She added: "It's no longer about where people are from. People are just trying to make sure that if you're a foreigner in Ukraine, you get to safety."

Ukraine's government has addressed allegations of discrimination against fleeing foreigners amid sharp comments like the one by the African Union continental body, which called dissimilar treatment of Africans "shockingly racist" and in breach of international law.

"Africans seeking evacuation are our friends and need to have equal opportunities to return to their home countries safely," Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba tweeted Wednesday. He later shared on Twitter a hotline number established to help African, Asian and other students wishing to leave.

Within 12 hours, the phone number had been retweeted more than 21,000 times. The following day, however, the hotline rang unanswered.

Other official statements of aid, even from foreigners' home countries, have felt remote as well.

Shortly after Russia's invasion started on Feb. 24, Zimbabwe's government told its citizens in Ukraine to contact their embassy in Germany, on the other side of Poland. Kenya's government suggested its embassy in Austria, similarly far away.

Since then, some countries have announced deals with Ukraine's neighbors to facilitate the entry of their citizens. Others are trying to evacuate those who can't make it out. But the death of an Indian student in Russian shelling in Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city, created new urgency.

Worried students and others have created WhatsApp and Telegram messaging groups for Africans, Brazilians and other populations with large numbers trying to leave. Some platforms offer financial or even mental health assistance.

Faith Chemari said she has helped over 50 Zimbabwean students by coordinating their bus travel toward Poland.

"I was putting students in groups, with boys leaving first, so as to give feedback to the rest of the students on whether it was safe," she said.

Along Ukraine's borders, a global community has begun to gather to welcome exhausted countrymen making their way out. Others inside Ukraine assist travelers to the next destination. "In Odesa, our Azeri people welcomed us and they helped us get to the Moldova border," said Elxan Salmanov Ilham, a 28-year old student from Azerbaijan who fled Kharkiv.

As support grows, some locals in Ukraine's neighboring countries are taking part.

After spending the night at the train station in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, Nigerian student Sanusi Salihu urgently needed food and shelter. He found both from a resident he met shortly after entering Slovakia.

"We are seven in his house," Salihu said. "He just took us all out for lunch (and) ... has been very nice."

Now, Salihu, too, does what he can from his new position of safety, messaging foreigners still in Ukraine.

Russian war in world's 'breadbasket' threatens food supply

By JOSEPH WILSON, SAMY MAGDY, AYA BATRAWY and CHINEDU ASADU Associated Press

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — The Russian tanks and missiles besieging Ukraine also are threatening the food supply and livelihoods of people in Europe, Africa and Asia who rely on the vast, fertile farmlands of the Black Sea region — known as the "breadbasket of the world."

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Ukrainian farmers have been forced to neglect their fields as millions flee, fight or try to stay alive. Ports are shut down that send wheat and other food staples worldwide to be made into bread, noodles and animal feed. And there are worries Russia, another agricultural powerhouse, could have its grain exports upended by Western sanctions.

While there have not yet been global disruptions to wheat supplies, prices have surged 55% since a week before the invasion amid concerns about what could happen next. If the war is prolonged, countries that rely on affordable wheat exports from Ukraine could face shortages starting in July, International Grains Council director Arnaud Petit told The Associated Press.

That could create food insecurity and throw more people into poverty in places like Egypt and Lebanon, where diets are dominated by government-subsidized bread. In Europe, officials are preparing for potential shortages of products from Ukraine and increased prices for livestock feed that could mean more expensive meat and dairy if farmers are forced to pass along costs to customers.

Russia and Ukraine combine for nearly a third of the world's wheat and barley exports. Ukraine also is a major supplier of corn and the global leader in sunflower oil, used in food processing. The war could reduce food supplies just when prices are at their highest levels since 2011.

A prolonged conflict would have a big impact some 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) away in Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer. Millions rely on subsidized bread made from Ukrainian grains to survive, with about a third of people living in poverty.

"Wars mean shortages, and shortages mean (price) hikes," Ahmed Salah, a 47-year-old father of seven, said in Cairo. "Any hikes will be catastrophic not only for me, but for the majority of the people."

Anna Nagurney, a professor of supply chains, logistics and economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, said, "Wheat, corn, oils, barley, flour are extremely important to food security ... especially in the poorer parts of the globe."

With Ukrainian men being called on to fight, she said, "Who's going to be doing the harvesting? Who'd be doing the transportation?"

Egypt's state procurer of wheat, which normally buys heavily from Russia and Ukraine, had to cancel two orders in less than a week: one for overpricing, the other because a lack of companies offered to sell their supplies. Sharp spikes in the cost of wheat globally could severely affect Egypt's ability to keep bread prices at their current subsidized level.

"Bread is extremely heavily subsidized in Egypt, and successive governments have found that cuts to those subsidies are the one straw that should be kept off the camel's back at all costs," Mirette Mabrouk, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, wrote in a recent analysis.

War-ravaged Syria recently announced it would cut spending and ration staples. In nearby Lebanon, where a massive explosion at the Beirut port in 2020 destroyed the country's main grain silos, authorities are scrambling to make up for a predicted wheat shortage, with Ukraine providing 60% of its supply. They are in talks with the U.S., India and Canada to find other sources for a country already in financial meltdown.

Even before the war threatened to affect wheat supplies in sub-Saharan Africa, people in Kenya were demanding #lowerfoodprices on social media as inflation eroded their spending power. Now, they're bracing for worse.

African countries imported agricultural products worth \$4 billion from Russia in 2020, and about 90% was wheat, said Wandile Sihlobo, chief economist for the Agricultural Business Chamber of South Africa.

In Nigeria, flour millers believe a shortage of wheat supplies from Russia would affect the price of products like bread, a common food in Africa's most populous country.

"All of us need to look elsewhere" in the future, said Tope Ogun with Honeywell Flour Mills Plc, one of Nigeria's biggest flour milling companies. "We might not get what we need to, and there is likely going to be an increase in the price."

Nigeria has taken pains to reduce its reliance on Russian grains, with farmers moving to plant more wheat fields to try to meet 70% of the country's demand in five years, said Gambo Sale, national secretary of the Wheat Farmers Association of Nigeria.

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"We have the land, we have the people, we have the money, we have whatever we can need in Nigeria" to grow wheat, he said. "All we need now is time."

The disruption can be felt as far away as Indonesia, where wheat is used to make instant noodles, bread, fried foods and snacks.

Ukraine was Indonesia's second-largest wheat supplier last year, providing 26% of wheat consumed. Rising prices for noodles, in turn, would hurt lower-income people, said Kasan Muhri, who heads the trade ministry's research division.

Ukraine and Russia also combine for 75% of global sunflower oil exports, accounting for 10% of all cooking oils, IHS Markit said.

Raad Hebsi, a wholesale retailer in Baghdad, said he and other Iraqis are bracing to pay more for their cooking oil.

"Once the items stored are sold, we will see an increase in prices of these items," he said. "We will likely purchase alternatives from Turkey, and Turkey will no doubt take advantage of the situation in Ukraine and raise its prices."

Farmers in the United States, the world's leading corn exporter and a major wheat supplier, are watching to see if U.S. wheat exports spike. In the European Union, farmers are concerned about rising costs for livestock feed.

Ukraine supplies the EU with just under 60% of its corn and nearly half of a key component in the grains needed to feed livestock. Russia, which provides the EU with 40% of its natural gas needs, is similarly a major supplier of fertilizer, wheat and other staples.

Spain is feeling the pinch both in sunflower oil, which supermarkets are rationing, and grains for the all-important breeding industry. Those imported grains go to feed some 55 million pigs.

Jaume Bernis, a 58-year-old breeder with 1,200 swine on his farm in northeast Spain, fears the war will further increase the pain his business is facing because of climate change and drought.

Since October, Spanish pork products have been taking a loss from high costs, Bernis said. Those costs are driven by China stockpiling feed for its pigs as it claws its way out of a devastating outbreak of African swine fever.

In the first two days of Russia's assault on Ukraine, the price of grain for animal feed jumped 10% on the open market in Spain.

"We are facing a moment of very elevated costs, and we don't know what lies ahead," Bernis said. "This is another cost of waging a war in the 21st century."

At Ukraine's largest art museum, a race to protect heritage

By BERNAT ARMANGUÉ Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — The director of Ukraine's largest art museum walked its hallways, supervising as staff packed away its collections to protect their national heritage in case the Russian invasion advances west.

In one partially empty gallery of the Andrey Sheptytsky National Museum, employees placed carefully wrapped baroque pieces into cardboard boxes. A few meters away, a group walked down the majestic main staircase carrying a giant piece of sacred art, the 18th century Bohorodchany iconostasis.

"Sometimes the tears are coming because a lot of labor has been put in here. It takes time, energy. You are doing something good, you feel pleased. Today you see empty walls, so it feels bitter, sad. We didn't believe it till the last minute that this could happen," museum General Director Ihor Kozhan said Friday.

