

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 1 of 76

- [1- Upcoming Events](#)
- [2- RL21 Informational Meeting Ad](#)
- [3- Boynton 70th Anniversary](#)
- [4- Groton Area retains traveling trophy in the "Battle of the Tigers"](#)
- [7- South Dakota Average Gas Prices](#)
- [8- Drought Monitor](#)
- [9- City Council Agenda](#)
- [10- Brown County Commission Agenda](#)
- [11- SD SearchLight: THC seltzers quietly find a foothold in cannabis-cautious South Dakota](#)
- [16- SD SearchLight: Here's hoping a thousand points of light grow from Thune's anti-Trump flicker](#)
- [18- SD SearchLight: Challenger criticizes congressman for celebrating project after voting against some of its funding](#)
- [20- Weather Pages](#)
- [24- Daily Devotional](#)
- [25- Subscription Form](#)
- [26- Lottery Numbers](#)
- [27- Upcoming Groton Events](#)
- [28- News from the Associated Press](#)



May you have a wonderful day surrounded by faith, love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, gentleness, sunshine, family, and friends.

Happy Weekend!

GOD'S BLESSINGS



Saturday, Aug. 31

Volleyball C Team tournament at Matchbox Club in Aberdeen

CLOSED: Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 1

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.

St. John's Lutheran: Worship with communion at St. John's, 9 a.m.; at Zion, 11 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m.; SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School, 9:15 a.m.; worship, 10:30 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde Worship, 8:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 2

NO SCHOOL - Labor Day

Soccer with Mitchell in Groton: Boys at 1 p.m., Girls at 3 p.m.

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

Informational Meeting

Never in 135 years of statehood has a law jeopardized people's Property Rights & Local Control like RL 21

Open Forum

Mon. Sept 9, 2024

6:30 pm Meeting

Ramkota

1400 8TH Ave NW Aberdeen, SD

Speakers:

Curtis Jundt - 40 yr pipeline engineer

Rep Julie Auch: District 18 Rep Jim Eschenbaum: Chair of RL 21

Former Speaker Spencer Gosch District 23

Sen Elect Mark Lapka District 23

Ed Fischbach - Spink County Farmer

Contact for more info:

Jodi Waltman: 605-216-8171

"Pie Auction Fundraiser"



70th Anniversary
Nancy and Charles Boynton 70th
Wedding Anniversary Celebration
will be held at the
Aberdeen Senior Center on
September 7th from 2- 4!

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 4 of 76

Groton Area retains traveling trophy in the "Battle of the Tigers"

Groton Area's newly formed football co-op with Langford Area posted an opening game win over Mobridge-Pollock, 29-12. The game was played at Doney Field in Groton Friday evening. Groton retains the traveling trophy in the Battle of the Tigers.

Mobridge-Pollock had the first offensive drive, but ended up punting after four plays. Groton Area saw penalties in its first possession. The Tigers had one first down before having to punt on fourth and 17.

Mobridge-Pollock started out on its own 30 yard line and went the distance to score on a Marc Saxon 14 yard run. The drive lasted 3:27, went 70 yards in eight plays and had three first downs. The PAT run failed.

On the following kickoff, Keegen Tracy got the reception and dashed 84 yards to score in a 15 second scramble. The PAT kick by Joao Nunes was good and Groton took the lead, 7-6.

Mobridge-Pollock only had four pops at the ball and ended up turning the ball over on downs while failing to convert one fourth and one.

Groton Area took over on the Moberidge-Pollock 39 yards. The drive started with 1:32 left in the first quarter and culminated with 9:10 left in the second quarter when Korbin Kucker scored on a three yard run. The PAT was good on a Brevin Fliehs run. That drive went 61 yards in 4:22 with three first downs in 12 plays.

The visiting Tigers got two quick first downs, but the drive was halted when Taylor Diegel intercepted the ball at the Groton Area 20 yard line.

The Tigers would take advantage of the turnover and Keegen Tracy would score on a 23 yard pass from Kucker. That drive would take nine plays, three first downs, 80 yards in 4:44. The PAT kick by Nunes was good and Groton Area took a 22-6 lead with 1:17 left in the half.

Mobridge-Pollock would end up punting on fourth and 15 and Groton had two plays before the half ended.

Groton Area would end up punting on the opening possession of the second half on fourth and 11.

Mobridge-Pollock tried to get things going with two first downs, but ended up turning the ball over on downs on fourth and one.



Christian Ehresmann carries the traveling trophy through the line of fans after the win over Moberidge-Pollock. (Photo by Paul Kosel)



It was a picturesque view after the sun went down during the football game. (Photo by Bruce Babcock)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 5 of 76



Keegen Tracy makes the catch in the endzone for a 23-yard pass play from Korbin Kucker. The catch gave Groton Area a 22-6 lead with 1:17 left in the first half.

(Photo by Paul Kosel)

catches for 68 yards and one touchdown, Conner Glines had two catches for 23 yards, Teylor Diegel had two catches for 19 yards, Christian Ehresmann and Breven Flihs each had one catch for 12 yards and Korbin Kucker had one catch for seven yards. Max Saxon led Mobridge-Pollock with two catches for 46 yards and Easton Eisman had one catch for six yards.

There were no fumbles in the game.

Groton Area had eight penalties for 65 yards and Mobridge-Pollock had seven penalties for 60 yards.

Defensive leaders for Groton Area were Tucker Harder with 13 tackles, Ryder Johnson with nine

Groton Area started on its own 15 yard line and ended up punting on the first play of the fourth quarter.

The visiting Tigers got a big boost with two Groton Area penalties, putting the ball on the Groton Area 21 yard line. The Groton Area defense held Mobridge-Pollock who ended up turning the ball over on downs on fourth and four. Groton could not get anything going and ended up punting on fourth and two.

Mobridge-Pollock started on the Groton Area 34 yard line. Eight plays and 2:08 later, Eiseman would score from one yard out. The PAT run failed. Mobridge-Pollock had three first downs. Now it was 22-12, Groton Area.

On Groton's first place from scrimmage after the kick-off, Korbin Kucker would run 40 yards in 11 seconds to score. The PAT kick by Nunes was good and Groton Area led, 29-12, with 3:38 left in the game.

Mobridge-Pollock got two first downs before time expired and the game was over.

Mobridge-Pollock had more first downs, 13-10, and more yards rushing, 231-82. Groton Area had 20 carries for 82 yards. Korbin Kucker has 12 carries for 41 yards and two touchdowns, Christian Ehresmann had two carries for 17 yards, Keegen Tracy had two carries for 16 yards and Ryder Johnson had four carries for eight yards. Mobridge-Pollock was led by Max Saxon with 26 carries for 151 yards while Tyler Schmeichel had six carries for 42 yards and Peter Fried had three carries for 14 yards.

Groton Area dominated the air show, completing 10 of 16 passes for 141 yards. Mobridge Pollock completed four of 10 for 50 yards and Teylor Diegel caught an interception. Ryder Johnson completed seven of nine for 94 yards and Korbin Kucker completed three of seven for 47 yards and one touchdown.

Receivers were Keegen Tracy with three



Teylor Diegel runs up the side to gain yards for the Groton Area Tigers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 6 of 76



Ryder Johnson gets his foot on the ball as he punts for the Groton Area Tigers. (Photo by Paul Kosel)

and Christian Ehresmann and Karter Moody each had eight. Carter Hinsz led Mobridge-Pollock with eight tackles and Luke Olson had five.

Coach Shaun Wanner said, "The kids played well in the first half. We have a lot of kids we can go too. We have some guys that can run it, we have some guys that can catch it. We have to get a little bit better up front. I think by the end of the year, barring injuries, we're going to be a pretty solid football team. It was a big win for us. Mobridge-Pollock is a good football team and putting up 22 points on them in the first half was a big key for that." Wanner said that Nick Morris is in concussion protocol after taking a hard hit.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM, sponsored by Agtegra, Avantara Groton, Bierman Farm Service, BK Custom T's & More, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, John Sieh Agency, Jungle Lanes & Lounge, R&M Farms/Rix Farms, The Meathouse in Andover.

Justin Olson did the play-by-play with Paper-Paul. Jeslyn Kosel ran the camera. There was a halftime interview with Tom Woods.

- Paul Kosel



Mobridge-Pollock players help carry stuff off the field after the game. (Photo by Jeslyn Kosel)

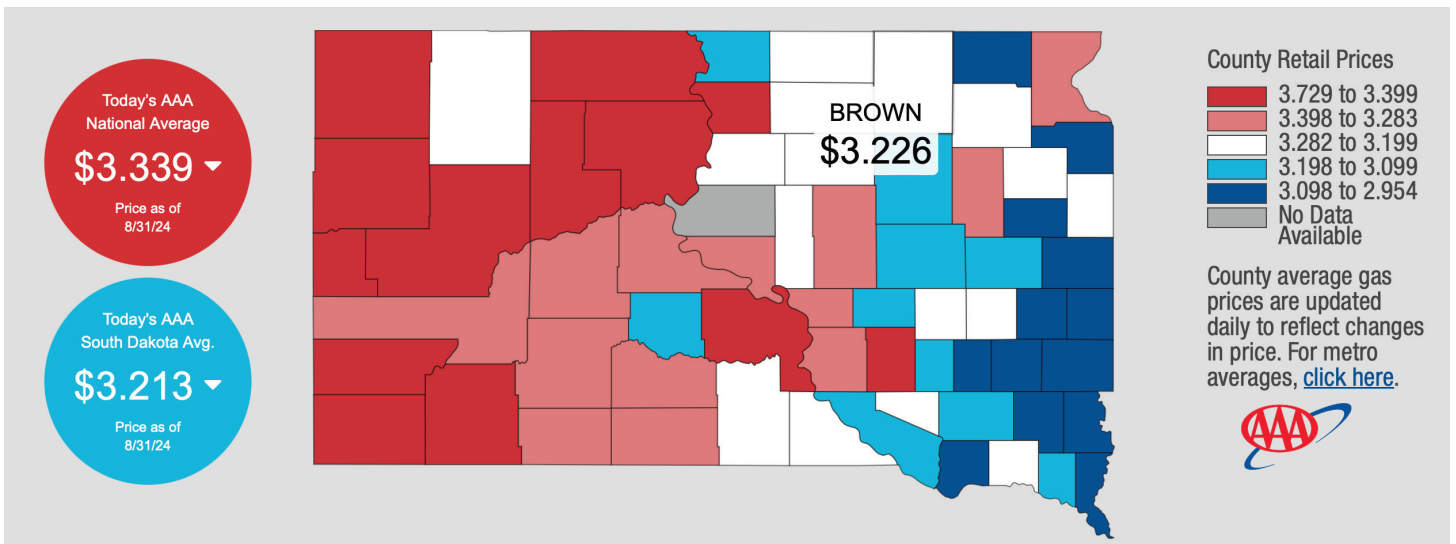
Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 7 of 76

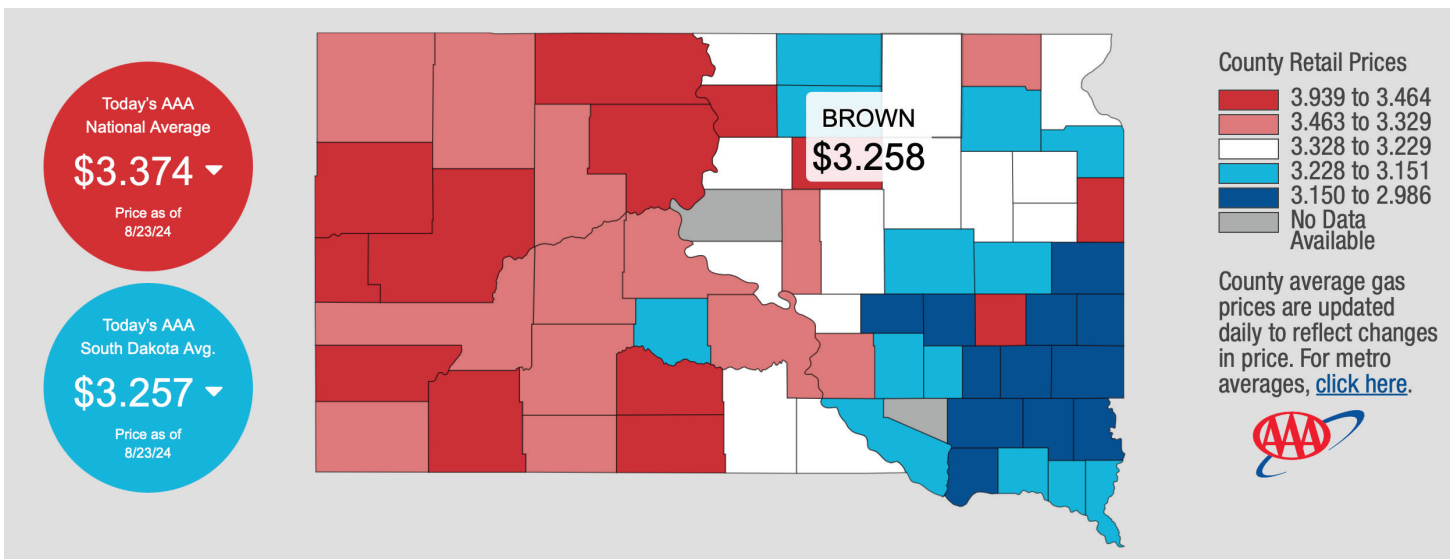
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.213	\$3.421	\$3.844	\$3.389
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.224	\$3.436	\$3.857	\$3.397
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.259	\$3.456	\$3.887	\$3.413
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.305	\$3.502	\$3.946	\$3.457
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.740	\$3.905	\$4.371	\$4.244

This Week



2 weeks ago



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 8 of 76

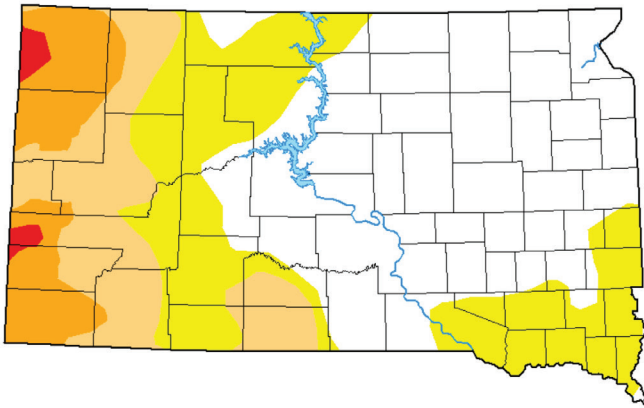
Drought Classification

None
D0 (Abnormally Dry)
D1 (Moderate Drought)

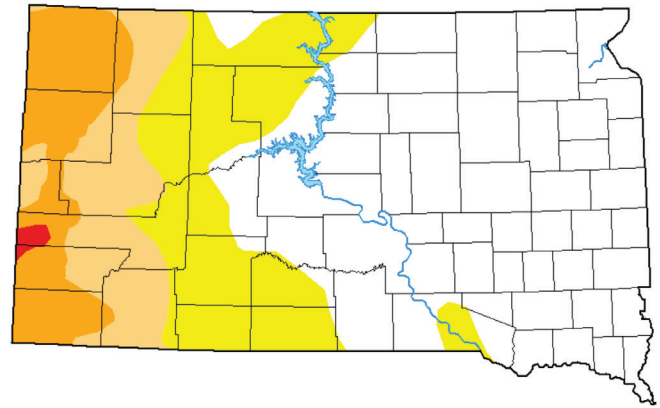
D2 (Severe Drought)
D3 (Extreme Drought)

D4 (Exceptional Drought)
No Data

Drought Monitor



August 27



August 20

Weekly temperatures were warmer than normal across most of the High Plains region, ranging from near to 2 degrees below normal in western Colorado to 6 to 10 degrees above normal in parts of Nebraska and the Dakotas. Thunderstorm complexes moved across parts of the region, dropping locally 2 to 3 inches of rain. In many cases, the storms were localized with one part of a county receiving rain and another part getting nothing – this was the case in other parts of the country as well. Drought or abnormal dryness contracted in a few areas of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota, but expanded or intensified in parts of all of the High Plains states. USDA statistics indicate half or more of the topsoil is short or very short in Wyoming (73%), Colorado (52%), and Kansas (52%), and half or more of the subsoil is short or very short in Wyoming (81%) and Kansas (57%).