The doors of the museum in the western city of Lviv have been closed since Russia's war on Ukraine began on Feb. 24, and heritage sites across the country face danger as the fighting continues. Kozhan said he receives daily calls from other European cultural institutions offering to help as he and his staff race to preserve the museum's works.

Anna Naurobska, the head of the rare manuscripts and books department, said she still doesn't know where to safely store the collection of more than 12,000 items being packed into boxes.

The relocation process and the fear that the collection is in danger in the event of an attack on the city

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overwhelms her.

"This is our story; this is our life. It is very important to us," Naurobska said.

She walked into another room and held up a massive tome, tears forming in her eyes. "It's a Russian book," she said, putting it back on the shelf. "I'm so angry."

Like the museum, other sites in Lviv are rushing to protect works of artistic or cultural importance. The display cabinets at the Museum of the History of Religion are almost empty. Workers are assembling metal containers in the patio to safely store the remaining items before placing them in basements. At the Latin Cathedral, the sculptures have been covered with cardboard, foam and plastic to protect them from possible shrapnel.

Amid the bare walls and shrouded statues, Kozhan lamented the empty museum, which has survived two world wars.

"Museum has to live. People have to be there, and first of all children. They have to learn the basics of their culture," he said.

Watching Ukraine, Bosnians relive the trauma of their war

By SABINA NIKSIC Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — News reports from Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities under unremitting bombardment by the Russian Army have been triggering painful memories among the survivors of the 1990s siege of the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo.

And yet, many have been spending hours on end glued to their TV screens since Russian President Vladimir Putin launched his invasion of Ukraine late last month.

"Not so long ago, we were them," said Amra Muftic who survived the 1992-95 siege, watching news reports showing civilians taking refuge from Russian rocket attacks, shelling and gunfire in basements and metro stations.

"If our experience is anything to go by — and I have a gut feeling that it is — things are about to get much worse," for them, she added.

Bosnian Serb forces laid siege to Sarajevo in the early 1990s, during the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia. Some 350,000 people were trapped, for 46 months, in their multiethnic city, subjected to daily shelling and sniper attacks and cut off from regular access to electricity, food, water, medicine, and the outside world.

More than 11,000 people were killed during the siege, including over 1,000 children. Countless others were wounded.

"We know how they feel. We survived the longest siege in modern history" said Elma Vukotic, an anesthesiologist, as she and her fellow healthcare workers stood earlier this week outside their Sarajevo hospital, clad in their medical robes and holding balloons in the blue and yellow colors of the Ukrainian flag — and, coincidentally, also the Bosnian one. Vukotic said their spontaneous show of solidarity was the least they could do for their Ukrainian colleagues.

"All wars are painful, all attacks against civilians abhorrent, but what is happening to Ukrainians right now is especially traumatic for us because they are so near and in a situation very similar to ours" three decades ago, Vukotic said.

"Television images of pregnant women waiting to give birth in the basement of the Kyiv hospital, hastily converted into an emergency bomb shelter, gave me a strong sense of déjà vu; I know exactly how they feel, how terrified they must be," she added. "Also, I think we all can empathize with how unwilling ordinary Ukrainians were to accept that the war was coming until Russian rockets and bombs started raining down on their homes, schools and hospitals."

The Bosnian war started when Bosnian Serbs, with the help of the Yugoslav army, tried to create ethnically pure territories with the aim of joining neighboring Serbia. More than 100,000 people were killed and 2 million — more than a half of the country's population — were left homeless during the conflict.

The Serb leadership argued throughout the war that multiethnic Bosnia was not a country at all and that, along with its Catholic Croats and its Bosniaks, who are mostly Muslim and account for about half of the

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population, it should be split between neighboring Serbia and Croatia. Bosniaks, they insisted, were just treacherous Serb converts who centuries ago abandoned their original (Orthodox Christian) faith.

Many in Sarajevo heard the echoes of those old insults in Vladimir Putin's recent statements, offered to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

A United Nations arms embargo maintained in Bosnia throughout the 1990s conflict gave Bosnian Serb militias, armed and backed by the Serbia-controlled Yugoslav Army, an edge in the fight. They conquered 60% of Bosnia's territory in less than two months, committing horrendous atrocities against their Bosniak and Croat compatriots.

In 1995, the U.S.-brokered Dayton Peace agreement put an end to the bloodshed in Bosnia by dividing the country into two semi-autonomous parts — one run by the Serbs and the other shared by Bosniaks and Croats. The two are linked by weak multiethnic institutions.

But living together in the aftermath of a brutal, fratricidal conflict has proven to be difficult.

The postwar power-sharing system perpetuates the polarized and venomous political climate in Bosnia, while its entrenched nationalist leaders continuously stoke ethnic animosities for political gain.

With Moscow's backing, the strongly pro-Russian Bosnian Serbs, in particular, have been advocating for years for the independence of their region. Meanwhile, sectarian networks of patronage and pervasive corruption, which gradually became integral to the system, ensure that Bosnia remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, increasingly hemorrhaging its best and brightest.

"Right now, Ukrainians are subjected to torture, they are pleading for help and hoping for who knows what," said Zoka Catic, a film-maker and journalist from Sarajevo who has spent years documenting the devastating impact of war on the mental health of Bosnians of all ethnic stripes.

No matter how the conflict in Ukraine ends, he argued, there is no such thing as a happy ending to a war.

"It is just a matter of time...before (Ukrainians) turn into us: sad, unhappy people who experienced the worst feeling in the world — helplessness."

Harris to mark 'Bloody Sunday' anniversary in Selma

SELMA, Ala. (AP) — Vice President Kamala Harris will visit Alabama on Sunday as the nation marks a defining moment in the fight for the right to vote, a trip that comes as congressional efforts to restore the landmark 1965 Voting Rights Act have faltered.

Harris is traveling to Selma, Alabama to commemorate the 57th anniversary of "Bloody Sunday," the day in 1965 when white state troopers attacked Black voting rights marchers attempting to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The nation's first female vice president — as well as the first African American and Indian American in the role— will speak at the site often referred to as hallowed ground in the fight for voting right for minority citizens.

State troopers on March 7, 1965, beat and tear-gassed peaceful demonstrators, including young activist John Lewis, who later became a longtime Georgia congressman. He images of the violence shocked a nation and helped galvanize support for passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Her visit to the city that served as the cradle of the Voting Rights Act comes as Democrats have unsuccessfully tried to update the landmark law and pass additional measures to make it more convenient for people to vote.

The legislation, named for Lewis who died in 2020, is part of a broader elections package that collapsed in the U.S. Senate in February.

Visiting Alabama during a congressional pilgrimage that coincides with the anniversary, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said he hoped some compromise still might be able to save the voting rights bill named for Lewis.

"The John Lewis bill means a lot to us because so many of us worked together on the bill with John being the leader and the inspiration," Hoyer said during an interview in Birmingham on Friday.

The U.S. Supreme Court in 2013 gutted a portion of the 1965 law that required certain states with a history of discrimination in voting, mainly in the South, to get U.S. Justice Department approval before

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changing the way they hold elections.

The supporters of the end of preclearance said the requirement — while necessary in the 1960s — was no longer needed. Voting rights activists have warned the end of preclearance is emboldening states to pass a new wave of voting restrictions.

President Joe Biden used a small portion of his State of the Union speech to renew his plea for Congress to take action.

“The most fundamental right in America is the right to vote – and to have it counted. And it’s under assault. In state after state, new laws have been passed, not only to suppress the vote, but to subvert entire elections,” Biden said.

The sweeping legislation called the Freedom to Vote: John R. Lewis Act would restore the preclearance requirement and the put nationwide standards for how elections operate — such as making Election Day a national holiday and allowing early voting nationwide — establish rules for redistricting criteria.

The annual Bloody Sunday remembrance has become a regular stop for politicians to pay homage to the foot soldiers of the civil rights movement and to make calls for action.

Harris will visit with civil rights leaders before speaking at the foot of the bridge. The bridge, named for a Confederate general and reputed Ku Klux Klan leader, has become an enduring symbol of the civil rights movement.

Harris will also take part in the annual event’s symbolic march across the bridge.

Several other members of President Joe Biden’s administration will also attend the event, including Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge, Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg, Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan.

Fleeing sanctions, oligarchs seek safe ports for superyachts

By MICHAEL BIESECKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The massive superyacht Dilbar stretches one-and-a-half football fields in length, about as long as a World War I dreadnaught. It boasts two helipads, berths for more than 130 people and a 25-meter swimming pool long enough to accommodate another whole superyacht.

Dilbar was launched in 2016 at a reported cost of more than \$648 million. Five years on its purported owner, the Kremlin-aligned Russian oligarch Alisher Usmanov, was already dissatisfied and sent the vessel to a German shipyard last fall for a retrofit reportedly costing another couple hundred million dollars.