Groton City Council Meeting Agenda

September 3, 2024 – 7:00pm

City Hall – 120 N Main Street

(IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CALL IN TO THIS MEETING, PLEASE MAKE PRIOR ARRANGEMENTS TO DO SO BY CALLING CITY HALL 605-397-8422)

1. Approval of Agenda
2. Public Comments - pursuant to SDCL 1-25-1
(Public Comments will offer the opportunity for anyone not listed on the agenda to speak to the council. Speaking time will be limited to 3 minutes. No action will be taken on questions or items not on the agenda.)
3. Electric Metering
4. Wastewater Project Update – IMEG Corp.
5. Request to Acquire Bucket Truck to Replace 2007 Ford F55
6. Stop Sign Discussion – North 3rd Street and East 4th Avenue
7. Department Reports
8. Soccer Field Gate Quote
9. Proclamation – Hunger Action Day on September 10, 2024
10. Minutes
11. Bills
12. Executive session personnel & legal 1-25-2 (1) & (3)
13. Adjournment

Broton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 10 of 76

**BROWN COUNTY
BROWN COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA
REGULAR MEETING TUESDAY**

September 3, 2024 8:45 A.M.

COMMISSIONER'S CHAMBERS, COURTHOUSE ANNEX - 25 MARKET STREET, ABERDEEN SD

1. Call To Order - Pledge of Allegiance
2. Approval of Agenda
3. Opportunity of Public Comment
4. Dirk Rogers, Highway Superintendent
 - a. Set Hearing Date for Highway 5-year plan/BIG Program Public Meeting
 - b. Submit Utilities Certificate for the Sand Lake Bridge Project
5. Discuss & Possibly Approve RFP for Indigent Counsel 1-yr. Contract
6. Public Hearing for Fiscal Year 2025 Provisional Budget
7. Consent Calendar
 - a. Approval of General Meeting Minutes of August 27, 2024
 - b. Claims
 - c. HR Report
 - d. Lease Agreement
 - e. Travel Request
 - f. Claim Assignment
8. Other Business
9. Executive Session (if requested per SDCL 1-25-2)
10. Adjourn

Brown County Commission Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

<https://meet.goto.com/BrCoCommission>

You can also dial in using your phone. United States: [+1 \(872\) 240-3311](tel:+18722403311)

Access Code: 601-168-909 #

Get the app now and be ready when your first meeting starts: <https://meet.goto.com/install>

Public comment provides an opportunity for the public to address the county commission but may not exceed 3 minutes.

Public comment will be limited to 10 minutes (or at the discretion of the board).

Public comment will be accepted virtually when the virtual attendance option is available.

Official Recordings of Commission Meetings along with the Minutes can be found at

<https://www.brown.sd.us/departments/commission>



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>



Drinks advertised as THC- and cannabis-infused on the shelves of a Rapid City store in July 2024. (Seth Tupper/South Dakota Searchlight)

THC seltzers quietly find a foothold in cannabis-cautious South Dakota

Lawmakers, law enforcement leaders largely unaware of fast-growing hemp drink market

BY: JOHN HULT - FRIDAY AUGUST 30, 2024 12:50 PM

About a year ago, bar owner Justin Henrichsen started offering THC seltzers and cocktails at his four establishments in Rapid City, Spearfish and Sioux Falls.

Since then, he's watched the libations' popularity spike with each passing month, across age groups and demographics, sometimes outselling wine and on pace with craft beers.

What he hasn't seen are problems. A year in, he can say something about cannabis drinkers he can't say about beer drinkers.

"We've never had to cut anyone off, we've never had a bro come in and try to pound 15 of them, and we've never had to kick anybody out," Henrichsen said. "It's a non-issue."

The drinks are a natural extension of the adult beverage business, he argues, no more difficult to fold safely into a bar's daily operations than the higher-alcohol craft beers that began to take hold across the nation a few decades ago.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 12 of 76

"It's no different from serving a beer or a cocktail," he said. "You need to serve responsibly."

Jason Sandquist has a similar perspective. He's a founding partner in Wild Mind Ales, a Minnesota outfit that sells both craft beers and drinks with low-dose, hemp-derived THC, an intoxicant found in higher levels in traditional marijuana. The THC seltzers are also shipped to other states, including South Dakota.

Sandquist's company has been a vocal backer of hemp drinks, advocating for other states to follow the lead of Minnesota and embrace them as alcohol alternatives. Sandquist doesn't mind that THC beverage sales now outpace craft beers at the company's brewery. He also appreciates the THC drinks for the same reasons his customers do, namely that the drinks are low-calorie, low carb, and offer a buzz without a hangover.

"I just turned 40, and my body doesn't handle beer the way it used to," he said.

In Minnesota, THC beverages are "taking over," Sandquist said, with demand fueled by older people who don't want hangovers and younger people who spend at least some of their days living "California sober," meaning they use some forms of cannabis but don't drink alcohol.

"Kids these days that are 21 to 35, they want a healthier thing," Sandquist said. "All they want to do is drink a seltzer, hit their vape pen and go play pickleball."

But South Dakotans curious about THC drinks needn't seek out a Wild Mind product or visit one of Henrichsen's establishments, which include the Windsor Bar in Rapid City and Monk's House of Ale Repute in Sioux Falls. Bars, liquor stores and grocery stores around the state carry a variety of the THC-infused drinks from a variety of companies.

Their appearance on shelves at stores across the state has drawn plenty of customers, but has yet to draw much attention from lawmakers or the law enforcement community.

South Dakotans buying THC as lawmakers focus on other cannabis issues

Hemp drinks are so deeply under the radar in South Dakota that even some of the leaders who track cannabis use trends are unaware they exist.

South Dakota's Medical Marijuana Oversight Committee, created after voters legalized medical cannabis in 2020, was pulled into a lengthy discussion about hemp-derived cannabis alternatives on Aug. 19.

The state banned the sale – but not the possession – of several synthetic, high-inducing categories of THC this year, but committee members learned that other alternatives remain available and continue to cut into the bottom line of medical marijuana producers.

The gummies can be packaged like candy and enticing to children, they heard. Novel, chemically modified cannabinoids pop up all the time. State Health Lab Director Tim Southern said he's concerned about "garage chemists" and spikes in emergency room calls associated with edibles.

Not a word was spoken about THC seltzers.

The co-chair of the medical marijuana committee, Pierre Republican state Sen. Jim Mehlhaff, said he didn't know about seltzers before getting questions about them from South Dakota Searchlight.

"We have one more medical marijuana oversight meeting to go," Mehlhaff said last week. "I think I will ask staff to collect some information on that."

Sen. Erin Tobin, R-Winner, is the other co-chair of the committee. Tobin told Searchlight that Mehlhaff is not alone in his lack of familiarity with THC beverage trends.

"I guarantee you probably 90% or higher of the Legislature doesn't even realize it's happening," Tobin said.

Law enforcement leaders spoke at length about hemp-derived THC at the Aug. 19 meeting, but like lawmakers, police have focused their attention on products with synthetic ingredients.

Former Rapid City mayor and former Rapid City police chief Steve Allender, who's also a member of the state's Law Enforcement Officers Standards and Training Commission, said he hadn't heard of THC seltzers.

He's not surprised to hear about them, or to hear that sellers say they're less potent and problematic than alcohol.

"The question really is, what type of impact does it have on public safety?" Allender said. "Maybe if they're new, nobody knows that yet."

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 13 of 76

Attorney General Marty Jackley has not offered any statements on the beverages' safety or legality, in spite of multiple requests from South Dakota Searchlight in recent months.

When asked about seltzers most recently, Jackley spokesman Tony Mangan sent Searchlight a statement about the new state law that bans some synthetic categories of THC. The law does not ban the seltzers' advertised active ingredient.

"This law was approved by the state Legislature and signed by the governor. It is set forth in state statute," the statement reads. "Violators are subject to prosecution by local law prosecutors or the Attorney General's Office with the testing results done by the state lab."

When asked if there is any reason for consumers or retailers to be concerned about the legality of THC seltzers specifically, Mangan reiterated the statement.

Even patrons are sometimes surprised that their cannabis cocktails are unregulated, Henrichsen said. No one who's of age to drink alcohol needs a medical marijuana card to order them – a fact servers occasionally need to pass along to customers.

"One of the funniest things ever, and we've seen it a couple different times, is you'll have this sweet old couple ordering THC, and all they want to do is show you their med cards," Henrichsen said. "They're like, 'Do you need to see our med card?' We say 'no, you don't need it,' and they'll go 'are you sure?'"

Growth market

Unlike the products pulled from store shelves when the new South Dakota law's prohibition on chemically modified hemp products took effect in July, THC drinks are still around and apparently growing in popularity.

The seltzers work like a marijuana edible, except most varieties have less THC, and they tend to take effect more quickly. Consumers apparently like the sales pitch for a hangover-free buzz.

The investment information firm Grand View Research tagged the THC seltzer market at \$344 million in 2023, and expects the market to grow by 34% a year through 2030, to \$1.2 billion.

The growth is expected as more states move to decriminalize marijuana – which South Dakota voters will have the chance to do in November.

"This regulatory shift not only opens new markets but also normalizes cannabis consumption, reducing stigma and increasing consumer acceptance," the company's report on THC seltzers says.

The growth trend is apparent in South Dakota.

An online map from Sioux Falls-based Global Distributing, which wholesales several varieties of THC seltzer, shows the company distributing THC drinks to areas including Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Watertown, Aberdeen, Huron, Mitchell, Brookings, Vermillion and Yankton.

Henrichsen's establishments work with Global, in part because he knows the distributor works with long-established, trustworthy companies. He doesn't worry about getting a product from a less-than-reputable beverage maker, and the rapid proliferation of THC options means he doesn't have to.

"I mean, Surly is making these," Henrichsen said, referring to a Twin Cities outfit known for its craft beers, and for sponsoring charity programs like the Big Sioux River Greenway Cleanup. "We are using manufacturers that we know are quality, that we know are testing. There's more testing done on THC than there is on craft beer."

Global Distributing spokespeople declined to speak on the record about the beverages, however, as did a handful of other grocers and beverage dealers.

Those who did respond to Searchlight inquiries cited concerns about being targeted by law enforcement and lawmakers, given those two groups' historical aversion to policies that smack of pot legalization.

The story is different to the east. Minnesota has embraced the beverages, regulated them and built a framework for folding them into its consumer market in a way Sandquist and other hemp beverage boosters see as a model for other states.

Attempts in other states to regulate the beverages have turned into hassles for Wild Mind Ales. Iowa lawmakers spent part of this year wrangling over and enacting THC limits in low-dose beverages. Sandquist

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 14 of 76

said some of the provisions are unworkable, and in some ways nonsensical and too vague to comply with. Iowa THC beverage sellers have taken a similar position in federal court, with 10 of them suing to block the restrictions.

Sandquist would like to see the federal government legalize the beverages. Absent that, he said, states should work to put together consistent rules that would allow businesses to service their clientele across state lines.

He pointed to Iowa, but also to Georgia, where lawmakers have passed rules that would require seltzer cans to bear THC testing certificate stickers and a "universal" symbol to signal that the contents contain THC.

Wild Mind already puts a pot leaf on its cans and tests its products, but they don't have a state-specific label.

"We just want to play in a world where we don't have to create a new label for every state," he said.

The legality of seltzers and other liquid pot alternatives – and the varying state-by-state response – is tied to the 2018 farm bill passed by Congress.

That bill declared hemp with less than 0.3% delta-9 THC by weight as legal to cultivate, process and sell.

Gray market in most states

Since the 2018 farm bill, companies have taken advantage of the law to tap into compounds similar to delta-9 THC, such as delta-8 and delta-10, which are present in low levels in the hemp plant and are now being synthesized to use in higher amounts in consumer products.

But the drinks are made from naturally occurring THC from hemp, sellers say, and the 0.3 % limit isn't hard to comply with for beverages.

The seltzers are often sold in 8- to 16-ounce cans, with 2-10 milligrams of THC – an amount that barely registers in the weight of a beverage but is enough to deliver a buzz to people without a high tolerance for the drug.

Lab results from a company called Melo for its 5-milligram High Roller Grapefruit seltzer put the total THC level of an 8-ounce (227,000 milligram) can at 0.0014% – well below the 0.3% THC limit.

"There's plenty of wiggle room," said Caleb Rose, owner of Black Hills Vapors in the Rapid City area and leader of South Dakota Retailers for Better Alternatives. "You've got to be careful, there's so much wiggle room."

Rose talked about one concentrated THC syrup so strong that he tells customers to treat it like hard liquor. Syrups work like hard liquor, often used by bartenders or consumers to make mixed drinks.

"It's delta-9, it's hemp-derived, and it's legal because by weight, it's still less than 0.3%," Rose said. "There's plenty of THC to make that syrup be treated like a bottle of liquor, where you'd want to be careful with it."

For Henrichsen, "careful" means using the syrups to make cocktails to fit his customers' needs and comfort level without overdoing it. Just as with higher-alcohol beers or stronger liquors, he said, establishments need to manage serving sizes.

"Anything under 8% (alcohol by volume) gets put in a 12-ounce glass. Anything over 8% gets put in an eight-ounce glass. That's the same thing we do with milligrams in THC," Henrichsen said.

If someone wants a 5-milligram THC cocktail, he said, "we're not going to make you a double and put 10 milligrams in there, because that wouldn't be responsible."

THC drink sellers often instruct first-time users to start with half the beverage. At Windsor Bar, the menu for THC drinks says "recommended one per customer," though Henrichsen said the warning label, added when the bar first began serving them, has proven unnecessary because THC drinkers have yet to cause trouble or pass out in a booth.

In North Liberty, Iowa, Field Day Brewing co-founder Alec Travis told the Iowa Press-Gazette in February that he tells consumers to start with half of a seltzer and wait half an hour before drinking the rest.

Legislative discussions on the beverages, in turn, have typically involved lawmakers discussing what

safely constitutes a "low dose" beverage.

The Hemp Beverage Alliance has a list of best practices for sellers, including no sales to anyone younger than 21, a 10-milligram serving size, and labels warning against consumption while pregnant, about delayed effects ("start low, go slow"), and linking to a product's lab testing results.

Some in the industry are concerned that low-dose drinks will get a bad reputation based on what they see as an unfair affiliation with synthetically produced THC or beverages too strong for the average bargoer.

Heavy pot users don't like low-dose seltzers, Sandquist said, because they're too weak and the price point per milligram of THC is high compared to traditional cannabis.

"The sky didn't fall" when Minnesota signed off on low-dose drinks, he said, and he'd like to see other states approach the issue with the understanding that sellers aren't out to turn bargoers into shiftless potheads.

"If every state would copy what Minnesota did, it would be a really easy market to play in," he said. "You know, there's options for people that want a lower dose, that haven't done it ever, and they want to just kind of dip their toes in it. It's not going to send them to the moon."

How South Dakota might approach the beverages is an open question.

Legislature playing 'whack-a-mole'

During the marijuana oversight committee's most recent meeting, Sioux Falls Police Chief Jon Thum referred to the malleable THC market as "whack-a-mole," in that new products pop up as quickly as lawmakers move to regulate them.

Jeremiah Murphy, a lobbyist, said several times during the meeting that the legal medical marijuana industry he represents isn't connected to the hemp alternatives market.

Even so, Murphy argued, the simplest way to regulate the cannabis market would be to legalize recreational cannabis. Do that, he said, and the products consumers clearly want could be regulated and monitored like alcohol.

"If you want to sell alcoholic beverages in South Dakota, you have to get a license, and part of that is you have to sell safe beverages," Murphy said. "There are requirements there."

Sen. Tobin told South Dakota Searchlight that there is something to that argument, inasmuch as it simplifies the job of lawmakers and regulators.

"If it were legal, we could regulate it all and be on top of it. I think there is some truth to that, but with every benefit there's some risk. The people will have their chance to decide in November."

Tobin said there's another factor at play with the regulation of hemp alternatives: a laser-like focus from some lawmakers and regulators on keeping medical marijuana from creeping into recreational use.

Lawmakers who focus on tightening access and monitoring for potential misuse in the regulated medical cannabis industry, she said, might miss trends in the unregulated market for alternatives.