That’s where she lay in drydock on Thursday when the United States and European Union announced economic sanctions against Usmanov — a metals magnate and early investor in Facebook — over his ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin and in retaliation for the invasion of Ukraine.

“We are joining with our European allies to find and seize your yachts, your luxury apartments, your private jets,” President Joe Biden said during his State of the Union speech Tuesday night, addressing the oligarchs. “We are coming for your ill-begotten gains.”

But actually seizing the behemoth boats could prove challenging. Russian billionaires have had decades to shield their money and assets in the West from governments that might try to tax or seize them.

Several media outlets reported Wednesday that German authorities had impounded Dilbar. But a spokeswoman for Hamburg state’s economy ministry told The Associated Press no such action had yet been taken because it had been unable to establish ownership of the yacht, which is named for Usmanov’s mother.

Dilbar is flagged in the Cayman Islands and registered to a holding company in Malta, two secretive banking havens where the global ultra-rich often park their wealth.

Still, in the industry that caters to the exclusive club of billionaires and centimillionaires that can afford to buy, crew and maintain superyachts, it is often an open secret who owns what.

Working with the U.K.-based yacht valuation firm VesselsValue, the AP compiled a list of 56 superyachts — generally defined as luxury vessels exceeding 24 meters (79 feet) in length — believed to be owned by a few dozen Kremlin-aligned oligarchs, seaborne assets with a combined market value estimated at more than \$5.4 billion.

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The AP then used two online services — VesselFinder and MarineTraffic — to plot the last known locations of the yachts as relayed by their onboard tracking beacons.

While many are still anchored at or near sun-splashed playgrounds in the Mediterranean and Caribbean, more than a dozen were underway or had already arrived in remote ports in small nations such as the Maldives and Montenegro, potentially beyond the reach of Western sanctions. Three are moored in Dubai, where many wealthy Russians have vacation homes.

Another three had gone dark, their transponders last pinging just outside the Bosphorus in Turkey — gateway to the Black Sea and the southern Russian ports of Sochi and Novorossiysk.

Graceful, a German-built Russian-flagged superyacht believed to belong to Putin, left a repair yard in Hamburg on Feb. 7, two weeks before Russia invaded Ukraine. It is now moored in the Russian Baltic port of Kaliningrad, beyond the reach of Western sanctions imposed against him this past week.

Some Russian oligarchs appear to have not gotten the memo to move their superyachts, despite weeks of public warnings of Putin's planned invasion.

French authorities seized the superyacht *Amore Vero* on Thursday in the Mediterranean resort town of La Ciotat. The boat is believed to belong to Igor Sechin, a Putin ally who runs Russian oil giant Rosneft, which has been on the U.S. sanctions list since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

The French Finance Ministry said in a statement that customs authorities boarded the 289-foot *Amore Vero* and discovered its crew was preparing for an urgent departure, even though planned repair work wasn't finished. The \$120 million boat is registered to a company that lists Sechin as its primary shareholder.

On Saturday, Italian financial police in the port of San Remo seized the 132-foot superyacht *Lena*, which is flagged in the British Virgin Islands. Authorities said the boat belongs to Gennady Timchenko, an oligarch close to Putin and among those sanctioned by the European Union. With an estimated net worth of \$16.2 billion, Timchenko is the founder of the Volga Group, which specializes in investments in energy, transport and infrastructure assets.

The 213-foot *Lady M* was also seized by the Italians while moored in the Riviera port town of Imperia. In a tweet announcing the seizure on Friday, a spokesman for Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi said the comparatively modest \$27 million vessel was the property of sanctioned steel baron Alexei Mordashov, listed as Russia's wealthiest man with a fortune of about \$30 billion.

However, Mordashov's upsized yacht, the 464-foot *Nord*, was safely at anchor on Friday in the Seychelles, a tropical island chain in the Indian Ocean not under the jurisdiction of U.S. or EU sanctions. Among the world's biggest superyachts, *Nord* has a market value of \$500 million.

But most of the Russians on the annual Forbes list of billionaires have not yet been sanctioned by the United States and its allies, and their superyachts are still crushing the world's oceans. The 237-foot *Stella Maris*, which was seen by an AP journalist docked this past week in Nice, France, is believed to be owned by Rashid Sardarov, a Russian billionaire oil and gas magnate.

The evolution of oligarch yachts goes back to the tumultuous decade after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, as state oil and metals industries were sold off at rock-bottom prices, often to politically connected Russian businessmen and bankers who had provided loans to the new Russian state in exchange for the shares.

Russia's nouveau riche began buying luxury yachts similar in size and expense to those owned by Silicon Valley billionaires, heads of state and royalty. It's a key marker of status in Moscow and St. Petersburg, and size matters.

"No self-respecting Russian oligarch would be without a superyacht," said William Browder, a U.S.-born and now London-based financier who worked in Moscow for years before becoming one of the Putin regime's most vocal foreign critics. "It's part of the rite of passage to being an oligarch. It's just a prerequisite."

As their fortunes ballooned, there was something of an arms race among the oligarchs, with the richest among them accumulating personal fleets of ever more lavish boats.

For example, Russian metals and petroleum magnate Roman Abramovich is believed to have bought or built at least seven of the world's largest yachts, some of which he has since sold off to other oligarchs.

In 2010, Abramovich launched the Bermuda-flagged *Eclipse*, which at 533 feet was at the time the world's

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longest superyacht. Features include a wood-burning firepit and swimming pool that transforms into a dance floor. Eclipse also boasts its own helicopter hanger and an undersea bay that reportedly holds a mini-sub.

Dennis Cauiser, a superyacht analyst with VesselsFinder, said oligarch boats often include secret security measures worthy of a Bond villain, including underwater escape hatches, bulletproof windows and armored panic rooms.

"Eclipse is equipped with all sorts of special features, including missile launchers and self-defense systems on board," Cauiser said. "It has a secret submarine evacuation area and things like that."

Eclipse was soon eclipsed by Azzam, purportedly owned by the Emir of Abu Dhabi, which claimed the title of longest yacht when it was launched in 2013. Three years after that, Usmanov launched Dilbar, which replaced another slightly smaller yacht by the same name. The new Dilbar is the world's largest yacht by volume.

Abramovich, whose fortune is estimated at \$12.4 billion, fired back last year by launching Solaris. While not as long as Eclipse or as big as Dilbar, the \$600 million Bermuda-flagged boat is possibly even more luxurious. Eight stories tall, Solaris features a sleek palisade of broad teak-covered decks suitable for hosting a horde of well-heeled partygoers.

But no boat is top dog for long. At least 20 superyachts are reported to be under construction in various Northern European shipyards, including a \$500 million superyacht being built for the American billionaire Jeff Bezos.

"It's about ego," Cauiser said. "They all want to have the best, the longest, the most valuable, the newest, the most luxurious."

But, he added, the escalating U.S. and EU sanctions on Putin-aligned oligarchs and Russian banks have sent a chill through the industry, with boatbuilders and staff worried they won't be paid. It can cost upwards of \$50 million a year to crew, fuel and maintain a superyacht.

The crash of the ruble and the tanking of Moscow stock market have depleted the fortunes of Russia's elite, with several people dropping off the list of Forbes billionaires last week. Cauiser said he expects some oligarch superyachts will soon quietly be listed by brokers at fire-sale prices.

On Thursday, the U.S. Treasury Department issued a new round of sanctions that included a press release touting Usmanov's close ties to Putin and photos of Dilbar and the oligarch's private jet, a custom-built 209-foot Airbus A340-300 passenger liner. Treasury said Usmanov's aircraft is believed to have cost up to \$500 million and is named Bourkhan, after his father.

Usmanov, whose fortune has recently shrunk to about \$17 billion, criticized the sanctions.

"I believe that such a decision is unfair and the reasons employed to justify the sanctions are a set of false and defamatory allegations damaging my honor, dignity and business reputation," he said in a statement issued through the website of the International Fencing Federation, of which he has served as president since 2008.

Abramovich has not yet been sanctioned. Members of the British Parliament have criticized Prime Minister Boris Johnson for not going after Abramovich's U.K.-based assets, which include the professional soccer club Chelsea. Under mounting pressure, the oligarch announced this past week he would sell the \$2.5 billion team and give the net proceeds "for the benefit of all victims of the war in Ukraine."

Meanwhile, location transponders showed Solaris moored in Barcelona, Spain, on Saturday. Eclipse set sail from St. Maarten late Thursday and is underway in the Caribbean Sea, destination undisclosed.

Official: 6 dead as large tornado roars through central Iowa

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Six people were killed Saturday when a tornado swept through central Iowa, damaging buildings and knocking down trees and power lines, authorities said.

Emergency management officials in Madison County said four were injured in addition to those killed when the tornado touched down in the area southwest of Des Moines at about 4:30 p.m. Among those killed were children and adults.

Madison County Emergency Management Director Diogenes Ayala said 25 to 30 homes were badly

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damaged by the tornado.

"This is the worst anyone has seen in a very long time," he said.

Officials didn't identify those killed but said they were not all in the same location.

Wendy Burkett told the Des Moines Register she and two of her three daughters were in their house Saturday afternoon when her husband, Tony, called her from a nearby shed where he was working and alerted her about a tornado warning.

Burkett said she came outside and joined him in front of the house, looking down their driveway toward the southwest. "And then we saw it. The tornado," she said. "There was debris flying around and it was getting louder and louder."

They hurried with their daughters to their basement as the tornado roared by within seconds. As they clung to each other, a window shattered outwards and water began spewing from the pipes, she said.

But within about a minute, the tornado passed by, and while the family was unhurt, their home was in ruins amid debris all around, even in the trees.

The National Weather Service in Des Moines tweeted later Saturday that initial photos and videos from the damage around the community of Winterset suggested it was at least an EF-3 tornado, capable of causing severe damage, on the Enhanced Fujita scale. It said weather service teams would investigate the damage Sunday and further assess a potential rating.

Thunderstorms that spawned tornadoes moved through much of Iowa from the afternoon until Saturday night with storms also causing damage in the Des Moines suburb of Norwalk, areas just east of Des Moines and other areas of eastern Iowa.

Officials reported a number of homes were damaged, roads were blocked by downed lines and tree branches were shredded by the strong winds. Photos tweeted on social media showed downed trees, debris and damaged roofs and vehicles. At one point, power outages affected about 10,000 in the Des Moines area.

Rival UNC upsets No. 4 Duke in Coach K's Cameron farewell

By AARON BEARD AP Basketball Writer

DURHAM, N.C. (AP) — North Carolina ignored all the attention surrounding the final home game for retiring Hall of Fame coach Mike Krzyzewski, as well as the fourth-ranked Duke's emotionally charged, rowdier-than-usual crowd.

Instead, the rival Tar Heels walked into Cameron Indoor Stadium and fearlessly spoiled Coach K's perfect send-off to the postseason.

Armando Bacot scored 23 points and the Tar Heels shot 59% after halftime to upset the Blue Devils 94-81 on Saturday night, a major reversal from a blowout loss in the first meeting that raised questions about UNC's ability to compete against the nation's top teams.

First-year coach Hubert Davis had shrugged off the "pageantry" from Krzyzewski's final home game, saying the team needed to tune out all the extra emotion and do one thing: compete.

"All week, we just talked about our competitive fight," Davis said, "that we had to do three things: We had to plant our feet, we had to stand our ground and we had to fight. ... I just felt like, as the game went on, we started to just gain more and more confidence."

In the final minutes, the Tar Heels (23-8, 15-5 Atlantic Coast Conference) were stretching the lead to double figures, hitting clinching free throws and leaving the "Cameron crazies" in disbelief that Krzyzewski's final home game after 42 years at the helm of Duke would end this way.

The day had begun with more than 90 former Blue Devils players joining Krzyzewski on the court for a pregame photo and the coach with 1,196 career victories and five NCAA championships. There were also celebrities like comedian Jerry Seinfeld and NBA commissioner Adam Silver in attendance at a game where tickets rocketed into four- and five-figure costs.

The emotions were too much for even the most veteran of coaches.

"I didn't think I'd cry," Krzyzewski said. "But I did. But that's all right, it's all right."

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He paused, then added with a chuckle: "I'm glad this is over."

Krzyzewski had tried all season to deflect questions about his looming retirement — even eschewing the use of the word "last" — and trying to avoid being a distraction or creating additional pressure on his team. That began to change more in recent days as the moment drew near for a coach who has long taken a live-in-the-moment approach.

The Blue Devils (26-5, 16-4) still felt that pressure.

"It was a big moment, actually a huge moment this week," Wendell Moore Jr. said. "I felt like we kind of got lost in everything."

Freshman Paolo Banchemo scored 23 points for the Blue Devils, who shot just 42% after halftime as the Tar Heels took over. But Krzyzewski was particularly frustrated by his team's play at the other end.

"They didn't talk at all on defense," he said. "That's why the second half, our defense was just horrible."

When the horn sounded, the Tar Heels mobbed each other to celebrate on the court, while Caleb Love — who overcame an 0-for-8 shooting start to score 15 of his 22 points after halftime — jawed at the Crazies.

It also included Krzyzewski taking the microphone to address the still-full arena before the school's postgame ceremony in his honor.

"I'm sorry about his afternoon," he said, calling the performance "unacceptable."

It marked the first time an unranked North Carolina team had beaten a top-5 Duke team in Cameron since 1990, when Davis was a sophomore guard for the Tar Heels under late Hall of Famer Dean Smith.

"We know how good of a team we are," Bacot said. "We know at times we've had lapses. But we came in and we knew we were going to win the game."

R.J. Davis added 21 points and Brady Manek 20, marking the first time in program history that the Tar Heels had four 20-point scorers in the same game.

BIG PICTURE

UNC: After a season of shaky performances against top-tier competition like Kentucky and Tennessee, the Tar Heels fearlessly attacked the rim and showed a competitive fire that wasn't apparent in last month's 87-67 loss to the Blue Devils. By far, it is UNC's best win this season, and represented a huge boost to its NCAA Tournament resume.

Duke: The Blue Devils had already secured the program's first outright ACC regular-season title since 2006 and had lost just once since mid-January, falling at home on a last-second 3-pointer to Virginia. But this time, they couldn't corral UNC's backcourt of Love and Davis — who struggled mightily against Duke's pressure defense in the first meeting — and couldn't manage a response as the Tar Heels made their move in the final 6 minutes.

THE KEY SEQUENCE

UNC led by just two with 5 1/2 minutes left when they made their move, with Davis getting by Banchemo for a driving layup, followed by Love penetrating to find Manek for the score to take a 79-71 lead with 3:52 left.

Manek also came through with one of his five 3-pointers at a critical moment, answering one from Moore to keep the lead at eight and maintain momentum.

PREGAME MOMENTS

Former Duke players in attendance included some of the program's biggest names like Grant Hill, Shane Battier, J.J. Redick, Jay Williams, Danny Ferry and Christian Laettner.

They gathered to create two lines on the court — several motioning to the student section for more noise or capturing video with their cellphones — to make an aisle for Krzyzewski to walk to midcourt to join them for a group photo captured from the rafters.

With Krzyzewski fighting back tears during the national anthem and dabbing his eyes with a tissue during the final pregame huddle, associate head coach Jon Scheyer — designated as Krzyzewski's successor next season — took a moment to pat his mentor on the right shin before the opening tip.

UP NEXT

UNC: The Tar Heels own the No. 3 seed for the ACC Tournament in New York and open play in Thursday's quarterfinals.

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Duke: The Blue Devils hold the No. 1 seed for the ACC Tournament and also open play Thursday.

Putin says Ukraine's future in doubt as cease-fires collapse

By YURAS KARMANAU Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine (AP) — Russian President Vladimir Putin warned Saturday that Ukrainian statehood is in jeopardy and likened the West's sanctions on Russia to "declaring war," while a promised cease-fire in the besieged port city of Mariupol collapsed amid scenes of terror.

With the Kremlin's rhetoric growing fiercer and a reprieve from fighting dissolving, Russian troops continued to shell encircled cities and the number of Ukrainians forced from their country grew to 1.4 million. By nighttime Russian forces had intensified their shelling of Mariupol, while dropping powerful bombs on residential areas of Chernihiv, a city north of Kyiv, Ukrainian officials said.

Bereft mothers mourned slain children, wounded soldiers were fitted with tourniquets and doctors worked by the light of their cellphones as bleakness and desperation pervaded. Crowds of men lined up in the capital to join the Ukrainian military.

The government has ordered men between the ages of 18 and 60 to stay and be available to fight. Some, like Volodymyr Onysko, have volunteered.

"We know why we are here. We know why we defend our country," Onysko told Britain's Sky News. "We know what we are doing, and that's why we will win."

Putin continued to pin the blame for the war squarely on the Ukrainian leadership and slammed their resistance to the invasion.

"If they continue to do what they are doing, they are calling into question the future of Ukrainian statehood," he said. "And if this happens, it will be entirely on their conscience."

He also hit out at Western sanctions that have crippled Russia's economy and sent the value of its currency tumbling.

"These sanctions that are being imposed, they are akin to declaring war," he said during a televised meeting with flight attendants from Russian airline Aeroflot. "But thank God, we haven't got there yet."

Russia's financial system suffered yet another blow as Mastercard and Visa announced they were suspending operations in the country.

Ten days after Russian forces invaded, the struggle to enforce the temporary cease-fires in Mariupol and the eastern city of Volnovakha showed the fragility of efforts to stop the fighting across Ukraine.

Ukrainian officials said Russian artillery fire and airstrikes had prevented residents from leaving before the agreed-to evacuations got underway. Putin accused Ukraine of sabotaging the effort.