With medical marijuana, "a doctor is in charge, and it's a debilitating medical condition," Tobin said, "yet somebody who's perfectly healthy can walk down to the bar and grab a soda, a delta-9 soda, and you're not worried about that at all?"

Henrichsen isn't worried. The Rapid City bar owner feels any honest analysis of the risks and rewards of hemp beverages would show lawmakers how easily they can fit into the state's existing adult beverage culture.

"Everybody fears the unknown, but if we're doing this responsibly, you can't tell me that having 5 milligrams of THC is different from having a cocktail," Henrichsen said. "Ultimately, I think this needs to be looked at like alcohol or beer, where you have all the guardrails in place to make sure that underage kids aren't getting it."

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

COMMENTARY

Here's hoping a thousand points of light grow from Thune's anti-Trump flicker

KEVIN WOSTER

AUGUST 30, 2024 4:30 PM

Even in these deeply troubled political times, you can sometimes see a flicker of hope coming from what former President George H.W. Bush called "a thousand points of light."

And I think I saw one of those points flicker briefly last week, thanks to John Thune.

Bush used the "points of light" metaphor in his speech accepting the 1988 Republican presidential nomination and again a few months later in his inaugural address. He was referring to the good works of good people across the land and how they brightened the way forward to a better America.

You have to look hard these days to find examples of any points of light in our politics. That's particularly true in the Republican Party, which is ruled by a man — Donald Trump — who prefers gloomy metaphors like "American carnage" and overwrought predictions of a catastrophic future, unless we put him back in the White House.

So you search for signs of hope where you can in the ailing GOP. Or at least I do. And I found one last week in the words of South Dakota's senior U.S. senator while he was discussing trade issues at Dakotafest, an annual agricultural show in Mitchell.

Speaking to reporters following a panel discussion that included Sen. Mike Rounds and Rep. Dusty Johnson, Thune disagreed with Trump on a key point of trade policy.

Let me repeat that: He disagreed with Trump. In public. On something important. That's an unusual and somewhat perilous move — politically speaking at the least — for a Republican politician these days.

But as reported in a South Dakota Searchlight story by Josh Haiar, Thune said Trump's recent call for a 10% tariff on all imports and a 60% tariff on Chinese imports was a "recipe for increased inflation."

While allowing that targeted tariffs can be justified against a nation engaging in unfair trade practices, or "cheating," as Thune called it, he doesn't support across-the-board tariffs that Trump recently advocated and seems to like.

No big deal? Maybe not. But disagreeing with Trump is dicey business in the GOP. That's particularly true at a time when Democrats are on an emotional-sugar high following their national convention in Chicago and polls show Trump, who thought he could cruise to victory in November over a fading Joe Biden, is now in a dead heat with the newly nominated Kamala Harris.

In addition, Thune is the GOP whip in the U.S. Senate and hopes to take the Republican leader's spot to be vacated by Kentucky Sen. Mitch McConnell at the end of the year. That's not a sure thing, especially if Trump were to oppose Thune as the new leader.



U.S. Sen. John Thune, R-South Dakota, participates in a TV interview at the U.S. Capitol on March 7, 2024, in Washington, D.C. (Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 17 of 76

So why would Thune stick his neck out?

First, he is what Trump never has been: a traditional conservative Republican with a general inclination toward free trade. And he was speaking at a farm show, a gathering of people whose financial lives depend on trade.

But could there be even more than that at work? Could it be that Thune's honest response reflecting consistent Republican trade policies is also a sign that Donald Trump's stranglehold on the Party of Lincoln is slipping, just a bit?

That would be a tiny flicker from a point of light, a point of hope, for the Republican Party and for the nation. What if a few more reasonable Republicans decided they could disagree with Trump in public? And a few more after that?

What if there were more and more public points of light — points of reason and decency and dignity — glittering across the party and the nation? Imagine how much better the present would be and the future would look.

Thune is a reasonable conservative by nature. He's also a gentleman by nature. In other words, nothing like Trump. And while Thune plays plenty of politics as a Republican leader in the Senate, he tends to do it respectfully and will periodically work with Democrats to get things done.

Thune was honored recently for getting things done, in fact, when he received the Titan of Public Service award from the Orrin G. Hatch Foundation, which is named after the late Republican senator from Utah.

The award goes to those who exemplify "the values of service, civility and bipartisanship, which were the hallmarks of Sen. Hatch's public service," according to the foundation.

Thune has "demonstrated the ability to get things done for the American people," the foundation continued. In general, I think that's true of Thune. Certainly the civility part is true, and the service part. I might not agree with everything he has gotten done, of course, or everything he hasn't gotten done.

I wish, for example, he had joined all 50 Senate Democrats and seven Republicans in the Senate in voting to convict Donald Trump in the impeachment trial following the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on our nation's Capitol, an attack that Trump inspired in his effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Trump was impeached by the House, and a trial in the Senate followed. Had he been convicted, Trump would have been barred from future public office, which would have opened the door for a different and surely more suitable GOP presidential nominee this year.

I was also deeply disappointed five years earlier when Thune joined McConnell and other Republicans — including Hatch — in refusing even to consider the well-qualified Merrick Garland for the U.S. Supreme Court. President Barack Obama nominated Garland, now the U.S. attorney general, in March of 2016 to fill the seat of Justice Antonin Scalia, who had died that February.

The excuses O'Connell, Thune and other Republicans, who controlled the Senate, came up with were both political and ludicrous. In a weak attempt at justification, Thune said at the time that the March nomination by Obama came too close to the November election:

"The American people deserve to have their voices heard on the nomination of the next Supreme Court justice, who could fundamentally alter the direction of the Supreme Court for a generation. Since the next presidential election is already underway, the next president should make this lifetime appointment to the Supreme Court."

Well, while the next presidential campaign was underway, Election Day was still months away. Besides, the American people had already made their voices heard when they elected Barack Obama as president for a second term in 2012. Eight months before the general election in 2016, Obama had the right to offer a nomination and the Senate had the obligation to consider it, with hearings and votes.

Because of the Republican power play, Donald Trump made the appointment on Jan. 31, 2017, almost a year after Scalia died.

So, there are a couple of smudges on that Titan of Public Service Award for John Thune. But there also are other ways in which it is deserved.

Thune can add to those ways by continuing to speak truth to the power of Trump when truth is called

for, and perhaps embolden other Republicans to do the same.

Who knows how many points of light that could create, or what they could mean to the future of our country.

Kevin Woster grew up on a farm near Reliance and worked for decades as a journalist, including stops at the Brookings Register, Sioux Falls Argus Leader, Rapid City Journal, KELO-TV and South Dakota Public Broadcasting, plus freelance assignments for outdoors and agricultural magazines. He lives in Rapid City.

Challenger criticizes congressman for celebrating project after voting against some of its funding

Republican incumbent cites prior support for Lewis and Clark water system

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - AUGUST 30, 2024 8:00 AM

U.S. Rep. Dusty Johnson is taking criticism from his opponent for celebrating a water system's progress this month, after he voted against a bill three years ago that provided some of the system's most recent funding.

Johnson, a South Dakota Republican, voted against the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that Democratic President Joe Biden signed in 2021. A provision in the voluminous

bill provided \$152.5 million that helped connect Madison to the Lewis and Clark Regional Water System. Johnson and other dignitaries celebrated the connection during a ribbon-cutting ceremony earlier this month.

Rep. Johnson's Democratic challenger, Sheryl Johnson, criticized the congressman for posing "proudly" for a group photo at the event, in front of a sign declaring "Project funded by President Joe Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law." South Dakota's two Republican U.S. senators, both present at the ribbon cutting, were also criticized along with Rep. Johnson this week in a state Democratic Party news release for their lack of support for the bill.

Sheryl Johnson said in her own news release that Rep. Johnson was engaging in "double-talk, plain and



South Dakota congressional delegates and other speakers and attendees cut a ribbon to celebrate Madison's connection to the Lewis and Clark Regional Water System on Aug. 21, 2024. (Makenzie Huber/South Dakota Searchlight)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 19 of 76

simple.”

“Dusty wants to take credit for projects he’s tried to block funding for,” she said, “all while pushing policies that favor billionaires and his big-money donors over the needs of regular South Dakotans. South Dakota deserves better.”

Rep. Johnson said in 2021 that he voted against the \$1.2 trillion bill because it was too costly and relied on one-time funding that would “create a massive fiscal cliff in a few years,” even though he supported the bill’s focus on roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

“I simply can’t support more unsustainable spending,” he said at the time.

He responded to Sheryl Johnson’s criticism in an emailed statement to South Dakota Searchlight.

“I’ve advocated for Lewis and Clark funding in every annual appropriations package since I’ve been in Congress,” Rep. Johnson said. “The recent infrastructure package did provide the final dollars for this project, but a huge bipartisan team set aside politics to provide the bulk of the funding over decades. I’m proud to be one of the leaders of that team.”

The pipeline delivering the water covers 310 miles and spans southeastern South Dakota, southwestern Minnesota and northwestern Iowa. The roughly \$700 million water system has been under construction for more than 20 years and serves about 350,000 people. The water source is a series of wells that tap into an aquifer adjacent to the Missouri River.

As of March, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law had provided \$2.5 billion to 357 projects in South Dakota. About \$1.6 billion went toward transportation, \$402 million for water quality and infrastructure, and \$310 million for broadband internet.

Lewis and Clark Regional Water System Executive Director Troy Larson said in an emailed statement that the infrastructure law has been a “godsend” and helped accelerate the project. He added that the nonprofit water system has worked with Republicans and Democrats to further its mission.

Before being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, Rep. Johnson worked for Gov. Mike Rounds and Gov. Dennis Daugaard and helped secure state funding, Larson said. Rep. Johnson has since “taken the lead” in the House to increase funding for the Bureau of Reclamation’s rural water program, Larson said, and is the nonprofit’s “go-to guy” in the House for non-financial issues such as administrative delays.

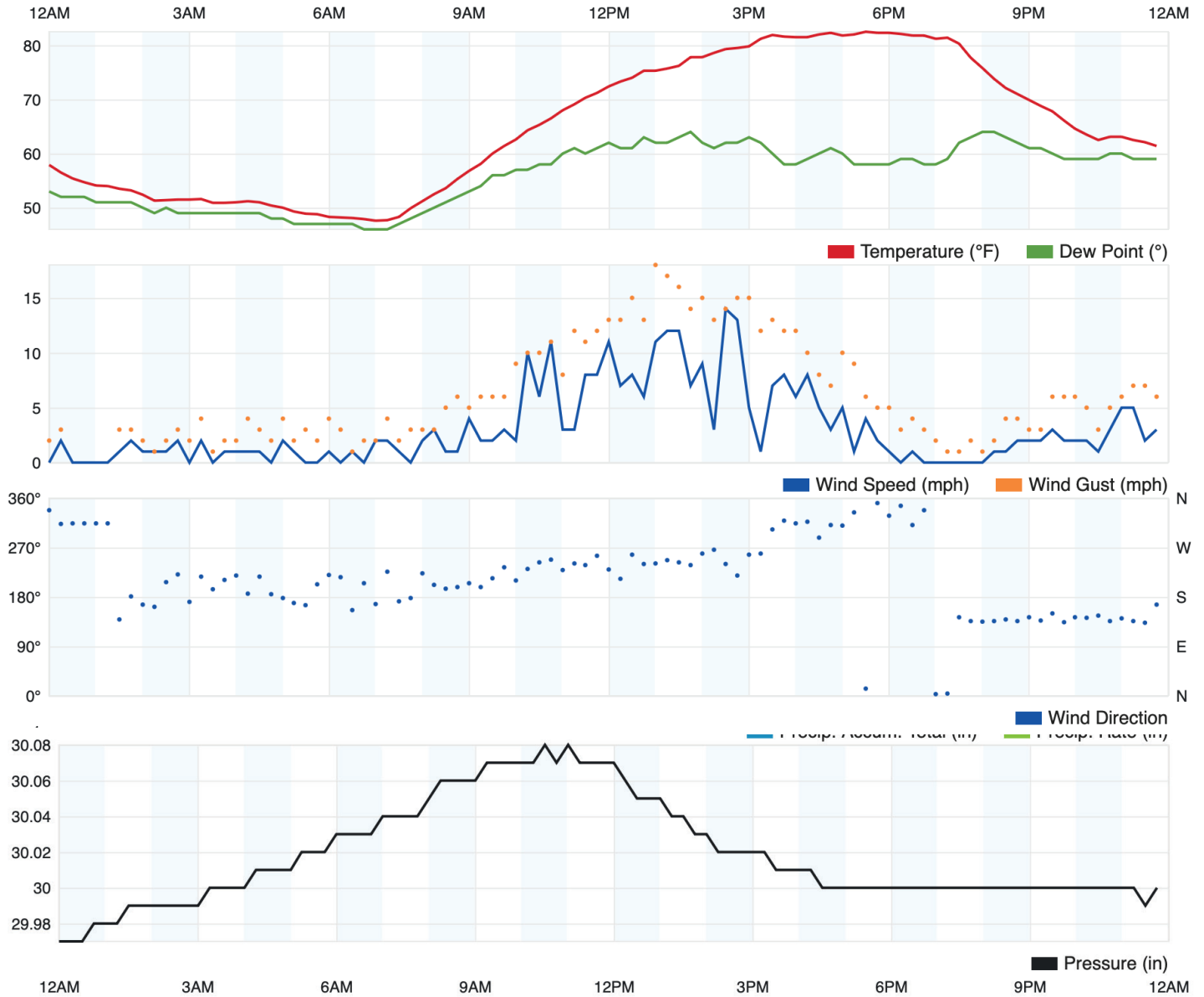
“His office is usually the first one we call,” Larson said.

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She’s spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 20 of 76

Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 21 of 76

Today



High: 88 °F

Sunny

Tonight



Low: 46 °F

Clear

Sunday



High: 74 °F

Sunny

Sunday Night



Low: 52 °F

Mostly Clear

Labor Day



High: 79 °F

Sunny then
Sunny and
Breezy

Labor Day Weekend Forecast

Today



Winds becoming
northerly 20-30 mph

Highs: 84-92°

Sunday



Cooler with light winds

Highs: 70s

Labor Day



Southerly wind gusts
30-40 mph

Highs: 84-92°

August 31, 2024
3:37 AM

National Weather Service
Aberdeen, SD

While it will be sunny this weekend, we do have stronger winds to deal with at times. A front moving through today will shift winds to the north at 20-30 mph. Then on Labor Day, southerly winds will gust to 30-40 mph.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 22 of 76

Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 83 °F at 5:29 PM

Low Temp: 48 °F at 6:55 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 12:49 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 13 hours, 20 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 98 in 1921

Record Low: 32 in 1987

Average High: 80

Average Low: 53

Average Precip in Aug.: 2.24

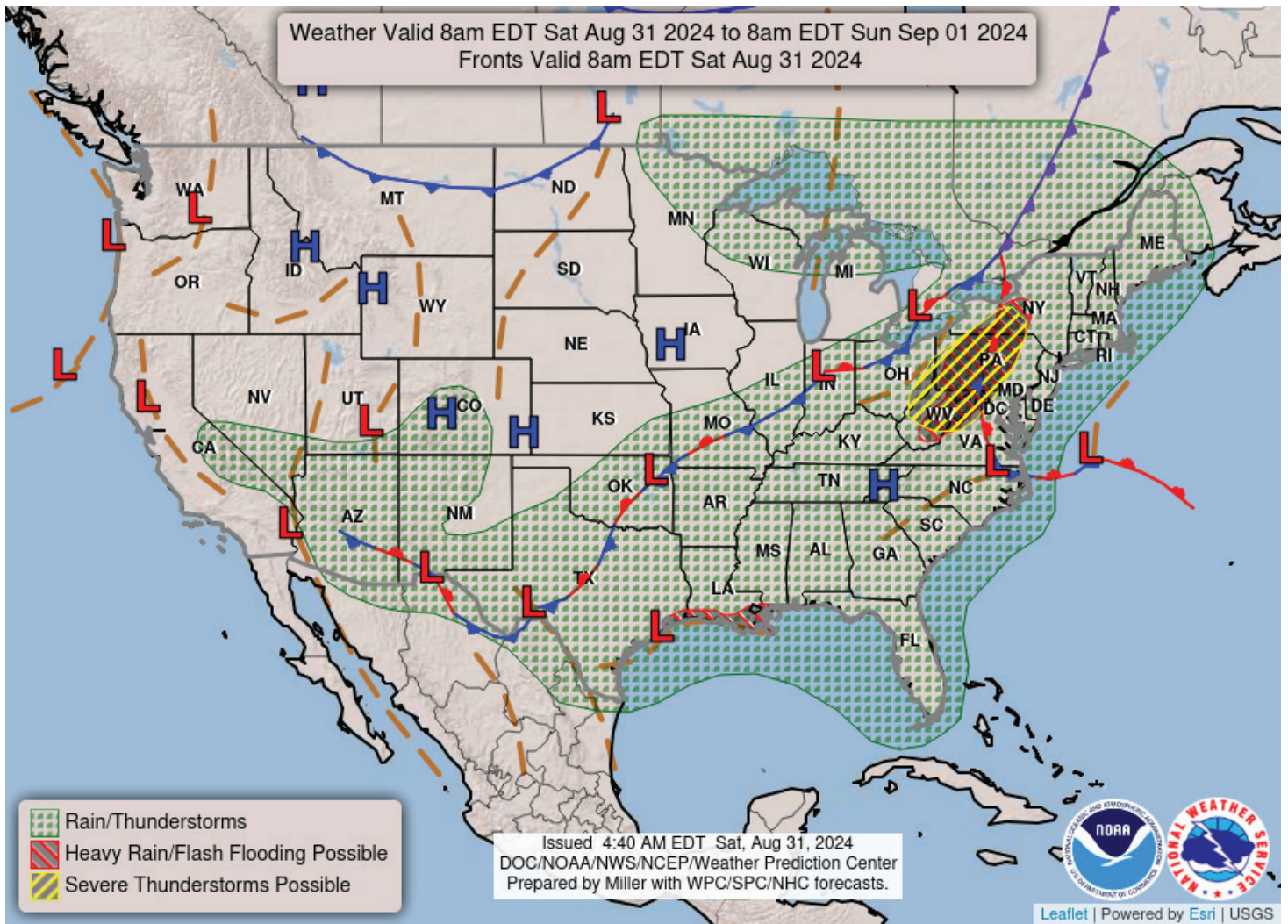
Precip to date in Aug.: 4.45

Average Precip to date: 16.34

Precip Year to Date: 19.34

Sunset Tonight: 8:12:46 pm

Sunrise Tomorrow: 6:53:23 am



Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 23 of 76

Today in Weather History

August 31, 1977: High winds accompanying thunderstorms moved across the southern part of Brown County during the early morning hours. A barn was destroyed three miles west of Warner. Many trees were damaged in the Stratford area. A large, empty fuel tank, southeast of Watertown was folded inward by strong winds. High wind damage was also reported in Faulk and Day Counties.

August 31, 2013: Thunderstorms produced numerous reports of large hail and damaging winds in and near Sioux Falls on the evening of August 31st. Large hail broke windows and damaged many vehicles, as well as siding and roofs on the west side of Sioux Falls. One automobile dealer with a large temporary outdoor display reported four thousand cars were damaged. Estimated property damage was listed at four million dollars. Thunderstorm winds also destroyed several businesses, including a large retail store which was also struck by lightning. The large store lost part of its roof, while the stockroom of the same store and its contents were also damaged. A canopy type tent was destroyed, and a 20-foot retaining wall was blown down. The winds caused extensive tree damage, including several trees blown down, one of which blocked a major intersection when it fell.

1886: A magnitude 7.3 earthquake shook Charleston, South Carolina around 9:50 pm on this day. This earthquake is the most damaging quake to occur in the southeast United States. This earthquake caused 60 deaths and between 5 to 6 million dollars in damage to over 2,000 buildings in the southeastern United States.

1915 - The temperature at Bartlesville, OK, dipped to 38 degrees to establish a state record for the month of August. (The Weather Channel)

1922 - An incredible hailstorm occurred near West Chester, PA dropped so much hail that fields were covered with up to two feet of drifted hail the next day.

1935 - The most intense hurricane to make landfall was a modest tropical depression on this day. Called the Labor Day Hurricane, this storm went through phenomenal intensification to become a Category 5 hurricane by September 2nd.

1954 - Hurricane Carol swept across eastern New England killing sixty persons and causing 450 million dollars damage. It was the first of three hurricanes to affect New England that year. (David Ludlum)

1971 - The low of 84 degrees and high of 108 degrees at Death Valley, CA, were the coolest of the month. The average daily high was 115.7 degrees that August, and the average daily low was 93.4 degrees. (The Weather Channel)

1984 - Lightning ignited several forest fires in Montana, one of which burned through 100,000 acres of timber and grassland. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Eight cities in Washington and Oregon reported record high temperatures for the date, including Eugene OR and Portland OR with afternoon highs of 102 degrees. The high of 102 degrees at Portland smashed their previous record for the date by twelve degrees. Frost was reported in South Dakota. Aberdeen SD established a record for the month of August with a morning low of 32 degrees, and Britton SD dipped to 31 degrees. (The National Weather Summary)

1988 - August ended on a relatively mild and tranquil note for most of the nation. Forest fires in the northwestern U.S. scorched 180,000 acres of land during the last week of August. (The National Weather Summary)

1989 - Thunderstorms developing along a stationary front spread severe weather from Minnesota to Indiana through the course of the day and night. Thunderstorms in Minnesota produced baseball size hail near Saint Michael and Hutchinson, and drenched Moose Lake with nine inches of rain in six hours. Tucson AZ hit 100 degrees for a record 79th time in the year, surpassing a record established the previous year. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)



WHY DO WE SUFFER?

Many of us, from time to time, ask ourselves the age-old question: "If God is God, and if God is a great God and if God is a good God and if God is a powerful God, why does He allow bad things to happen to me and others who have good intentions and want to please Him?"

Deep down we do believe that He is a good and great and powerful God. But that question still nags at our innermost thoughts and feelings and from time to time challenges our faith with subtle doubts.

He certainly does have everything under His control, and He does desire our very best. But not all things, such as sorrow and suffering, seem good while we are going through them.

I remember very well my mother's homemade bread. I would return home from school, I and the entire house would be filled with the aroma of fresh baked bread waiting for some butter and homemade strawberry jam.

But by themselves, I did not like flour, yeast, shortening or baking soda. But when Mom mixed them together, allowed them to "rise" and then baked them in a hot oven, the results were amazing and wonderful.

Is that not how God works? Some pain here. A lot of suffering there. A time of grief. Sorrow for a season. Financial problems. Discouragement over a loss. That's God's mixing everything together for our good and His will.

Prayer: Father, give us grace and courage to look at our lives the way that You look at them – knowing and believing that everything works for our good and Your glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. Romans 8:28

We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 25 of 76

The Groton Independent Printed & Mailed Weekly Edition Subscription Form

All prices listed include 6.5% Sales Tax

- Black & White \$48.99/year
- Colored \$79.88/year
- Colored \$42.60/6 months
- E-Weekly* \$31.95/year

* The E-Weekly is a PDF file emailed to you each week. It does not grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

E-mail _____

Phone Number _____

Mail Completed Form to:

Groton Independent

P.O. Box 34

Groton, SD 57445-0034

or scan and email to paperpaul@grotonsd.net

Groton Daily Independent www.397news.com Subscription Form

This option will grant you access to the GDI/Video Archives.

- 1 Month \$15.98
- 3 Months \$26.63
- 6 Months \$31.95
- 9 Months \$42.60
- 12 Months \$53.25

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

City _____

State, Zip Code _____

Phone Number _____

The following will be used for your log-in information.

E-mail _____

Password _____

Pay with Paypal. Type the following into your browser window:

paypal.me/paperpaul

Pay with Venmo: [@paperpaul](https://venmo.com/paperpaul) Phone Number to Confirm: 7460

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 26 of 76



WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.30.24

10 17 20 24 54 8

MegaPlier: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$681,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

7 28 41 46 52 4

All Star Bonus: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$7,990,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 15 Mins
DRAW: 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.30.24

3 24 25 30 43 11

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 13 Hrs 30 Mins
DRAW: 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

2 16 21 23 24

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$20,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 30 Mins
DRAW: 16 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

9 11 31 52 54 25

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 59 Mins
DRAW: 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
08.28.24

5 33 47 50 64 20

Power Play: 2x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$69,000,000

NEXT 13 Hrs 59 Mins
DRAW: 15 Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 27 of 76

Upcoming Groton Events

- 07/04/2024 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/09/2024 FREE SNAP Application Assistance 1-6pm at the Community Center
- 07/14/2024 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 07/17/2024 Legion Auxiliary #39 Salad Buffet & Dessert Bar at the Groton Legion 11am-1pm
- 07/17/2024 Pro Am Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/25/2024 Dairy Queen Miracle Treat Day
- 07/25/2024 Summer Downtown Sip & Shop 5-8pm
- 07/25/2024 Treasures Amidst The Trials 6pm at Emmanuel Lutheran Church
- 07/26/2024 Ferney Open Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 9am Start
- 07/27/2024 1st Annual Celebration in the Park 1-9:30pm
- 08/05/2024 School Supply Drive 4-7pm at the Community Center
- Cancelled:** Wine on 9 at Olive Grove Golf Course 6pm
- 08/08/2024 Family Fun Fest 5:30-7:30pm
- 08/9-11/2024 Jr. Legion State Baseball Tournament
- 08/12/2024 Vitalant Blood Drive at the Community Center 1:15-7pm
- 09/07/2024 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/07-08/2024 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/08/2024 Sunflower Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 10/05/2024 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/11/2024 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/31/2024 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2024 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/16/2024 Groton American Legion "Turkey Raffle" 6:30-11:30pm
- 11/28/2024 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/01/2024 Groton Snow Queen Contest, 4:30 p.m.
- 12/07/2024 Olive Grove 8th Annual Holiday Party & Tour of Homes with Live & Silent Auctions 6pm-close
- 04/12/2025 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park 10am Sharp
- 05/03/2025 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 05/26/2025 Memorial Day Services Groton Union Cemetery with lunch at Legion Post #39, 12pm
- 07/04/2025 Firecracker Couples Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 07/13/2025 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm
- 09/06/2025 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 10/31/2025 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 11/27/2025 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 28 of 76

News from the **AP** Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Alcester-Hudson 70, Centerville 44

Arlington 22, Wilmot 6

Avon 58, Sioux Falls Lutheran 8

Bennett County 30, New Underwood 26

Beresford 34, Parker 12

Brookings 31, Sturgis Brown High School 0

Canistota 12, Colman-Egan 6

Canton 20, Rapid City Christian 16

Chester 7, Castlewood 0

Corsica/Stickney 28, Scotland/Menno 16

Dakota Valley 22, Dell Rapids 14

DeSmet 72, Garretson 21

Dell Rapids St Mary 52, Irene-Wakonda 0

Deuel 40, Sisseton 0

Dupree 80, North Central 26

Elkton-Lake Benton 40, Viborg-Hurley 24

Flandreau 42, Baltic 12

Freeman-Marion-FA 50, Bon Homme 19

Great Plains Lutheran 42, Waubay/Summit 31

Groton Area 29, Mobridge-Pollock 12

Hamlin 44, Hanson 6

Herreid-Selby 50, Northwestern 0

Hill City 41, Lemmon High School 8

Hot Springs 21, Miller 14

Howard 35, Estelline-Hendricks 8

Jones County 52, Faith 6

Kadoka 62, Lyman 14

Kimball-White Lake 52, Redfield 0

Lennox 48, Vermillion 13

Leola-Frederick High School 36, Britton-Hecla 30

Madison 41, Belle Fourche 6

McCook Central-Montrose 33, Webster 6

Milbank 55, Lakota Tech 0

Mitchell 51, Douglas 13

Mt. Vernon/Plankinton 36, St Thomas More 30

Oldham-Ramona-Rutland 43, Sunshine Bible Academy 16

Parkston 54, Stanley County 16

Platte-Geddes 55, Colome 0

Sioux Falls Christian 42, West Central 13

Sioux Falls Jefferson 38, Watertown 7

Sioux Falls Lincoln 55, Rapid City Stevens 7

Sioux Falls Roosevelt 21, Rapid City Central 19

Spearfish 39, Tea 29

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 29 of 76

Sully Buttes 56, Burke 6
TDAACDC 48, Gregory 22
Todd County 48, Little Wound 22
Tri-Valley 20, Custer 13
WWSSC 42, Lead-Deadwood 6
Wall 43, Harding County 22
Warner 47, Potter County 6
Waverly-South Shore 33, Florence-Henry 20
Winner 24, Wagner 6
Wolsey-Wessington 52, Deubrook 6
Yankton 60, Huron 0

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

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Aberdeen Central High School def. Rapid City Central, 25-10, 25-19, 25-6

Mitchell def. Sturgis Brown High School, 25-11, 29-27, 25-18

Rapid City Stevens def. T F Riggs High School, 25-19, 25-18, 25-21

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

Division II-member Sioux Falls stymies St. Thomas in 34-13 season-opening win

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — Division II-member Sioux Falls got two rushing touchdowns from Dylan Rudningen and the Cougars shut down the St. Thomas-Minnesota offense in a 34-13 season-opening win on Thursday night.

The Tommies' loss brought their nation-long 31-game home winning streak to an end.

The Cougars, known for their four NAIA national championships before moving to Division II in 2012, outgained St. Thomas 393-172 in total offense. The Tommies had only three first downs through three quarters and were 1 for 13 on third down for the game.

Sioux Falls took an 11-7 lead at halftime, after Camden Dean's 1-yard run plus a two-point conversion and a 30-yard field goal by Nick Hernandez.

The Cougars pushed their lead to 18-7 when Matt Grzybowski ran 3 yards for a touchdown in the third quarter. St. Thomas got within 18-13 on a strip sack and 5-yard fumble return by C.J. Warren to make it 18-13 but the Cougars' Brendan Holt recovered a fumble on the two-point try and returned it 90 yards for a defensive two-point conversion.

Sioux Falls added Rudningen's two short touchdown runs to put the game away in the fourth quarter. He finished with 67 yards on 23 carries.

Dean completed 17 of 29 passes for 189 yards and was intercepted once.

Two St. Thomas quarterbacks combined to go 14 of 35 for 150 yards with a touchdown and in interception.

The Tommies took an early 7-0 lead when an interception by Branden Smith set up a 25-yard touchdown pass from Tak Tateoka to Jacob Wildermuth. ____ Get poll alerts and updates on the AP Top 25 throughout the season. Sign up here. AP college football: <https://apnews.com/hub/ap-top-25-college-football-poll> and <https://apnews.com/hub/college-football>

Error messages and lengthy online queues greet fans scrambling to secure Oasis reunion tickets

By JILL LAWLESS Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — Oasis fans seeking tickets to the band's reunion tour endured hourslong waits, and in some cases disappointment, as online platforms strained under demand Saturday from hundreds of thousands of fans.

The Britpop-era behemoth led by brothers Noel and Liam Gallagher is scheduled to play 17 gigs — its first shows for 15 years — in Cardiff, Manchester, London, Edinburgh and Dublin starting July 4.

More than 1 million tickets went on sale Saturday morning, with prices starting at about 74 pounds (just under \$100).

Some people attempting to get onto the handful of authorized sales sites, including Ticketmaster and Gigs and Tours, received error messages, while many others were informed they were in a lengthy queue.

Josh Jeffery, a videographer who lives near Edinburgh, spent hours moving up the online ticket queue, before "the whole site collapsed" at the last step.

"I've given up, my friends have given up," said Jeffery, who first saw Oasis in Manchester as a teenager in 1996. "We just decided it's too much hassle.

"As I was in the queue, I heard 'Wonderwall' blasting out from my neighbor's house," he added ruefully. "He'd obviously got tickets."

Some fans managed to buy tickets through a presale lottery on Friday. Barista Isabelle Doyle said she was "over the moon" after snagging two seats for one of the band's London shows.

"I've been a fan of Oasis for about 10 years now, literally since I was 11 years old," the 21-year-old said. "Finally to be able to see them after they got me through as a teenager, it's absolutely amazing and I'm so excited."