A third round of talks between Russia and Ukraine will take place Monday, according to Davyd Arakhmia, a member of the Ukrainian delegation. He gave no additional details, including where they would take place.

Previous meetings were held in Belarus and led to the failed cease-fire agreement to create humanitarian corridors for the evacuation of children, women and older people from besieged cities, where pharmacies have run bare, hundreds of thousands face food and water shortages, and the injured have been succumbing to their wounds.

Mariupol Mayor Vadym Boychenko said thousands of residents had gathered for safe passage out of the city of 430,000 when shelling began and the evacuation was stopped. Later in the day, he said the attack had escalated further.

"The city is in a very, very difficult state of siege," Boychenko told Ukrainian TV. "Relentless shelling of residential blocks is ongoing, airplanes have been dropping bombs on residential areas. The Russian occupants are using heavy artillery, including Grad multiple rocket launchers."

Russia has made significant advances in the south, seeking to cut off Ukraine's access to the sea. Capturing Mariupol could allow Russia to establish a land corridor to Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

Meanwhile the head of the Chernihiv region said Russia has dropped powerful bombs on residential areas of the city of the same name, which has a population of 290,000. Vyacheslav Chaus posted a photo online of what he said was an undetonated FAB-500, a 1,100-pound (500-kilogram) bomb.

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"Usually this weapon is used against military-industrial facilities and fortified structures," Chaus said.

In a speech to Ukrainians, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy pointed to "the 500-kilogram bombs that were dropped on the houses of Ukrainians. Look at Borodyanka, at the destroyed schools, at the blown-up kindergartens. At the damaged Kharkiv Assumption Cathedral. Look what Russia has done."

The West has broadly backed Ukraine, offering aid and weapons and slapping Russia with vast sanctions. But the fight itself has been left to Ukrainians, who have expressed a mixture of courageous resolve and despondency.

"Ukraine is bleeding," Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in a video released Saturday, "but Ukraine has not fallen."

Russian troops advanced on a third nuclear power plant, having already taken control of one of the four operating in the country and the closed plant in Chernobyl, Zelenskyy told U.S. lawmakers.

Zelenskyy pleaded with the lawmakers for additional help, specifically fighter planes to help secure the skies over Ukraine, even as he insisted Russia was being defeated.

"We're inflicting losses on the occupants they could not see in their worst nightmare," Zelenskyy said.

Russian troops took control of the southern port city of Kherson this week. Although they have encircled Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Chernihiv and Sumy, Ukrainian forces have managed to keep control of key cities in central and southeastern Ukraine, Zelenskyy said.

U.S. President Joe Biden called Zelenskyy early Sunday, Kyiv time, to discuss Russia sanctions and speeding U.S. assistance to Ukraine. The White House said the conversation also covered talks between Russia and Ukraine but did not give details.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in Poland to meet with the prime minister and foreign minister, a day after attending a NATO meeting in Brussels in which the alliance pledged to step up support for eastern flank members.

Blinken also spoke by phone with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who said Beijing opposes any moves that "add fuel to the flames" in Ukraine, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry. Blinken said the world is watching to see which nations stand up for freedom and sovereignty, the State Department said.

In Moscow, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett met with Putin at the Kremlin. Israel maintains good relations with both Russia and Ukraine, and Bennett has offered to act as an intermediary in the conflict, but no details of the meeting emerged immediately. Bennett's office said he spoke twice with Zelenskyy afterward.

In the wake of Western sanctions, Aeroflot, Russia's flagship state-owned airline, announced plans to halt all international flights except to Belarus starting Tuesday.

The death toll of the conflict was difficult to measure. The U.N. human rights office said at least 351 civilians have been confirmed killed since the Feb. 24 invasion, but the true number is probably much higher.

Ukraine's military is vastly outmatched by Russia's, but its professional and volunteer forces have fought back with fierce tenacity. Even in cities that have fallen, there were signs of resistance.

Onlookers in Chernihiv cheered as they watched a Russian military plane fall from the sky and crash, according to video released by the Ukrainian government. In Kherson, hundreds of protesters waved blue and yellow Ukrainian flag and shouted, "Go home."

A vast Russian armored column threatening Ukraine's capital remained stalled outside Kyiv. Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovich said in the afternoon that the military situation was quieter overall and Russian forces hadn't "taken active actions since the morning."

The U.S. Congress is considering a request for \$10 billion in emergency funding for humanitarian aid and security needs. The U.N. said it would increase its humanitarian operations both inside and outside Ukraine, and the Security Council scheduled a meeting for Monday on the worsening situation.

The U.N. World Food Program has warned of an impending hunger crisis in Ukraine, a major global wheat supplier, saying millions will need food aid "immediately."

Kyiv's central train station remained crowded with people desperate to flee. "People just want to live," one woman, Ksenia, said.

Ukrainian woman weds Chicago fiancé ahead of return home

By KATHLEEN FOODY and TERESA CRAWFORD Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — When Russia invaded her home country of Ukraine, Maria decided she had to get there and help defend it — even if it meant leaving her fiancé behind in Chicago days after getting married.

Maria and her fiancé, David, married Saturday before about 20 people in the backyard of an Oak Park home — the venue offered last minute after Maria asked for advice in a neighborhood Facebook group. The couple met last year and got engaged in October.

On Monday, she plans to fly to Poland, then make her way to the Ukrainian border, ultimately aiming to volunteer to fight for her home country.

“People are running out of there and she is running in,” said a friend at the wedding, Pamela Chinchilla of Lombard.

Seven guests at the wedding brought medical supplies, masks and other items for Maria to take to Ukraine. People hugged each other, and Maria at one point spoke with family members in Odesa.

Maria, who asked that her last name not be published because she fears for her family’s safety in Ukraine and the U.S., said she lived with her parents in Kyiv until 1991 when the family moved to Poland.

For Maria, a previous marriage ended in divorce. She met her ex-husband while studying music in Austria and more than 20 years ago they moved to his hometown of Chicago — which has the second-largest Ukrainian-born population among U.S. cities.

Since the war began, she used messages and calls through Facebook to keep in touch with her parents, who have been sheltering in a parking garage during attacks on Ukraine’s largest port city of Odesa. But she said she has been unable to reach cousins in Kyiv in recent days.

Three days into the invasion, Maria made up her mind to return to Ukraine, determined to find some way to be useful. She said she doesn’t have medical or military training but worries that a Russian takeover of Ukraine will embolden the country to threaten more places around the world.

“I have to go,” Maria, 44, said. “I can’t do protests or fundraising or wave flags. We’ve done this since 2015, Ukrainians, and I just can’t do it anymore.”

Her fiancé refused to stay behind despite Maria’s resistance to him accompanying her. But since David first needs to apply for a passport, she plans to leave Monday and wait in Poland before crossing the border.

“He knows how stubborn I am and knew he’d have no chance to convince me otherwise,” Maria said.

David, 42, said he feels a responsibility to do what he can to keep her safe.

“Because complacency and compliance are pretty much the same thing,” he said. “And you can only turn a blind eye to people being bullied for so long. And if it happens to them, it might be you next.”

He also asked that his last name not be published to avoid endangering Maria’s family.

Ukraine’s forces are outnumbered and outgunned, but their resistance did prevent a swift Russian victory. Ukrainian leaders called on citizens to join in guerrilla war this week as Russian forces gained ground on the coast and took over one major port city.

Associated Press reporters at the border checkpoint in Medyka in southeastern Poland found Ukrainians lining up to return from other countries in Europe in recent days in response to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s call for volunteers to come assist the country’s military.

The White House has since urged Americans not to travel to Ukraine, but Maria and David said that didn’t change their plans.

The couple had planned to be married at a courthouse on March 5, a nod to Maria’s grandmother’s birthday.

After deciding they would try to reach Ukraine, they accepted the offer to hold a backyard celebration. They also asked people to purchase items needed by Ukrainian troops through an Amazon list that includes rain ponchos, medical supplies and boots rather than wedding gifts.

Maria said she’s not certain what she will have to do after arriving at the Polish border with Ukraine; friends who live near border crossings have told her it’s taking days to get through. Her parents also

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questioned her decision to volunteer, she said, because they don't want to be worried about her safety on top of their own.

"If the army doesn't take us, we'll be as close as possible," Maria said Wednesday. "There's always a need for volunteers. I'm pretty strong, I'm not afraid of blood, I'm good under pressure."

Natalia Blauvelt, a Chicago immigration attorney who has assisted dozens of clients trying to help family leave Ukraine and Russia in recent weeks, said she hasn't heard of others seeking to get into Ukraine in order to join the country's defense.

But she advised that anyone considering it contact the Ukrainian embassy in the U.S. and speak with an immigration attorney to talk through plans for returning to the U.S.

Mastercard, Visa suspend operations in Russia after invasion

By STAN CHOE AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Mastercard and Visa are suspending their operations in Russia, the companies said Saturday, in the latest blow to the country's financial system after its invasion of Ukraine.