Within hours, tickets began to be offered on resale websites for as much as 6,000 pounds (\$7,800).

Oasis issued a warning, saying tickets could only be resold at face value through authorized sites.

"Tickets appearing on other secondary ticketing sites are either counterfeit or will be cancelled by the promoters," it said in a statement.

Formed in Manchester in 1991, Oasis was one of the dominant British acts of the 1990s, producing hits including "Wonderwall" and "Don't Look Back in Anger." Its sound was fueled by singalong rock choruses and the combustible chemistry between guitarist-songwriter Noel Gallagher and singer sibling Liam.

Oasis split in 2009, with Noel Gallagher quitting the band after a backstage dustup with his brother at a festival near Paris. While the Gallagher brothers, now aged 57 and 51, haven't performed together since, both regularly perform Oasis songs at their solo gigs. They've also each fired off criticisms of the other in the press.

Announcing the reunion, the band said fans would experience "the spark and intensity" that occurs only when they appear on stage together.

The tour will begin July 4 and 5 at the Principality Stadium. Oasis will also perform at Heaton Park in Manchester, on July 11, 12, 16, 19 and 20; London's Wembley Stadium on July 25, 26 and 30 and Aug. 2 and 3; Murrayfield Stadium in Edinburgh on Aug. 8, 9 and 12; and Croke Park in Dublin on Aug. 16 and 17.

Prices for the London, Cardiff and Edinburgh concerts range from about 74 pounds (\$97) to just over 200 pounds (\$260) for seats, and about 150 pounds (about \$200) to stand. In Manchester, the cheapest tickets are 148 pounds (\$195) to stand, with no seated option.

The costliest option is a 506-pound (\$666) package for the London gigs that includes a pre-show party, admission to an Oasis exhibition, souvenirs and a "premium collectible item."

Tickets for the Dublin shows start at 86.50 euros (\$96) plus booking fee.

Alice Enders, head of research at media consultancy Enders Analysis, said touring was now the major source of revenue for many musicians, and Oasis could expect a big payday — though the tour, limited for now to the U.K. and Ireland, pales in comparison to global juggernauts like Taylor Swift's Eras tour.

She said Oasis is playing catch-up in a live music market that has seen "a relentless climb in expenditure,

consumer expenditure, demand for festivals.”

“It’s been 15 years of a mega-trend that they missed out on, basically,” Enders said. “So it’s a good thing they’re jumping on now. ... If they wait too long, then they are just a bunch of old geezers.”

The host cities anticipate an economic boost to hotels, bars, restaurants and shops — especially Manchester, the band’s hometown and a city renowned for its musical heritage.

Sacha Lord, Manchester’s official nighttime economy adviser, said “there’s a big buzz” in the city about the reunion.

“This is a homecoming gig,” he said. “When they set foot on that stage for the first time, it’s going to be a really special moment.”

Associated Press video journalist Kwiyeon Ha in Manchester contributed to this report.

7 US troops hurt in raid with Iraqi forces targeting Islamic State group militants that killed 15

By JON GAMBRELL Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates (AP) — The United States military and Iraq launched a joint raid targeting suspected Islamic State group militants in the country’s western desert that killed at least 15 people and saw seven American troops hurt, officials said Saturday.

For years after dislodging the militants from their self-declared caliphate across Iraq and Syria, U.S. forces have fought the Islamic State group, though the casualties from this raid were higher than in previous ones.

The U.S. military’s Central Command alleged the militants were armed with “numerous weapons, grenades, and explosive ‘suicide’ belts” during the attack Thursday, which Iraqi forces said happened in the country’s Anbar Desert.

“This operation targeted ISIS leaders to disrupt and degrade ISIS’ ability to plan, organize, and conduct attacks against Iraqi civilians, as well as U.S. citizens, allies, and partners throughout the region and beyond,” Central Command said, using an acronym for the militant group. “Iraqi Security Forces continue to further exploit the locations raided.”

It added: “There is no indication of civilian casualties.”

An Iraqi military statement said “airstrikes targeted the hideouts, followed by an airborne operation.”

“Among the dead were key ISIS leaders,” Iraq’s military said, without identifying them. “All hideouts, weapons and logistical support were destroyed, explosive belts were safely detonated and important documents, identification papers and communication devices were seized.”

A U.S. defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss details of the operation yet to be made public, told The Associated Press that five American troops were wounded in the raid, while two others suffered injuries from falls during the operation. One who suffered a fall was transported out of the region, while one of the wounded was evacuated for further treatment, the official said.

“All personnel are in stable condition,” the official said.

It wasn’t immediately clear why it took two days for the U.S. to acknowledge it took part in the raid. Iraq did not say the U.S. took part in the operation when initially announcing it, as politicians debate the future of having American troops in the country. There are approximately 2,500 U.S. troops in Iraq.

Since the U.S. toppled dictator Saddam Hussein with its 2003 invasion of Iraq, the country has struggled to balance relations between America and neighboring Iran. Since the Israel-Hamas war broke out, Iraqi militias allied to Iran have targeted U.S. forces there, leading to American airstrikes targeting them.

At its peak, the Islamic State group ruled an area half the size of the U.K. It attempted to enforce its extreme interpretation of Islam, which included attacks on religious minority groups and harsh punishment of Muslims deemed to be apostates.

A coalition of more than 80 countries led by the United States was formed to fight the group, which lost its hold on the territory it controlled in Iraq in 2017 and in Syria in 2019.

However, the militants have continued to operate in the Anbar Desert in Iraq and Syria, while claiming

attacks carried out by others elsewhere in the world inspired by the group. That includes the two suspects in a foiled plot to attack Taylor Swift shows in Vienna. Meanwhile, the IS branch in Afghanistan is known to carry out intensely bloody assaults.

Last month, the U.S. military said the number of attacks claimed by IS in Syria and Iraq was on track to double this year, compared with the year before. IS claimed 153 attacks in the two countries in the first six months of 2024, compared with 121 attacks in all of 2023.

Iraqi officials say that they can keep the IS threat under control with their own forces and have entered into talks with the U.S. aimed at winding down the mission of the U.S.-led military coalition in Iraq.

Since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza last October, U.S. military presence in the region has become particularly contentious.

An umbrella group of Iran-backed militias calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq has periodically launched drone attacks on bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq and Syria, which they said was in retaliation for Washington's support of Israel in the ongoing war in Gaza and were aimed at forcing U.S. forces to withdraw from Iraq.

Associated Press staff writers Abby Sewell in Beirut and Qassim Abdul-Zahra in Boston contributed to this report.

With men at the front lines, women watch over Ukraine's night sky for Russian drones

By VASILISA STEPANENKO and SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press
KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — When the air raid siren bellows in the dead of night, the women in arms rush to duty.

Barely two months since joining the mobile air-defense unit, 27-year-old Angelina has perfected the drill to a tee: Combat gear fitted, anti-aircraft machine gun in place, she cruised behind the wheel of a pickup, singing along to a Ukrainian song about rebellion.

The rest unfolded in seconds: Under a tree-lined position near Kyiv's Bucha suburb, she and her five-woman unit mounted the gun, checked the salvo and waited. The chirp of crickets filled the silence until the Russian-launched Shahed drone was shot down — on this August night, by a nearby unit — another menace to near daily life in Ukraine eliminated.

To shoot down a drone brings her joy. "It's just a rush of adrenaline," said Angelina, who like other women in the unit spoke to The Associated Press on condition only their first names or call signs be used, in keeping with military policy.

Women are increasingly joining volunteer mobile units responsible for shooting down Russian drones that terrorize Ukrainian civilians and energy infrastructure as more men are sent east to the front line.

While women make up only a tiny fraction of the country's armed forces, their service is vital. With tens of thousands of men reportedly recruited every month, women have stepped up as crucial operations from coal mines to territorial defense forces accept them to fulfill traditionally male roles.

At least 70 women have been recruited into the Bucha defense forces in recent months for anti-drone operations, said the area's territorial defense commander, Col. Andrii Velarty. It's part of a nationwide drive to attract part-time female volunteers to fill the ranks of local defense units.

The women come from all walks of life — stay-at-home moms to doctors like Angelina — and call themselves the "Witches of Bucha," a nod to their role of keeping watch over the night skies for Russian drones.

Some were motivated to volunteer by the Russian massacre of hundreds of Bucha residents during the monthlong occupation of the Kyiv suburb by Russian troops soon after the February 2022 invasion. Bodies of men, women and children were left on the streets, in homes and in mass graves.

"We were here, saw these horrors," said Angelina, who treated wounded residents, including children, during the Russian occupation.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 33 of 76

So when she spotted a sign calling for female recruits on a highway while driving in June with her friend, Olena, also a doctor, "we didn't hesitate," she said.

"We called and were immediately told 'Yes, come tomorrow,'" she said. "There is work that we can do here."

A grueling training

At a training session deep inside Bucha's forest this month, female recruits ranging in age from 27 to 51 were being tested on how quickly they could assemble and disassemble rifles. "I have eighth graders who can do this better," their instructor shouted.

The recruits were taught about a variety of weapons and mines, tactics and how to detect Russian infiltrators — their skills adapted to a war in which their enemy's methods are always changing.

"We train no less than men," said Lidiia, who joined a month ago.

A 34-year-old sales clerk with four children, Lidiia said her main motivation was to do her part to protect her family. Her children have looked at her differently since she began wearing army fatigues, she said.

"My younger son always asks, 'Mom, do you carry a gun?' I say, 'Yes.' He asks, 'Do you shoot?' I say, 'Of course I do.'"

"I've always been the best for them, but now I'm the best in a slightly different way," she said.

On July 31, she was on duty when Russia launched 89 Shahed drones, all of which were destroyed. Lidiia was an assistant machine-gunner that night.

"We got ready, we went to the call, we found that there were a lot of targets all over Ukraine," she said. "We had night-vision devices so it was easy to spot the target."

What did she feel as her unit shot down three of the drones? "Joy and some foul language," Olena said.

After shooting down drones, the day job begins

When the sun rose, Angelina and Olena removed their heavy combat gear and went home to slip on surgical scrubs. Another shift, this time at the intensive care unit at the hospital where they work, was about to start.

By midnight, they would be back near the tree line, waiting for incoming Russian drones. "Today I slept for two hours and forty minutes," Olena said.

There is no escape from the war for both women.

Their boyfriends are soldiers, and Angelina, an anesthesiologist, met hers at the hospital where he was recovering from a combat wound to his foot.

Seeing the numbers of wounded Ukrainian soldiers was one reason she decided to volunteer.

"To bring our victory closer. If we can do something to help, why not?" she said.

Angelina's boyfriend worries every time she is on duty and the air raid alarm sounds. He texts her, "be careful" and when it ends, "write to me" — despite it being much scarier on the front lines, she said.

"We are no longer women, we are soldiers"

The Russian drone attacks are typically more intense at night, but daytime attacks are just as deadly. The drone unit spends entire nights driving back and forth from their base in the forest to the position. Sometimes they stand there for hours waiting to shoot.

"There is nothing easy about it. In order to shoot it down, you have to train constantly," Angelina said. "I have to train all the time, including on simulators."

Their platoon commander, a confident woman with long braided hair who goes by the call sign Calypso, leads training in shooting, assault skills and combat medicine every Sunday.

There's no difference between the male and female volunteers, she said.

"From the moment we come to serve, sign a contract, we are no longer women, we are soldiers," she said. "We have to do our job, and men also understand this. We don't come here to sit around and cook borscht or anything."

"I have a feeling the girls and I would shoot down these Shaheds with our bare hands, with a stick, if we had to — anything to stop them from landing on our children, friends and family."

The women in the mobile-fire units are on duty every two or three days. They work in groups of five, with a machine gunner, assistant, fire support, a driver and commander.

"Of course, war is war, but no one has canceled femininity," Calypso said. "It doesn't matter whether you hit a Shahed with painted eyes or not, the work is still going on. And not everyone has a manicure."

As more women are trained to join the ranks of the territorial defense forces, the safer Ukraine's skies will be, Angelina said.

"This means that I can make at least some small contribution to the fact that my mother sleeps peacefully, that my brothers and sisters go to school peacefully and they can meet their friends peacefully," she said.

"So that my godsons can also grow under a relatively peaceful sky."

Vietnamese helping victims of Agent Orange used by US troops in Vietnam War among Magsaysay winners

By JIM GOMEZ Associated Press

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A Vietnamese doctor who has helped seek justice for victims of the powerful defoliant dioxin "Agent Orange" used by U.S. forces during the Vietnam War is among this year's winners of the Ramon Magsaysay Awards — regarded as Asia's version of the Nobel Prizes.

The other winners announced on Saturday were a group of doctors who struggled to secure adequate healthcare for Thailand's rural poor, an Indonesian environmental defender, a Japanese animator who tackles complex issues for children and a Bhutanese academician promoting his country's cultural heritage to help current predicaments.

First given in 1958, the annual awards are named after a Philippine president who died in a 1957 plane crash, and honor "greatness of spirit" in selfless service to people across Asia.

"The award has celebrated those who challenge the status quo with integrity by courageously confronting systemic injustices, transform critical sectors through groundbreaking solutions that drive societal progress, and address pressing global issues with unwavering resilience," said Susanna B. Afan, president of the award foundation.

Vietnamese doctor Nguyen Thi Ngoc Phuong carried out extensive research into the devastating and long-term effects of Agent Orange which she said she first encountered in the late 1960s as a medical intern when she helped deliver babies with severe birth defects as a result of the lingering effect of highly toxic chemical, according to the awards body.

"Her work serves as a dire warning for the world to avoid war at all costs as its tragic repercussions can reach far into the future," the Magsaysay foundation said. "She offers proof that it can never be too late to right the wrongs of war and gain justice and relief for its hapless victims."

American forces used Agent Orange during the Vietnam War to defoliate Vietnamese jungles and to destroy crops for the Vietnamese Communists, or Viet Cong, who fought against South Vietnam and the United States.

Between 1962 and 1971, the U.S. military sprayed roughly 11 million gallons of the chemical agent dioxin used in Agent Orange across large swaths of southern Vietnam. Dioxin stays in the soil and in the sediment of lakes and rivers for generations. It can enter the food supply through the fat of fish and other animals.

Vietnam says as many as 4 million citizens were exposed to the herbicide and as many as 3 million have suffered illnesses from it, including the children of people exposed during the war.

Indonesian Farwiza Farhan won the award for helping lead a group protect the Leuser Ecosystem, a 2.6-million-hectare forest on Sumatra Island in his country's Aceh province where some of the world's most highly endangered species have managed to survive, the foundation said.

Her group helped win a court verdict that led to \$26 million in fines against a palm oil company that burned forests and stopped a hydroelectric dam that would have threatened the elephant's habitat, the foundation said.

Miyazaki Hayao, a popular animator in Japan, was cited by the awards body as a co-founder in 1985 of Studio Ghibli, a leading proponent of animated films for children. Three Ghibli productions were among Japan's ten top-grossing films.

"He tackles complicated issues, using his art to make them comprehensible to children, whether it be

about protecting the environment, advocating for peace or championing the rights and roles of women in society," the foundation said.

The Rural Doctors Movement, a group of Thai physicians, won the award for their "decades of struggle...to secure adequate and affordable healthcare for their people, especially the rural poor," the foundation said.

"By championing the rural poor, the movement made sure to leave no one behind as the nation marches forward to greater economic prosperity and modernization," it said.

Karma Phuntsho from Bhutan, a former Buddhist monk and an Oxford-educated scholar, was cited by the awards body for his academic works in the field of Buddhism and Bhutan's rich history and cultural heritage that were being harnessed to address current and future problems in his country, including unemployment and access to high-quality education.

The winners will be presented with their awards and a cash prize on Nov. 16 at the Metropolitan Theater in Manila.

Brazil blocks Musk's X after company refuses to name local representative amid feud with judge

By GABRIELA SÁ PESSOA and MAURICIO SAVARESE Associated Press

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazil started blocking Elon Musk's social media platform X early Saturday, making it largely inaccessible on both the web and through its mobile app after the company refused to comply with a judge's order.

X missed a deadline imposed by Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes to name a legal representative in Brazil, triggering the suspension. It marks an escalation in the monthlong feud between Musk and de Moraes over free speech, far-right accounts and misinformation.

To block X, Brazil's telecommunications regulator, Anatel, told internet service providers to suspend users' access to the social media platform. As of Saturday at midnight local time, major operators began doing so.

De Moraes had warned Musk on Wednesday night that X could be blocked in Brazil if he failed to comply with his order to name a representative, and established a 24-hour deadline. The company hasn't had a representative in the country since earlier this month.

"Elon Musk showed his total disrespect for Brazilian sovereignty and, in particular, for the judiciary, setting himself up as a true supranational entity and immune to the laws of each country," de Moraes wrote in his decision on Friday.

The justice said the platform will stay suspended until it complies with his orders, and also set a daily fine of 50,000 reais (\$8,900) for people or companies using VPNs to access it.

In a later ruling, he backtracked on his initial decision to establish a 5-day deadline for internet service providers themselves — and not just the telecommunications regulator — to block access to X, as well as his directive for app stores to remove virtual private networks, or VPNs.

The dispute also led to the freezing this week of the bank accounts in Brazil of Musk's satellite internet provider Starlink.

Brazil is one of the biggest markets for X, which has struggled with the loss of advertisers since Musk purchased the former Twitter in 2022. Market research group Emarketer says some 40 million Brazilians, roughly one-fifth of the population, access X at least once per month.

"This is a sad day for X users around the world, especially those in Brazil, who are being denied access to our platform. I wish it did not have to come to this — it breaks my heart," X's CEO Linda Yaccarino said Friday night, adding that Brazil is failing to uphold its constitution's pledge to forbid censorship.

X had posted on its official Global Government Affairs page late Thursday that it expected X to be shut down by de Moraes, "simply because we would not comply with his illegal orders to censor his political opponents."

"When we attempted to defend ourselves in court, Judge de Moraes threatened our Brazilian legal representative with imprisonment. Even after she resigned, he froze all of her bank accounts," the company wrote.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 36 of 76

X has clashed with de Moraes over its reluctance to comply with orders to block users.

Accounts that the platform previously has shut down on Brazilian orders include lawmakers affiliated with former President Jair Bolsonaro's right-wing party and activists accused of undermining Brazilian democracy. X's lawyers in April sent a document to the Supreme Court in April, saying that since 2019 it had suspended or blocked 226 users.

In his decision Friday, de Moraes' cited Musk's statements as evidence that X's conduct "clearly intends to continue to encourage posts with extremism, hate speech and anti-democratic discourse, and to try to withdraw them from jurisdictional control."

In April, de Moraes included Musk as a target in an ongoing investigation over the dissemination of fake news and opened a separate investigation into the executive for alleged obstruction.

Musk, a self-proclaimed "free speech absolutist," has repeatedly claimed the justice's actions amount to censorship, and his argument has been echoed by Brazil's political right. He has often insulted de Moraes on his platform, characterizing him as a dictator and tyrant.

De Moraes' defenders have said his actions aimed at X have been lawful, supported by most of the court's full bench and have served to protect democracy at a time it is imperiled. He wrote Friday that his ruling is based on Brazilian law requiring internet services companies to have representation in the country so they can be notified when there are relevant court decisions and take requisite action — specifying the takedown of illicit content posted by users, and an anticipated churn of misinformation during October municipal elections.

The looming shutdown is not unprecedented in Brazil.

Lone Brazilian judges shut down Meta's WhatsApp, the nation's most widely used messaging app, several times in 2015 and 2016 due to the company's refusal to comply with police requests for user data. In 2022, de Moraes threatened the messaging app Telegram with a nationwide shutdown, arguing it had repeatedly ignored Brazilian authorities' requests to block profiles and provide information. He ordered Telegram to appoint a local representative; the company ultimately complied and stayed online.

X and its former incarnation, Twitter, have been banned in several countries — mostly authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Venezuela and Turkmenistan. Other countries, such as Pakistan, Turkey and Egypt, have also temporarily suspended X before, usually to quell dissent and unrest. Twitter was banned in Egypt after the Arab Spring uprisings, which some dubbed the "Twitter revolution," but it has since been restored.

A search Friday on X showed hundreds of Brazilian users inquiring about VPNs that could potentially enable them to continue using the platform by making it appear they were logging on from outside the country. It was not immediately clear how Brazilian authorities would police this practice and impose fines cited by de Moraes.

"This is an unusual measure, but its main objective is to ensure that the court order to suspend the platform's operation is, in fact, effective," Filipe Medon, a specialist in digital law and professor at the law school of Getulio Vargas Foundation, a university in Rio de Janeiro, told The Associated Press.

Mariana de Souza Alves Lima, known by her handle MariMoon, showed her 1.4 million followers on X where she intends to go, posting a screenshot of rival social network BlueSky.

On Thursday evening, Starlink, said on X that de Moraes this week froze its finances, preventing it from doing any transactions in the country where it has more than 250,000 customers.

"This order is based on an unfounded determination that Starlink should be responsible for the fines levied—unconstitutionally—against X. It was issued in secret and without affording Starlink any of the due process of law guaranteed by the Constitution of Brazil. We intend to address the matter legally," Starlink said in its statement. The law firm representing Starlink told the AP that the company appealed, but wouldn't make further comment.

Musk replied to people sharing the reports of the freeze, adding insults directed at de Moraes. "This guy @Alexandre is an outright criminal of the worst kind, masquerading as a judge," he wrote.

Musk later posted on X that SpaceX, which runs Starlink, will provide free internet service in Brazil "until

the matter is resolved” since “we cannot receive payment, but don’t want to cut anyone off.”

In his decision, de Moraes said he ordered the freezing of Starlink’s assets, as X didn’t have enough money in its accounts to cover mounting fines, and reasoning that the two companies are part of the same economic group.

While ordering X’s suspension followed warnings and fines and so was appropriate, taking action against Starlink seems “highly questionable,” said Luca Belli, coordinator of the Getulio Vargas Foundation’s Technology and Society Center.

“Yes, of course, they have the same owner, Elon Musk, but it is discretionary to consider Starlink as part of the same economic group as Twitter (X). They have no connection, they have no integration,” Belli said.

AP writers Barbara Ortutay reported from San Francisco and David Biller from Rio. Savarese contributed from Sao Paulo.

Young girls are using anti-aging products they see on social media. The harm is more than skin deep

By JOCELYN GECKER AP Education Writer

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — When she was in fifth grade, Scarlett Goddard Strahan started to worry about getting wrinkles.

By the time she turned 10, Scarlett and her friends were spending hours on TikTok and YouTube watching influencers tout products for achieving today’s beauty aesthetic: a dewy, “glowy,” flawless complexion. Scarlett developed an elaborate skin care routine with facial cleansers, mists, hydrating masks and moisturizers.

One night, Scarlett’s skin began to burn intensely and erupted in blisters. Heavy use of adult-strength products had wreaked havoc on her skin. Months later, patches of tiny bumps remain on Scarlett’s face, and her cheeks turn red in the sun.

“I didn’t want to get wrinkles and look old,” says Scarlett, who recently turned 11. “If I had known my life would be so affected by this, I never would have put these things on my face.”

Scarlett’s experience has become common, experts say, as preteen girls around the country throng beauty stores to buy high-end skin care products, a trend captured in viral videos with the hashtag #SephoraKids. Girls as young as 8 are turning up at dermatologists’ offices with rashes, chemical burns and other allergic reactions to products not intended for children’s sensitive skin.

“When kids use anti-aging skin care, they can actually cause premature aging, destroy the skin barrier and lead to permanent scarring,” says Dr. Brooke Jeffy, a Scottsdale, Arizona, dermatologist who has posted her own social media videos rebutting influencers’ advice.

More than the physical harm, parents and child psychologists worry about the trend’s effects on girls’ mental health — for years to come. Extensive data suggests a fixation on appearance can affect self-esteem and body image and fuel anxiety, depression and eating disorders.

The skin care obsession offers a window into the role social media plays in the lives of today’s youth and how it shapes the ideals and insecurities of girls in particular. Girls are experiencing high levels of sadness and hopelessness. Whether social media exposure causes or simply correlates with mental health problems is up for debate. But to older teens and young adults, it’s clear: Extended time on social media has been bad for them, period.

Young girls’ fascination with makeup and cosmetics is not new. Neither are kids who hold themselves to idealized beauty standards. What’s different now is the magnitude, says Kris Perry, executive director of Children and Screens, a nonprofit that studies how digital media impacts child development. In an era of filtered images and artificial intelligence, some of the beautiful faces they encounter aren’t even real.

“Girls are being bombarded with idealized images of beauty that establish a beauty standard that could be very hard — if not impossible — to attain,” Perry says.

Saving allowances for Sephora hauls

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 38 of 76

The obsession with skin care is about more than the pursuit of perfect skin, explains 14-year-old Mia Hall. It's about feeling accepted and belonging to a community that has the lifestyle and look you want, says Mia, a New Yorker from the Bronx.

Skin care was not on Mia's radar until she started eighth grade last fall. It was a topic of conversation among girls her age — at school and on social media. Girls bonded over their skin care routines.

"Everyone was doing it. I felt like it was the only way I could fit in," says Mia. She started following beauty influencers like Katie Fang and Gianna Christine, who have millions of young followers on TikTok. Some influencers are paid by brands to promote their products, but they don't always mention that.

Mia got hooked on "Get Ready With Me" videos, where influencers film themselves getting ready — for school, for a night out with friends, packing for a trip. The hashtag #GRWM has over 150 billion views on TikTok.

"It's like a trance. You can't stop watching it," Mia says. "So when they tell me, 'Go buy this product' or, 'I use this and it's amazing,' it feels very personal. Getting what they have makes me feel connected to them."

Mia started saving her \$20 weekly allowance for trips with friends to Sephora. Her daily routine included a face wash, a facial mist, a hydrating serum, a pore-tightening toner, a moisturizer and sunscreen. Most were luxury brands like Glow Recipe, Drunk Elephant or Caudalie, whose moisturizers can run \$70.

"I get really jealous and insecure a lot when I see other girls my age who look very pretty or have an amazing life," she says.

The level of detail and information girls are getting from beauty tutorials sends a troubling message at a vulnerable age, as girls are going through puberty and searching for their identities, says Charlotte Markey, a body image expert and Rutgers University psychologist.

"The message to young girls is that, 'You are a never-ending project to get started on now.' And essentially: 'You are not OK the way you are,'" says Markey, author of "The Body Image Book for Girls."

Products promoting youth, purchased by kids

The beauty industry has been cashing in on the trend. Last year, consumers under age 14 drove 49% of drug store skin sales, according to a NielsonIQ report that found households with teens and tweens were outspending the average American household on skin care. And in the first half of 2024, a third of "prestige" beauty sales, at stores like Sephora, were driven by households with tweens and teens, according to market research firm Circana.

The cosmetics industry has acknowledged certain products aren't suitable for children but has done little to stop kids from buying them. Drunk Elephant's website, for example, recommends kids 12 and under should not use their anti-aging serums, lotions and scrubs "due to their very active nature." That guidance is on the site's FAQ page; there are no such warnings on the products themselves.

Sephora declined to comment for this story.

Ingredients like retinol and chemical exfoliants like hydroxy acids are inherently harsh. For aging skin, they are used to stimulate collagen and cell production. Young or sensitive skin can react with redness, peeling and burning that can lead to infections, acne and hypersensitivity if used incorrectly, dermatologists say.

Dermatologists agree a child's face typically needs only three items, all found on drugstore shelves: a gentle cleanser, a moisturizer and sunscreen.

A California bill aimed at banning the sale of anti-aging skin care products to children under age 13 failed this spring, but Democratic Assemblymember Alex Lee says he plans to continue pursuing industry accountability. Lee and other critics say popular brands use colorful packaging and product names like "Baby facial" to attract younger buyers in the same way that e-cigarette companies and alcohol brands created fruity flavors that appeal to underage users.

Lee points to Europe as setting the right example. The European Union enacted legislation last year that limits the concentration of retinol in all over-the-counter products. And one of Sweden's leading pharmacy chains, Apotek Hjartat, said in March it would stop selling anti-aging skin care products to customers under 15 without parental consent. "This is a way to protect children's skin health, finances and mental well-being," the company said.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 39 of 76

One mother 'got rid of them all'

Around the country, concerned mothers are visiting dermatologists with their young daughters, carrying bags filled with their child's skin care products to ask: Are these OK?

"Often the mothers are saying exactly what I am but need their child to hear it from an expert," says Dr. Dendy Engelman, a Manhattan dermatologist. "They're like, 'Maybe she'll listen to you because she certainly doesn't listen to me.'"

Mia's mother, Sandra Gordon, took a different approach. Last spring, she noticed dark patches on Mia's face and became alarmed. Gordon, a nurse, threw all her daughter's products into the trash.

"There were Sephora bags on top of bags. Some things were opened, some not opened, some were full. I got rid of them all," she says.

Mia wasn't happy. But as she starts high school, she now feels her mother was right. She has switched to a simple routine, using just a face wash and moisturizer, and says her complexion has improved.

In Sacramento, California, Scarlett missed early signs the products were hurting her skin: She developed a rash and felt a stinging sensation, within days of trying out viral skin care products. Scarlett figured she wasn't using enough, so she layered on more. That's when her cheeks erupted in blistering pain.

"It was late at night. She came running into my room crying. All of her cheeks had been burned," recalls Anna Goddard, Scarlett's mother, who hadn't realized the extent of Scarlett's skin care obsession.

When Goddard read the ingredients in each product, she was shocked to find retinol in products that appeared to be marketed to children — including a facial sheet mask with a cat's face on the packaging.

What worries her mother most is the psychological consequences. Kids' comments at school have caused lingering anxiety and self-consciousness.

Goddard hopes to see more protections. "I didn't know there were harmful ingredients being put in skin care that is marketed to kids," she says. "There has to be some type of warning."

The Associated Press' education coverage receives financial support from multiple private foundations. AP is solely responsible for all content. Find AP's standards for working with philanthropies, a list of supporters and funded coverage areas at AP.org.

Japan wants its hardworking citizens to try a 4-day workweek

By YURI KAGEYAMA Associated Press

TOKYO (AP) — Japan, a nation so hardworking its language has a term for literally working oneself to death, is trying to address a worrisome labor shortage by coaxing more people and companies to adopt four-day workweeks.

The Japanese government first expressed support for a shorter working week in 2021, after lawmakers endorsed the idea. The concept has been slow to catch on, however; about 8% of companies in Japan allow employees to take three or more days off per week, while 7% give their workers the legally mandated one day off, according to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare.

Hoping to produce more takers, especially among small and medium-sized businesses, the government launched a "work style reform" campaign that promotes shorter hours and other flexible arrangements along with overtime limits and paid annual leave. The labor ministry recently started offering free consulting, grants and a growing library of success stories as further motivation.

"By realizing a society in which workers can choose from a variety of working styles based on their circumstances, we aim to create a virtuous cycle of growth and distribution and enable each and every worker to have a better outlook for the future," states a ministry website about the "hatarakikata kaikaku" campaign, which translates to "innovating how we work."

The department overseeing the new support services for businesses says only three companies have come forward so far to request advice on making changes, relevant regulations and available subsidies, illustrating the challenges the initiative faces.

Perhaps more telling: of the 63,000 Panasonic Holdings Corp. employees who are eligible for four-day

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 40 of 76

schedules at the electronics maker and its group companies in Japan, only 150 employees have opted to take them, according to Yohei Mori, who oversees the initiative at one Panasonic company.

The government's official backing of a better work-life balance represents a marked change in Japan, a country whose reputed culture of workaholic stoicism often got credited for the national recovery and stellar economic growth after World War II.

Conformist pressures to sacrifice for one's company are intense. Citizens typically take vacations at the same time of year as their colleagues — during the Bon holidays in the summer and around New Year's — so co-workers can't accuse them of being neglectful or uncaring.

Long hours are the norm. Although 85% of employers report giving their workers two days off a week and there are legal restrictions on overtime hours, which are negotiated with labor unions and detailed in contracts. But some Japanese do "service overtime," meaning it's unreported and performed without compensation.

A recent government white paper on "karoshi," the Japanese term that in English means "death from overwork," said Japan has at least 54 such fatalities a year, including from heart attacks.