Mastercard said cards issued by Russian banks will no longer be supported by its network and any Mastercard issued outside the country will not work at Russian stores or ATMs.

"We don't take this decision lightly," Mastercard said in a statement, adding that it made the move after discussions with customers, partners and governments.

Visa said it's working with clients and partners in Russia to cease all Visa transactions over the coming days.

"We are compelled to act following Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, and the unacceptable events that we have witnessed," Visa Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Al Kelly said in a statement.

The twin suspensions were announced within 16 minutes of each other, and they followed a private video call earlier in the day between President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine and U.S. lawmakers. During that conversation, Zelenskyy "asked us to turn off MasterCard and Visa for Russia," Rep. Brad Sherman, a Democrat from California, tweeted. "I agree," he added, before Mastercard and Visa made their announcements.

Earlier in the week, Visa and Mastercard had announced more limited moves to block financial institutions from the networks that serve as arteries for the payments system. Russian people have already been hit hard by heavy sanctions and financial penalties imposed by the U.S. government and others.

Since the invasion of Ukraine, the value of the Russian currency, the ruble, has plunged by more than a third to a record low. That's pushing up inflation for Russian households, and all the fear has helped cause long lines at ATMs.

Many other companies around the world have also made moves to increase the financial pressure on Russia and its people because of its attack on Ukraine. Some are selling their stakes in Russian companies, such as energy giant BP, while others like Harley-Davidson halted product shipments to the country.

"This war and the ongoing threat to peace and stability demand we respond in line with our values," Visa's Kelly said.

The moves by Mastercard and Visa could make real differences to their bottom lines. Russia accounted for 4% of all of Visa's net revenue in its last fiscal year, including money made from domestic and cross-border activities. Ukraine accounted for about 1%, Visa said in a filing with U.S. securities regulators this week.

Mastercard said in its own filing that about 4% of its net revenues during 2021 came from business conducted within, into and out of Russia. Another roughly 2% was related to Ukraine.

Blinken hears harrowing tales from refugees fleeing Ukraine

By MATTHEW LEE AP Diplomatic Writer

KORCZOWA, Poland (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Saturday visited a welcome center set up by Polish authorities in what once was a shopping mall in Korczowa, close to the border with Ukraine, where roughly 3,000 refugees are taking shelter after the Russian invasion of their homeland.

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While at the border later, Blinken stepped briefly onto Ukrainian soil to meet Foreign Minister Dymtro Kuleba, who predicted Russia would be defeated but appealed for more military assistance to lower the cost in lives that he said victory will require.

At the refugee center, America's top diplomat heard harrowing tales from mothers and their children who described long and perilous journeys — and the shock of the sudden disruption and the fear for their lives — after fleeing the devastation of the war.

"Near our home we heard bombs," said Venera Ahmadi, 12, who said she came with her brother and sister, six dogs and seven cats from Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, more than 600 kilometers (372 miles) away. "We walked to the border, I don't know how many hours. We crossed the border on foot."

Her 16-year-old sister, Jasmine, said: "I was scared I would die."

Natalia Kadygrob, 48, reached the center with her four adopted children from Kropyvnytskyi, almost 800 kilometers (about 500 miles) by bus on their way to her brother's home in Germany. Her husband stayed behind.

"There they bombed planes at the airport," she said. "Of course we were afraid."

Tatyana, 58, who wouldn't give her last name, came with her daughter, Anna, 37, and her 6- and 1-year-old daughters, Katya and Kira, from Kharkiv, about 1,000 kilometers (600 miles) away. "They were shooting on the street," Tatyana said. Anna said her home had been destroyed by a shell or a rocket.

She was in the basement with her daughters when the explosion happened. "They should be in school," Anna said. "They are children, they don't understand."

Blinken then met with Kuleba on a visit to the Korczowa border crossing where Polish authorities escorted small groups of refugees — about 20 at a time — across the frontier from the Ukrainian town of Krakovets as sporadic snow flakes fell from a gray sky.

Groups mainly of women, children and elderly men — grimly rolling their possessions in luggage and carrying infants and the occasional family pet — made their way into makeshift processing centers set up in tents on Polish territory.

The foreign minister said he wanted to convey a simple message: "Ukraine will win this war because this is the people's war for their land and we defend the right course." He added, "The question is the price, the price of our victory."

Kubela said that if Ukraine's allies "continue to take bold, systemic decisions to step up economic and political pressure on (Russia), if they continue to provide us with necessary weapons, the price will be lower" and "this will save many lives in Ukraine."

Blinken praised Kuleba, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other officials for their courage and "inspiring" leadership during the crisis. He said support for Ukraine and pressure on Russia to end the war would increase "until this war of choice is brought to an end."

Kuleba thanked Blinken for the support so far but said Ukraine needed even more if his country's predicted victory was not to come at too high a cost. He lamented that NATO on Friday had rejected appeals from nonmember Ukraine and others to set up a no-fly zone over the country.

"We are now in the phase where maybe saying 'No, we're not going to do that', but the time will come," Kuleba said. "It's again the issue of price. It is the people of Ukraine who will pay the price for the reluctance of NATO to act."

Blinken earlier was in the city of Rzeszow for talks with Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau a day after attending a NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels. The alliance pledged to step up support for eastern flank members such as Poland to counter the Russian invasion. Poland is seeking more U.S. forces on its territory, where there are currently more than 10,000 American troops.

Rau said Poland had already taken in more than 700,000 refugees from Ukraine and that he expected hundreds of thousands more in the coming weeks unless Russia backs down.

"Poland will never recognize territorial changes brought about by unprovoked, unlawful aggression," he said, adding that his country will demand that alleged Russian war crimes committed in Ukraine will be prosecuted.

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Morawiecki and Blinken discussed stepping up sanctions and freezes of assets on Russia, which Morawiecki said should be "crushing" for Russia's economy. No Russian banks should be exempted from the exclusions from the SWIFT system, he said. Currently, all but the largest Russian banks have been kicked off the financial messaging service.

Zelenskyy's 'desperate' plea to Congress: Send more planes

By LISA MASCARO, MARY CLARE JALONICK and MATTHEW LEE Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Fighting for his country's survival, Ukraine's leader made a "desperate" plea Saturday to American lawmakers for the United States to help get more warplanes to his military and cut off Russian oil imports as Kyiv tries to stave off the Russian invasion.

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy opened the private video call with U.S. lawmakers by telling them this may be the last time they see him alive. He has remained in Kyiv, the capital, which has a vast Russian armored column threatening from the north.

Appearing in what is now his trademark army-green shirt in front of a white wall with the Ukrainian flag, he told them Ukraine needs to secure its skies, either through a no-fly zone enforced by NATO or through the provision of more warplanes so Ukraine could better defend itself. Zelenskyy has been pleading for a no-fly zone for days, but NATO has refused, saying it could provoke a widespread war with Russia.

The hourlong exchange with some 300 members of Congress and their staffs came as Russian troops continued to shell encircled cities and the number of Ukrainians who have fled the country grew to 1.4 million.

"President Zelenskyy made a desperate plea," said Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer.

He said Zelenskyy wants the U.S. to facilitate the transfer of planes from Eastern European allies. "I will do all I can to help the administration to facilitate their transfer," Schumer said.

The U.S. is considering sending American-made F-16s as backfill to former Soviet bloc countries in Eastern Europe that are now members of NATO. They, in turn, would send Ukraine their own Soviet-era MiGs, which Ukrainian pilots are trained to fly.

There appears to be a logistical problem, however, in sending the F-16s to Poland or other East European allies because of a production backlog. These countries would essentially have to give their MiGs to the Ukrainians and accept an IOU from the U.S. for the F-16s. The situation is further complicated because the next shipment of F-16s is set for Taiwan, and Congress would be reluctant to delay those deliveries as it eyes China.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken indicated the fighter jets are under consideration after meeting with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba at the Poland-Ukraine border outside the town of Korczowa.

"We are talking about and working on everything," Blinken told reporters.

Blinken reiterated that the U.S. support for Ukraine "not only has been unprecedented, not only is it going to continue, it's going to increase."

The U.S. Congress is working on a \$10 billion package of military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine. Schumer told Zelenskyy lawmakers hope to send it quickly to Ukraine, according to a person on the call and granted anonymity to discuss it.

When Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell asked about the types of military support his country needs, Zelenskyy said drones as well as planes would be the most helpful.

During the call, Democratic Sen. Joe Manchin of West Virginia asked Zelenskyy about the idea of banning the import of Russian oil to the U.S., according to two other people granted anonymity to discuss the private call. They said Zelenskyy indicated such a ban would be effective in putting pressure on Russia.

Republicans and a growing number of Democrats, including Speaker Nancy Pelosi, back the idea of an Russian oil import ban. The Biden administration has so far resisted that step, worried about rising prices at the pump.

Zelenskyy urged U.S. lawmakers to sanction Russia's oil and gas sector, which has so far escaped the mounting sanctions imposed by the Biden administration and other countries.

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The Ukrainian leader also urged lawmakers to suspend Visa and Mastercard credit card access in Russia — and the two announced later Saturday that they were doing just that. Mastercard said cards issued by Russian banks will no longer be supported by its network and any card issued outside the country will not work at Russian stores or ATMs. Visa said it's working with clients and partners in Russia to cease all Visa transactions over the coming days.

In a video posted to Twitter after the call, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said: "Anything that could hurt the Russian economy will help the Ukrainian people and may make this war more difficult for Putin."

Zelenskyy's office said he also suggested the U.S. consider imposing an embargo on all Russian goods and stripping Russia of its most-favored-nation trade status.

Lawmakers are concerned that Zelenskyy will be killed in the Russian invasion. They are also worried that a Ukrainian government under assault will be unable to function and to receive aid.

When one lawmaker asked diplomatically what would happen if he was killed, Zelenskyy acknowledged the concerns but implored Congress to do whatever it can to help Ukraine fight off Russia's assault on his country.

Sen. Ben Sasse, R-Neb., said in a statement that Zelenskyy's "message is simple: 'close the skies or give us planes.'"

Iditarod dogs pack Anchorage for race's ceremonial start

By MARK THIESSEN Associated Press

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) — Fans, dogs and mushers returned in droves Saturday to downtown Anchorage in the midst of a snowstorm for the ceremonial start of the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race.

The ceremonial start was canceled last year due to the pandemic. This year, fans attending the 50th running of the race were limited in their interactions with participants but still were able to watch from behind fences as mushers left the starting line two minutes apart.

Mushers took a leisurely jaunt through Alaska's largest city, waving at fans that lined downtown streets. The competitive race for mushers and their dogs starts Sunday in Willow, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) north of Anchorage, with the winner expected about nine days later in Nome.

Mushers had to show proof of vaccination to race this year, and they will isolate at checkpoints so they don't bring COVID-19 to the rural, largely Alaska Native villages along the nearly 1,000-mile (1,609-kilometer) route to Nome.

Some villages opted not to be checkpoints because of the ongoing pandemic, leaving mushers to bypass towns, while other arrangements were made in some communities. In White Mountain, where mushers must take an eight-hour layover before making the final 77-mile (124-kilometer) run to Nome, the community building will not be used to house mushers waiting for the final push.

Instead, lumber was delivered, and an elaborate tent camp was being built, including new outhouses, race marshal Mark Nordman said.

There are 49 mushers in this year's race, including defending champion Dallas Seavey, who is seeking to make history as the first musher to win six Iditarod titles. He's tied with Rick Swenson with five victories apiece. Win or lose, the 35-year-old indicated this is probably his last race for a while as he wishes to spend more time with his pre-teen daughter.

Also in the race are two four-time winners, Martin Buser and Jeff King.

King, who last raced in 2019, stepped in just this week to run in the place of Nic Petit, who announced on Facebook he had contracted COVID-19. Mitch Seavey, a three-time winner and Dallas' father, is also back this year, as are 2018 winner Joar Leifseth Ulsom and 2019 champion Pete Kaiser.

Fifteen mushers withdrew before the race started, including 2020 winner Thomas Waerner, who wasn't allowed to travel to the U.S. from his native Norway.

Musher Jaye Foucher withdrew after her sled dog team in January veered onto a busy Alaska highway and collided with a pickup truck, killing one of the dogs and injuring three others.

Moose are a concern for mushers on the trail this year. A heavy snow year in some parts of Alaska has made moose aggressive toward people in the backcountry, including mushers.

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On a training run last month, rookie musher Bridgett Watkins had four of her dogs seriously injured by a moose, which wouldn't leave and at times stood over the dogs. The incident only ended when a friend shot the bull moose with a high-powered rifle.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals remains the race's biggest critic and has caused some financial hardship for the race by targeting big-name corporations, which have dropped sponsorships. The Anchorage hotel that has been the race headquarters for three decades will drop its affiliation next year.

Officials with the Lakefront Anchorage Hotel blamed the change on the pandemic's effect on business, but the move was announced by its owners, Millennium Hotels and Resorts, a day before PETA planned to protest outside the Millennium Knickerbocker Hotel Chicago.

Countering that, Iditarod CEO Rob Urbach told reporters during a pre-race news conference that they have picked up six new sponsors this year.

"I think that's a pretty big story for us," he said.

Mariupol Diary: Scenes of despair, resolve in Ukraine city

By MSTYSLAV CHERNOV and EVGENIY MALOLETKA Associated Press

MARIUPOL, Ukraine (AP) — A man dashes into a hospital with a desperately wounded toddler in his arms, the child's mother on his heels. Doctors use smartphone torches to examine patients' wounds.

New mothers nestle infants in makeshift basement bomb shelters.

A father collapses in grief over the death of his teen son when shelling ravages a soccer field near a school.

These scenes unfolded in and around the Azov Sea port of Mariupol in southern Ukraine over the past week, captured by Associated Press journalists documenting Russia's invasion.

With nighttime temperatures just above freezing, the battle plunged the city into darkness late in the week, knocked out most phone services and raised the prospect of food and water shortages. Without phone connections, medics did not know where to take the wounded.

A limited cease-fire that Russia declared to let civilians evacuate Mariupol and Volnovakha, a city to its north, quickly fell apart Saturday, with Ukrainian officials blaming Russian shelling for blocking the promised safe passage.

Russia has made significant gains on the ground in the south in an apparent bid to cut off Ukraine's access to the sea. Capturing Mariupol could allow Russia to build a land corridor to Crimea, which it seized in 2014.

THE PAIN OF MOTHERS

A man dashes through the doors of a hospital carrying a desperately wounded toddler wrapped in a pale blue, bloodstained blanket. His girlfriend, the baby's mother, is on his heels.

Hospital workers surge round, trying to save the life of 18-month-old Kirill, but there is nothing to be done.

As Marina Yatsko and her boyfriend Fedor weep in each other's arms, distraught staff sit on the floor and try to recover themselves before the next emergency arrives.

It's a scene repeated over and over again in Mariupol. Days earlier, hospital workers had pulled a wounded 6-year-old girl from an ambulance as her mother stood alone, helpless.

Multiple attempts at resuscitation failed until eventually the frenetic activity stopped and the mother was left with her grief. A doctor looked straight into the camera of an AP videojournalist allowed inside.

He had a message: "Show this to Putin."

HOSPITAL HAS NO POWER

Smoke from shelling rises over a snow-covered residential part of Mariupol, as in the city's hospital the bangs send women dropping to the floor for shelter. One raises her arms in prayer.

Doctors use their smartphone torches to examine patients' wounds, as the hospital lacks electricity and heating.

"We work more than a week without a break, (some of us) even more," said doctor Evgeniy Dubrov. "(We) continue working, everyone on their positions."

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Grappling with the pain of their wounds, Ukrainian soldiers are in shock at the loss of their comrades. "I don't understand what had happened, blast, my eyes getting dark and vision blurring," said Svyatoslav Borodin. "I continued to crawl ... but I didn't understand if I had legs or not. Then I turned and saw my leg."

DEATH COMES TO A SOCCER FIELD

Flashes from shelling light up the medics as they stand in a parking lot waiting for the next emergency call. In the hospital nearby, a father buries his face into his dead 16-year-old son's head. The boy, draped under a bloodstained sheet, has succumbed to wounds from shelling on the soccer field where he was playing. Hospital staff wipe blood off a gurney. Others treat a man whose face is obscured by blood-soaked bandages.

The medics prepare to go out, strapping on their helmets.

They find a wounded woman in an apartment and take her in an ambulance for treatment, her hand shaking rapidly from apparent shock. She yells out in pain as the medics wheel her into the hospital.

On the darkening horizon, orange light flashes at the edge of the sky and loud bangs reverberate in the air.

CHILDREN WILL PLAY

The resting toddler, perhaps responding instinctively to the sight of a camera, raises an arm and waves. But the mother underneath has tears in her eyes.

They're lying together on the floor in a gym-turned-shelter, waiting out the fighting that rages outside.

Many families have young children. And as children can do anywhere, some giggle and run around the floor covered with blankets.

"God forbid that any rockets hit. That's why we've gathered everyone here," says local volunteer Ervand Tovmasyan, accompanied by his young son.

He says locals have brought supplies. But as the Russian siege continues, the shelter lacks enough drinking water, food, and gasoline for generators.

Many there remember the shelling in 2014, when Russia-backed separatists briefly captured the city.

"Now the same thing is happening — but now we're with children," says Anna Delina, who fled Donetsk in 2014.

TANKS IN A ROW

In a field in Volnovakha on the outskirts of Mariupol, a row of four green tanks hold their cannons at roughly 45 degrees.