Japan's "serious, conscientious and hard-working" people tend to value their relationships with their colleagues and form a bond with their companies, and Japanese TV shows and manga comics often focus on the workplace, said Tim Craig, the author of a book called "Cool Japan: Case Studies from Japan's Cultural and Creative Industries."

"Work is a big deal here. It's not just a way to make money, although it is that, too," said Craig, who previously taught at Doshisha Business School and founded editing and translation firm BlueSky Academic Services.

Some officials consider changing that mindset as crucial to maintaining a viable workforce amid Japan's nosediving birth rate. At the current rate, which is partly attributed to the country's job-focused culture, the working age population is expected to decline 40% to 45 million people in 2065, from the current 74 million, according to government data.

Proponents of the three-days-off model say it encourages people raising children, those caring for older relatives, retirees living on pensions and others looking for flexibility or additional income to remain in the workforce for longer.

Akiko Yokohama, who works at Spelldata, a small Tokyo-based technology company that allows employees to work a four-day schedule, takes Wednesdays off along with Saturdays and Sundays. The extra day off allows her to get her hair done, attend other appointments or go shopping.

"It's hard when you aren't feeling well to keep going for five days in a row. The rest allows you to recover or go see the doctor. Emotionally, it's less stressful," Yokohama said.

Her husband, a real estate broker, also gets Wednesdays off but works weekends, which is common in his industry. Yokohama said that allows the couple to go on midweek family outings with their elementary-school age child.

Fast Retailing Co., the Japanese company that owns Uniqlo, Theory, J Brand and other clothing brands, pharmaceutical company Shionogi & Co., and electronics companies Ricoh Co. and Hitachi also began offering a four-day workweek in recent years.

The trend even has gained traction in the notoriously consuming finance industry. Brokerage SMBC Nikko Securities Inc. started letting workers put in four days a week in 2020. Banking giant Mizuho Financial Group offers a three-day schedule option.

Critics of the government's push say that in practice, people put on four-day schedules often end up working just as hard for less pay.

But there are signs of change.

A annual Gallup survey that measures employee engagement ranked Japan as having among the least engaged workers of all nationalities surveyed; in the most recent survey, only 6% of the Japanese respondents described themselves as engaged at work compared to the global average of 23%.

That means relatively few Japanese workers felt highly involved in their workplace and enthusiastic about

their work, while most were putting in their hours without investing passion or energy.

Kanako Ogino, president of Tokyo-based NS Group, thinks offering flexible hours is a must for filling jobs in the service industry, where women comprise most of the work force. The company, which operates karaoke venues and hotels, offers 30 different scheduling patterns, including a four-day workweek, but also taking long periods off in between work.

To ensure none of the NS Group's workers feel penalized for choosing an alternative schedule, Ogino asks each of her 4,000 employees twice a year how they want to work. Asserting individual needs can be frowned upon in Japan, where you are expected to sacrifice for the common good.

"The view in Japan was: You are cool the more hours you work, putting in free overtime," Ogino said with a laugh. "But there is no dream in such a life."

Yuri Kageyama is on X: <https://x.com/yurikageyama>

In South Africa's richest area, mother-to-baby HIV transmission is a concern despite free prevention

By MOGOMOTSI MAGOME Associated Press

PRETORIA, South Africa (AP) — It's a worrying question for health officials in one of the richest and most developed areas of the African continent: Why are babies being born with HIV when free medication is available to prevent mother-to-child transmission?

In the first half of this year, 232 babies were born with HIV in South Africa's Gauteng region, which includes Johannesburg and the capital of Pretoria and is home to at least 15 million people.

"We do still find it very concerning that in this day and age, with all the preventative programs that's available free of charge at our clinics, that we are still finding babies testing positive," said Melanie Langeveldt, the director for primary healthcare programs in Tshwane, which includes Pretoria.

Mother-to-child transmission of HIV globally remains a concern for UNAIDS, which estimates there are 120,000 new infections annually in children aged 14 years and younger around the world, while over 1.3 million children are living with HIV.

South Africa has one of the highest rates of HIV in the world. About 12.7% of its population, or about 7.9 million people, live with HIV. The country has about 150,000 new infections every year.

Pregnant women in South Africa can access HIV testing and antiretroviral therapy free of charge from health facilities.

It is not clear why the more than 200 pregnant women across Gauteng didn't take advantage of the services this year, or why 211 women in the second half of last year didn't either.

Data from South Africa's other regions was not immediately available.

Alarmed health officials believe even one case of mother-to-child HIV transmission is too many, considering the availability of treatment.

"With the medicines and science available today, we can ensure that all babies are born – and remain – HIV-free," UNAIDS executive director Winnie Byanyima said in July, adding that resources must be made available everywhere around the world.

The data in Gauteng shows that many of the mothers who gave birth this year to children with HIV did so in government-run health clinics where the free HIV testing and treatment is available.

At least 55 of the babies born were delivered in Johannesburg, which has 125 of the clinics, and 39 were born in Pretoria, which has 24 of the clinics.

Langeveldt said one contributing factor is the failure of some pregnant women to present themselves at a clinic as soon as they fall pregnant, with some women not aware of their HIV status.

Other pregnant women receive medication but the treatment is interrupted for various reasons including migration. Some pregnant women are infected during pregnancy or breastfeeding. And some women do not stick to the guidelines of continuous and exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months.

Such factors are seen globally in mother-to-child transmission.

Langeveldt said her department is now engaged in widespread campaigns to inform women that mother-to-child transmissions are preventable if the strict treatment offered at clinics is followed.

"We have services. It is free. Please come and present so that we can assist you and prevent this in the future," she said.

Officials also recommend that new mothers test for HIV every three months while breastfeeding, and that they encourage their partners to test for HIV.

Women who gave birth to babies with HIV would not speak with The Associated Press.

Mapule Radebe is among the women who have benefited from medical treatment to avoid passing on HIV to her children.

In 2015, she tested positive for HIV and was soon receiving antiretroviral treatment. She was concerned about the possibility of having children born with HIV but learned that transmission of the virus could be prevented.

"I took my medication throughout my pregnancy, and after birth I still continued with my treatment. After I gave birth I still continued with my medication and my child was also given medication for the first six months after she was born," Radebe said.

This year she gave birth to her second child who was also free of HIV.

"To all women out there who are HIV positive and expecting babies, I would urge them to continue taking their treatment throughout their nine months, and continue doing so even after giving birth, for the sake of their children," said the 35-year-old who currently lives at Nkosi's Haven, a Johannesburg home that assists women with HIV.

For more news on Africa and development: <https://apnews.com/hub/africa-pulse>

The Associated Press receives financial support for global health and development coverage in Africa from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Trust. The AP is solely responsible for all content. Find AP's standards for working with philanthropies, a list of supporters and funded coverage areas at AP.org.

3 days, 640,000 children, 1.3M doses. The plan to vaccinate Gaza's young against polio

By JULIA FRANKEL Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — The U.N. health agency and partners are launching a campaign starting Sunday to vaccinate 640,000 Palestinian children in Gaza against polio, an ambitious effort amid a devastating war that has destroyed the territory's healthcare system.

The campaign comes after the first polio case was reported in Gaza in 25 years — a 10-month-old boy, now paralyzed in the leg. The World Health Organization says the presence of a paralysis case indicates there could be hundreds more who have been infected but aren't showing symptoms.

Most people who have polio do not experience symptoms, and those who do usually recover in a week or so. But there is no cure, and when polio causes paralysis it is usually permanent. If the paralysis affects breathing muscles, the disease can be fatal.

The vaccination effort will not be easy: Gaza's roads are largely destroyed, its hospitals badly damaged and its population spread into isolated pockets.

WHO said Thursday that it has reached an agreement with Israel for limited pauses in the fighting to allow for the vaccination campaign to take place. Even so, such a large-scale campaign will pose major difficulties in a territory blanketed in rubble, where 90% of Palestinians are displaced.

How long will it take?

The three-day vaccination campaign in central Gaza will begin Sunday, during a "humanitarian pause" lasting from 6 a.m. until 3 p.m., and another day can be added if needed, said Dr. Rik Peepkorn, WHO's representative in the Palestinian territories.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 43 of 76

In coordination with Israeli authorities, the effort will then move to southern Gaza and northern Gaza during similar pauses, he said during a news conference by video from Deir al-Balah in central Gaza.

Who will receive the vaccine?

The vaccination campaign targets 640,000 children under 10, according to WHO. Each child will receive two drops of oral polio vaccine in two rounds, the second to be administered four weeks after the first.

Where are the vaccination sites?

The vaccination sites span Gaza, both inside and outside Israeli evacuation zones, from Rafah in the south to the northern reaches of the territory.

The Ramallah-based Health Ministry said Friday that there would be over 400 "fixed" vaccination sites — the most in Khan Younis, where the population density is the highest and there are 239,300 children under 10. Fixed sites include healthcare centers, hospitals, clinics and field hospitals.

Elsewhere in the territory, there will also be around 230 "outreach" sites — community gathering points that are not traditional medical centers — where vaccines will be distributed.

Where are the vaccines now?

Around 1.3 million doses of the vaccine traveled through the Kerem Shalom checkpoint and are currently being held in "cold-chain storage" in a warehouse in Deir al-Balah. That means the warehouse is able to maintain the correct temperature so the vaccines do not lose their potency.

Another shipment of 400,000 doses is set to be delivered to Gaza soon.

The vaccines will be trucked to distribution sites by a team of over 2,000 medical volunteers, said Ammar Ammar, a spokesperson for UNICEF.

What challenges lie ahead?

Mounting any sort of campaign that requires traversing the Gaza strip and interacting with its medical system is bound to pose difficulties.

The U.N. estimates that approximately 65% of the total road network in Gaza has been damaged. Nineteen of the strip's 36 hospitals are out of service.

The north of the territory is cut off from the south, and travel between the two areas has been challenging throughout the war because of Israeli military operations. Aid groups have had to suspend trips due to security concerns, after convoys were targeted by the Israeli military.

Peepkorn said Friday that WHO cannot do house-to-house vaccinations in Gaza, as they have in other polio campaigns. When asked about the viability of the effort, Peepkorn said WHO thinks "it is feasible if all the pieces of the puzzle are in place."

How many doses do children need and what happens if they miss a dose?

The World Health Organization says children typically need about three to four doses of oral polio vaccine — two drops per dose — to be protected against polio. If they don't receive all of the doses, they are vulnerable to infection.

Doctors have previously found that children who are malnourished or who have other illnesses might need more than 10 doses of the oral polio vaccine to be fully protected.

Are there side effects?

Yes, but they are very rare.

Billions of doses of the oral vaccine have been given to children worldwide and it is safe and effective. But in about 1 in 2.7 million doses, the live virus in the vaccine can paralyze the child who receives the drops.

How did this outbreak in Gaza start?

The polio virus that triggered this latest outbreak is a mutated virus from an oral polio vaccine. The oral polio vaccine contains weakened live virus and in very rare cases, that virus is shed by those who are vaccinated and can evolve into a new form capable of starting new epidemics.

Associated Press reporters Samy Magdy in Cairo and Maria Cheng in London contributed.

Harris and Trump offer starkly different visions on climate change and energy

By MATTHEW DALY Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — As the Earth sizzled through a summer with four of the hottest days ever measured, Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump have starkly different visions on how to address a changing climate while ensuring a reliable energy supply. But neither has provided many details on how they would get there.

During her acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention, Harris briefly mentioned climate change as she outlined “fundamental freedoms” at stake in the election, including “the freedom to breathe clean air and drink clean water and live free from the pollution that fuels the climate crisis.”

As vice president, Harris cast the tie-breaking vote on the Inflation Reduction Act, President Joe Biden’s landmark climate law that was approved with only Democratic support. As a senator from California, she was an early sponsor of the Green New Deal, a sweeping series of proposals meant to swiftly move the U.S. to fully green energy that is championed by the Democratic Party’s most progressive wing.

Trump, meanwhile, led chants of “drill, baby, drill” and pledged to dismantle the Biden administration’s “green new scam” in his acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention. He has vowed to boost production of fossil fuels such as oil, natural gas and coal and repeal key parts of the 2022 climate law.

“We have more liquid gold under our feet than any other country by far,” Trump said at the RNC. “We are a nation that has the opportunity to make an absolute fortune with its energy.”

‘Climate champion’ or unfair regulations?

Environmental groups, who largely back Harris, call her a “proven climate champion” who will take on Big Oil and build on Biden’s climate legacy, including policies that boost electric vehicles and limit planet-warming pollution from coal-fired power plants.

“We won’t go back to a climate denier in the Oval Office,” said Lena Moffitt, executive director of Evergreen Action.

Republicans counter that Biden and Harris have spent four years adopting “punishing regulations” that target American energy while lavishing generous tax credits for electric vehicles and other green priorities that cost taxpayers billions of dollars.

“This onslaught of overreaching and outrageous climate rules will shut down power plants and increase energy costs for families across the country,” said Sen. John Barrasso, R-Wyo. “Republicans will work to stop them and fight for solutions that protect our air and water and allow our economy to grow.”

Democrats have a clear edge on the issue. More than half of U.S. adults say they trust Harris “a lot” or “some” when it comes to addressing climate change, according to an AP-NORC poll conducted in July. About 7 in 10 say they have “not much” trust in Trump or “none at all” when it comes to climate. Fewer than half say they lack trust in Harris.

A look at where the two candidates stand on key climate and energy issues:

Fracking and offshore drilling

Harris said during her short-lived 2020 presidential campaign that she opposed offshore drilling for oil and hydraulic fracturing, an oil and gas extraction process better known as fracking.

But her campaign has clarified that she no longer supports a ban on fracking, a common drilling practice that is crucial to the economy in Pennsylvania, a key swing state and the nation’s second-largest producer of natural gas.

“As vice president, I did not ban fracking. As president, I will not ban fracking,” Harris told CNN Thursday in her first major television interview as the Democratic nominee. “We can grow ... a thriving clean energy economy without banning fracking.”

Kevin Book, managing director at ClearView Energy Partners, a Washington research firm, said Harris’ evolving views show she is “trying to balance climate voters and industry supporters,” even as her campaign takes “an adversarial stance” with the oil and gas industry overall.

Harris and Democrats have cited new rules — authorized by the climate law — to increase royalties that

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 45 of 76

oil and gas companies pay to drill or mine on public lands. She also has supported efforts to clean up old drilling sites and cap abandoned wells that often spew methane and other pollutants.

Trump, who pushed to roll back scores of environmental laws as president, says his goal is for the U.S. to have the cheapest energy and electricity in the world. He'd increase oil drilling on public lands, offer tax breaks to oil, gas and coal producers and speed the approval of natural gas pipelines.

Electric vehicles

Trump has frequently criticized tough new vehicle emissions rules imposed by Biden, incorrectly calling them an electric vehicle "mandate." Environmental Protection Agency rules issued this spring target tailpipe emissions from cars and trucks and encourage — but do not require — sales of new EVs to meet the new standards.

Trump has said EV manufacturing will destroy jobs in the auto industry. In recent months, however, he has softened his rhetoric, saying he's for "a very small slice" of cars being electric.

The change comes after Tesla CEO Elon Musk "endorsed me very strongly," Trump said at an August rally in Atlanta. Even so, industry officials expect Trump to roll back Biden's EV push and attempt to repeal tax incentives that Trump claims benefit China.

Harris has not announced an EV plan but has strongly supported EVs as vice president. At a 2022 event in Seattle, she celebrated roughly \$1 billion in federal grants to purchase about 2,500 "clean" school buses. As many as 25 million children ride the familiar yellow buses each school day, and they will have a healthier future with a cleaner fleet, Harris said.

The grants and other federal climate programs not only are aimed at "saving our children, but for them, saving our planet," she said.

Climate law, jobs

Harris has focused on implementing the \$1 trillion bipartisan infrastructure law passed in 2021, as well as climate provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act, which provided nearly \$375 billion in financial incentives for electric cars, clean energy projects and manufacturing.

Under Biden and Harris, American manufacturers created more than 250,000 energy jobs last year, the Energy Department said, with clean energy accounting for more than half of those jobs.

Trump and his running mate, Ohio Sen. JD Vance, deride climate spending as a "money grab" for environmental groups and say it will ship Americans' jobs to China and other countries while increasing energy prices at home.

"Kamala Harris cares more about climate change than about inflation," Vance wrote in an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal.