Two of them fire, jolting the machines backward slightly, and sending clouds of white smoke skyward.

The tanks are painted with the letter "Z" in white, a tactical sign intended to quickly identify military units and help troops distinguish friend from foe in combat.

The tanks with the "Z" move around inside Russian-held territory and are believed to be used by Russian forces.

AMID DEATH, THE JOY OF BIRTH

A nurse fits a shirt on a newborn who fusses at first and then cries loudly. It is a joyful sound.

Babies born at a Mariupol hospital are taken down flights of stairs to a makeshift nursery that also serves as a bomb shelter during shelling.

Sitting in the dimly lit shelter, new mother Kateryna Suharokova struggles to control her emotions as she holds her son, Makar.

"I was anxious, anxious about giving birth to the baby in these times," the 30-year-old says, her voice shaking. "I'm thankful to the doctors who helped this baby to be born in these conditions. I believe that everything will be fine."

Above the basement, hospital staff labor to save people wounded in the shelling. A woman with blood streaming from her mouth cries out in pain, A young man's face is ashen as he is wheeled into the hos-

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pital. Another, who did not survive, is covered by a thin blue sheet.

"Do I need to say more?" says Oleksandr Balash, head of anesthesiology department.

"This is just a boy."

Refugees fleeing Ukraine grab documents, pets, some photos

By ELDAR EMRIC Associated Press

SIRET, Romania (AP) — Life or death choices leave little time for sentiment. War refugees fleeing Russian ordnance in Ukraine grabbed only the essentials for their journeys to safety: key documents, a beloved pet, often not even a change of clothes.

Lena Nesterova remembers the hour her fate was sealed: Feb. 24, 5:34 a.m., the first explosions in the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, that signaled the feared Russian invasion.

Driven by fear, she said, they took "only daughter, dog, all the documents, and left' Kyiv with only the clothes on their backs.

"We left everything. We have no clothes, nothing," Nesterova said, adding. "And we don't know what will be after."

Her daughter, 18-year-old Margo, cradled the family toy Chihuahua, dressed lovingly in a purple puffer, in the safety of a refugee camp in the border city of Siret, Romania.

Ten days into Russia's invasion of Ukraine, 1.45 million people have fled the battered country, according to the U.N.-affiliated Organization for Migration in Geneva. The U.N. has predicted that the total number of refugees could swell to 4 million, to become the biggest such crisis this century.

Most have arrived in Poland and other neighboring European Union countries, with the bloc granting people fleeing Ukraine temporary protection and residency permits. Some are starting to make their way to countries further afield.

More than 100,000 have reached Slovakia, with many planning to continue to the neighboring Czech Republic that has a sizeable Ukrainian community. Czech authorities are creating classes for thousands of children to be taught in their native Ukrainian.

Hundreds arrive daily by train in the German capital, Berlin. Further away in Italy, 10,000 refugees have arrived, 40% of them children, with the education ministry indicating plans to get them into classrooms so they can integrate.

Iryna Bogavchuk wanted to be light for the journey to Romania from Chernivtsi, across the Carpathian Mountains in southern Ukraine, just 40 kilometers (30 miles) — and what seems like a lifetime — away. In better times, her home city teemed with young people, drawn by the university whose 19th century architecture won it a spot on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

"I took my daughter," she said, stroking the child sleeping in her lap. "I hope we will be all right."

Instead of belongings, which would have weighed her down, Bogavchuk brought Polaroids, which she fumbles in her wallet to produce. Happier times: her daughter's 10th birthday; a photo with her husband, whom she left behind as Ukrainian men of military age are banned from exiting the country. "I miss him," she said, dissolving into tears.

Ludmilla Nadzemovska traveled to Hungary from the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv. She planned ahead for the worst -- purchasing traveling cages for her four cats a month ago as U.S. intelligence indicated Russia's intention to invade. But the decision to actually leave was made in an instant: after hearing her neighbors had been killed by Russian forces.

"I want to go back" she said, sitting in a camp in Tiszabecs, Hungary, just over the border. "But my priority is my family and the pets."

In nearby Moldova, a non-EU nation tucked between Ukraine and Romania, hundreds of Roma families are being welcomed at a sports venue in the capital, Chisinau.

Maria Cherepovskaia, 50, walked the first 15 kilometers from her home in the eastern Russian-controlled enclave of Donetsk. She received help from people, including transport and food, to make the rest of the nearly 900-kilometer journey to Moldova.

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"We will be here until the war is over. We don't know where to go," she said. "There they are bombing. A lot, too much, what can we do?"

Today in History

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Sunday, March 6, the 65th day of 2022. There are 300 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 6, 1944, U.S. heavy bombers staged the first full-scale American raid on Berlin during World War II.

On this date:

In 1834, the city of York in Upper Canada was incorporated as Toronto.

In 1836, the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, fell as Mexican forces led by General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna stormed the fortress after a 13-day siege; the battle claimed the lives of all the Texan defenders, nearly 200 strong, including William Travis, James Bowie and Davy Crockett.

In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court, in Dred Scott v. Sandford, ruled 7-2 that Scott, a slave, was not an American citizen and therefore could not sue for his freedom in federal court.

In 1912, Oreo sandwich cookies were first introduced by the National Biscuit Co.

In 1933, a national bank holiday declared by President Franklin D. Roosevelt aimed at calming panicked depositors went into effect.

In 1964, heavyweight boxing champion Cassius Clay officially changed his name to Muhammad Ali.

In 1970, a bomb being built inside a Greenwich Village townhouse in New York by the radical Weathermen accidentally went off, destroying the house and killing three group members.

In 1973, Nobel Prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck, 80, died in Danby, Vermont.

In 1981, Walter Cronkite signed off for the last time as principal anchorman of "The CBS Evening News."

In 1998, the Army honored three Americans who'd risked their lives and turned their weapons on fellow soldiers to stop the slaughter of Vietnamese villagers at My Lai (mee ly) in 1968.

In 2002, Independent Counsel Robert Ray issued his final report in which he wrote that former President Bill Clinton could have been indicted and probably would have been convicted in the scandal involving former White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

In 2016, former first lady Nancy Reagan died in Los Angeles at age 94.

Ten years ago: In Super Tuesday contests, Republican Mitt Romney narrowly won in pivotal Ohio, seized a home-state victory in Massachusetts, triumphed in Idaho, Vermont and Alaska, and won easily in Virginia, where neither Rick Santorum nor Newt Gingrich was on the ballot; Santorum won contests in Oklahoma, Tennessee and North Dakota, while Gingrich won at home in Georgia. Former Texas tycoon R. Allen Stanford was convicted in Houston of bilking his investors out of more than \$7 billion through a Ponzi scheme. (Stanford was sentenced to 110 years in prison.)

Five years ago: Without fanfare, President Donald Trump signed a scaled-back version of his controversial ban on many foreign travelers, one that still barred new visas for people from six Muslim-majority countries and temporarily shut down America's refugee program.

One year ago: After working through the night on a mountain of amendments, the Senate narrowly approved a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, setting up final approval by the House. Carla Wallenda, a member of "The Flying Wallendas" high-wire act and the last surviving child of the famed troupe's founder, died at 85 in Sarasota, Florida.

Today's Birthdays: Former FBI and CIA director William Webster is 98. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan is 96. Dancer-actor Carmen de Lavallade is 91. Former Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova is 85. Former Sen. Christopher "Kit" Bond, R-Mo., is 83. Actor-writer Joanna Miles is 82. Actor Ben Murphy is 80. Opera singer Dame Kiri Te Kanawa is 78. Rock musician Hugh Grundy (The Zombies) is 77. Rock singer-musician David Gilmour (Pink Floyd) is 76. Actor Anna Maria Horsford is 75. Actor-director

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Rob Reiner is 75. Singer Kiki Dee is 75. TV consumer reporter John Stossel is 75. Composer-lyricist Stephen Schwartz is 74. Rock singer-musician Phil Alvin (The Blasters) is 69. Sports correspondent Armen Keteyian is 69. Actor Tom Arnold is 63. Actor D.L. Hughley is 59. Country songwriter Skip Ewing is 58. Actor Shuler Hensley is 55. Actor Connie Britton is 55. Actor Moira Kelly is 54. Actor Amy Pietz is 53. Rock musician Chris Broderick (Megadeth) is 52. Basketball Hall of Famer Shaquille O'Neal is 50. Country singer Trent Willmon is 49. Rapper Beanie Sigel is 48. Rapper Bubba Sparxxx is 45. Actor Shaun Evans is 42. Rock musician Chris Tomson (Vampire Weekend) is 38. MLB pitcher Jake Arrieta is 36. Actor Eli Marienthal is 36. Rapper/producer Tyler, the Creator is 31. Actor Dillon Freasier is 26. Actor Savannah Stehlin is 26. Actor Millicent Simmonds (Film: "Wonderstruck") is 19.