Goodbye Paris?

Trump, who has cast climate change as a "hoax," withdrew the U.S. from the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. He has vowed to do so again, calling the global plan to reduce carbon emissions unenforceable and a gift to China and other big polluters. Trump vows to end wind subsidies included in the climate law and eliminate regulations imposed and proposed by the Biden administration to increase the energy efficiency of lightbulbs, stoves, dishwashers and shower heads.

Harris has called the Paris Agreement crucial to address climate change and protect "our children's future."

The U.S. returned to the Paris Agreement soon after Biden took office in 2021.

LNG pause

After approving numerous projects to export liquefied natural gas, or LNG, the Biden administration in January paused consideration of new natural gas export terminals. The delay allows officials to review the economic and climate impacts of natural gas, a fossil fuel that emits methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

The decision aligned the Democratic president with environmentalists who fear the recent increase in LNG exports is locking in potentially catastrophic planet-warming emissions even as Biden has pledged to cut climate pollution in half by 2030.

Trump has said he would approve terminals "on my very first day back" in office.

Harris has not outlined plans for LNG exports, but analysts expect her to impose tough climate standards on export projects as part of her larger stance against large oil and gas companies.

Women behind bars are often survivors of abuse. A series of new laws aim to reduce their sentences

By ISABELLA VOLMERT Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — Advocates for domestic violence survivors in Illinois celebrated earlier this month when Gov. JB Pritzker signed a bill into law making it easier for those who are incarcerated to get reduced sentences.

House bill sponsor Rep. Kelly Cassidy was among those cheering. First elected in 2011, she has since written legislation designed to help survivors of gender-based and domestic violence, including the resentencing bill that was signed into law in August. The idea is that women who received harsh sentences without a court hearing about their histories of abuse should get an opportunity to tell their stories in court and potentially be resentenced.

“We can write all the laws in the world but until we start taking women’s lives seriously and valuing them and believing them, we’re going to keep having more tragedy,” Cassidy said.

Illinois is taking this view into account with a series of new laws. Only New York and California — and now Oklahoma — have comparable resentencing statutes, although efforts to change laws are underway in several other states. Since the laws involved reducing sentences, tough-on-crime lawmakers remain hard to convince.

But Illinois women’s advocates have had success getting laws passed and the state’s become sort of a laboratory, Cassidy said. “We’ve now figured out how to do it and could easily share it across other jurisdictions.”

Cassidy, who had herself grown up in an abusive home, found her passion for criminal justice reform while working in the 1990s as a policy assistant at Cook County State’s Attorney Office — the equivalent of a district attorney’s office — where she managed a pilot program that provided resources to people facing domestic violence with an increased risk of escalation.

Women who were abused are much more likely to be incarcerated than women who are not, according to research published by the National Online Resource Center on Violence Against Women. Melissa Dichter, author of the research and a professor at Temple University, said the pipeline also disproportionately impacts women and girls of color because of racial biases in the justice system as well as economic disadvantages.

“Leaving an abusive partner takes resources and takes money,” she said.

Advocates say many incarcerated women acted in self-defense against an abuser or were coerced into the crimes they were charged with. Sex trafficking survivors, for example, frequently face prostitution charges, according to Madeleine Behr with the Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation.

“Someone who’s experienced massive amounts of trauma, they’re going to act out that trauma,” senate sponsor of the Illinois bill Robert Peters said. “And it is actually vitally important that we give grace.”

Illinois has been working on the issue since 2015, when it adopted a law allowing judges to reduce jail time for some domestic violence survivors if their history was not considered in the original sentencing.

But the law has only been marginally effective. Alexis Mansfield, a senior adviser with the Illinois-based advocacy group Women’s Justice Institute, said it’s not yet possible to track specific cases and only a handful of women have seen success with their resentencing petitions.

Cassidy, a Democrat, then sponsored a bill that was signed into law last year to broaden who is eligible for sentencing relief. It now includes survivors of trafficking, stalking and sex crimes such as rape. Mansfield said the 2023 legislation expanded the scope of the law beyond violence from an intimate partner, or someone the person knows, as well as the type of abuse that can be considered.

“That expansion was really important for people who had experienced these types of harms and couldn’t get relief otherwise,” Mansfield said.

After the Illinois Supreme Court found in 2023 that the resentencing law did not apply to those who had originally pleaded guilty, Cassidy and Democratic Sen. Robert Peters sponsored legislation to close the loophole for those survivors. That’s the bill Pritzker signed Aug. 9.

Mansfield knows of over 60 petitions that have been denied, many from cases where the defendant

was originally convicted under a plea deal. She hopes this year's legislation will result in more success for women seeking new sentences.

"Representative Cassidy has been an incredible ally for survivors of gender-based violence everywhere. She uses her own lived experience to make a safer world — not just for survivors, but really for everyone," Mansfield said.

Peters described Cassidy as a mentor and lawmaker who cares about what it actually means "to give people safety."

New York passed its own Domestic Violence Survivors Justice Act in 2019. Since then, 66 people have been released after filing a resentencing petition, according to the Survivors Justice Project.

In Oklahoma, a new law went into effect Thursday that allows survivors of domestic and gender-based violence to have their sentences redone and establishes a new sentencing system capping penalties at 30 years. A legal advocacy group for incarcerated survivors, Oklahoma Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, said it is filing its first case under the law.

In Pennsylvania, Democratic state Sen. Amanda Cappelletti sponsored similar legislation last year but said the timing was not right to advance the bill with her party in the minority.

Opponents to the resentencing laws, such as Illinois Republican state Sen. Terri Bryant, emphasize that crimes were still committed and that the process of the justice system should be upheld.

"They had their day in court," Bryant said, of incarcerated survivors.

Cassidy is determined to keep pushing legislation in Illinois. She intends to bring back bills she sponsored this year to reform the Illinois Prison Review Board system — so that survivors can submit statements and that the board can provide video of the deliberations on its website.

The board came under fire when, earlier this year, it released a convicted domestic abuser who then attacked a pregnant woman with a knife and fatally stabbed her 11-year-old son in Chicago.

Cassidy's bill — which had bipartisan support — also would mandate that the board notify people if their abuser is about to have a hearing and improve its protocol so people are immediately alerted when their abuser is released. This year, the legislation failed to get final approval before the state's budget was finalized, but Cassidy is hopeful about getting it passed next session.

Her legislative to-do list also includes creating a fund for survivors to get to safety when that release alert comes through. Cassidy's vision is to work with state agencies to establish a grant for people to use on temporary housing, transportation and moving expenses.

"Really approaching this population with some intentionality and trauma-informed, gender-informed approaches, I think would be a worthy investment," Cassidy said.

The Associated Press' women in state government coverage receives financial support from Pivotal Philanthropies. AP is solely responsible for all content. Find AP's standards for working with philanthropies, a list of supporters and funded coverage areas at AP.org.

Trump courts conservative male influencers to try to reach younger men

By MATT BROWN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — At first glance, there's little that a 78-year-old former president and a 23-year-old internet personality might have in common.

Donald Trump admitted in a recent appearance on Adin Ross' show that he only "more or less" understood livestreaming, the publishing of live video on social media. But he told Ross he appreciated that the show was part of "the new wave" of information — and he credited his youngest son, 18-year-old Barron, for helping educate him.

"My son's told me about you, and they told me about how big, he said, 'Dad, he's really big,'" Trump said during their two-hour conversation.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 48 of 76

Trump's campaign has fully embraced the bravado-filled, macho, often contrarian online spaces popular with a subset of younger men on livestreaming platforms like Twitch and Kick, as well as on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram. The former president has appeared with the influencer Logan Paul, another personality Trump said was a favorite of his youngest son, and spoke on X with multibillionaire Elon Musk, a figure revered by many younger conservatives.

The computer scientist and podcaster Lex Fridman, who also has a large audience of mostly younger men, said he will soon host an episode with Trump.

Both Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris are competing for voters who increasingly get most of their news from non-traditional sources. Trump's campaign aides talk to conservative influencers about potential topics and guests, while the Harris campaign credentialed around 200 content creators to the recent Democratic National Convention, with some getting free hotel stays and other perks from aligned liberal groups to be in Chicago.

"This election is where influencers as news sources have really matured into a place where campaigns have real outreach programs and treat them almost like segments of the media," said Tammy Gordon, a digital communications strategist. "And that's one of the really neat things about the evolution of political advertising. Plus, the scary thing is that you can so finely slice and dice the electorate that you're feeding different messages in different places.

"That's both a cool thing about technology and a terrifying thing about political advertising," she added.

It is unclear how much the Trump campaign's ventures into online media will boost his campaign. The same social media platforms are filled with content creators highly critical of the former president who go viral by the same algorithms as Ross and other pro-Trump personalities.

But Trump cultivating memes is in some ways an evolution of the strategy he used to boost his persona as a playboy, businessman and mogul. That image helped make him a New York tabloid darling in the 1980 and 1990s, a television personality with "The Apprentice" in the 2000s and, ultimately, president in the 2010s.

The campaign now hopes to leverage Trump's celebrity and bombast to garner attention online and in traditional media in ways that implicitly push his message to audiences who may not pay attention to political news. It views men under 50, including many Black and Hispanic men, as key demographics where Trump can make inroads.

Younger Americans, communities of color and immigrant communities are all more likely than older or white Americans to receive their news online or from social media.

In his appearance with Trump, Ross toned down his normally provocative persona and swapped out his normal discussion topics of video games, sports and women for Trump's foreign policy and immigration talking points.

Ross gifted Trump a Rolex watch and then walked with him to sit inside a Tesla Cybertruck decal with a picture of the former president's face after the July assassination attempt at a rally, along with images of a bald eagle and an American flag. Then the two danced outside the truck.

Ross is an internet personality who gained prominence in 2020 by livestreaming video games with now-professional basketball player Bronny James, son of NBA legend LeBron James, and later appearing with rappers like Lil Uzi Vert. He became known for making provocative comments about sexuality and women on his livestreams.

His stunts regularly brought him an audience of hundreds of thousands of mostly men but also suspensions across platforms for repeatedly using slurs and other transgressions. He was permanently banned from Twitch in 2023 for what the platform called "hateful conduct." He increasingly espoused right-wing political views as he developed friendships with figures like Andrew Tate, a controversial influencer who was recently put under house arrest over new allegations of human trafficking with minors.

The presidential campaign is hitting its apex at a time of perceived challenge for many young men, particularly those without a college degree who are struggling economically. Conservative politicians and internet personalities have sought to address a bevy of grievances.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 49 of 76

Solomon Brent is one of four men who post daily reaction videos to their YouTube channel, CartierFamily, offering their Gen Z, Black, right-wing perspective on the political news of the day to more than 1 million subscribers with hyperbolic headlines and casual conversation. They joke about former CNN host Don Lemon, praise conservative commentators who “destroy” and “obliterate” liberal politicians and activists, and mix their banter in with everyday debates over relationships, sports, music and other ostensibly non-political topics.

“I think they just see our raw, honest opinions. We just pull up a clip that we’ve seen happen for the day and we just react to it,” Brent said. “We keep it all the way real about pretty much everything.”

The videos have found appeal with an audience that is overwhelmingly male and under the age of 40, the group said, citing YouTube’s analytics.

After garnering a following online with their videos, the group behind CartierFamily met top Trump aides at a 2021 Turning Point USA event, who have since “connected some dots for us,” Brent said, with political connections, amplifying content and flagging stories to discuss to their audience.

The Trump campaign declined to disclose the number of online conservative creators it is working with in a similar manner to CartierFamily.

“Our strategy has always been to meet voters where they are and that means entering nontraditional media spaces,” said Janiyah Thomas, the Trump campaign’s Black media director. “Black podcasters hold significant influence over this election, and it is important to utilize diverse voices to amplify our message to the Black community.”

Harris’ presidential candidacy, meanwhile, has ignited an explosion of organic engagement online that the campaign has sought to harness, especially on platforms popular with younger Americans and people of color like Instagram, TikTok and YouTube.

The campaign is paying close attention to Harris’ online footprint and responding with its own content echoing its newfound online supporters. Creators have also been welcomed by the broader progressive movement; multiple creators confirmed that liberal groups closely aligned with Democrats offered perks like paid flights, parties and hotel rooms to cover the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

Harris is also capitalizing on the White House’s years of engagement with the influencers to promote its agenda and hear their interests.

“I think there’s a lot to critique about (Biden) but, comparatively, the Republican Party doesn’t have the same level of support or creator outreach,” said Kahlil Greene, a TikTok influencer who creates American history videos that often go viral across platforms. “If I had to give them a review, I would definitely rate it positively. And I think they have really pioneered a new way of interacting with the public that, no matter how you feel about the details you can critique, you have to give them credit for that.”

Trump questions acceptance of transgender people as he courts his base at Moms for Liberty gathering

By ALI SWENSON, MORIAH BALINGIT and WILL WEISSERT Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump lamented the growing acceptance of transgender Americans Friday in an appearance at the annual gathering of Moms for Liberty, a national nonprofit that has spearheaded efforts to get mentions of LGBTQ+ identity and structural racism out of K-12 classrooms.

Trump said transgender women should not be allowed to play in women’s sports and said access to gender-affirming health care should be restricted. He also lashed out at critics who have accused him of using Arlington National Cemetery for a campaign photo op.

But he largely stuck to his favorite topics during an hourlong “fireside chat” in Washington, where he lashed out at President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, deplored illegal immigration and reminisced about his parents’ marriage, his path to being the reality television star of “The Apprentice” and the debate that ended Biden’s reelection campaign.

“Our country is being poisoned. And your schools and your children are suffering greatly because they’re

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 50 of 76

going into the classrooms and taking disease, and they don't even speak English," Trump said of immigrants crossing the border illegally. "It's crazy."

Trump said school boards have become "like dictatorships" hostile to the desires of parents, echoing conservative frustration that bubbled over in public meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I'm for parental rights all the way. I don't even understand the concept of not being," Trump said.

Trump did not address the U.S. Army's allegation that an Arlington National Cemetery official was "abruptly pushed aside" in an altercation with Trump aides this week while he visited the graves of servicemembers killed in a terrorist attack during the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan. But he said he's gotten to know the families and they asked to take a photo with him.

Photos of the cemetery visit showed Trump standing by the graves and flashing a thumbs-up sign next to relatives of Staff Sgt. Darin Taylor Hoover and Sgt. Nicole Gee.

"These people are devastated," Trump said Friday. "These people can never ever be the same. And it was all because of Biden."

Trump entered a hotel ballroom in Washington as he does at his signature rallies, standing and soaking up applause for the entirety of Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA," followed by chants of "Trump, Trump, Trump." Seated onstage with the co-founder of Moms for Liberty, Tiffany Justice, he shared some of his favorite stories that are mainstays at his rallies, bouncing from topic to topic in a style that has become familiar to his supporters.

The former president sought to shore up support and enthusiasm among a major part of his base. The bulk of Moms for Liberty's 130,000-plus members are conservatives who agree with him that parents should have more say in public education and that racial equity programs and transgender accommodations don't belong in schools.

Yet Trump also runs the risk of alienating some moderate voters, many of whom see Moms for Liberty's activism as too extreme to be legitimized by a presidential nominee.

A year ago, Moms for Liberty was viewed by many as a rising power player in conservative politics that could be pivotal in supporting the Republican ticket. The group's membership skyrocketed after its launch in 2021, fueled by parents protesting mandatory masking for students and remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

But in the last several months, a series of embarrassing scandals and underwhelming performances during local elections have called Moms for Liberty's influence into question.

The group also has voiced support for Project 2025, a detailed and controversial playbook for the next conservative presidency from which Trump has repeatedly tried to distance himself.

Moms for Liberty serves on the advisory board for Project 2025, and the author of the document's education chapter taught a "strategy session" at the group's Friday gathering.

The negative perceptions about Moms for Liberty around the country could increase the potential liability for Trump as he sits down with co-founder Justice, said University of Central Florida political science professor Aubrey Jewett.

"It certainly helps him rally his base," Jewett said. "But will that be enough to outdo the backlash?"

In an interview before the event, Justice disputed the idea that her group's influence is waning, pointing to the 60% of Moms for Liberty-backed candidates who won their recent races in the Florida primaries.

That's "a really big deal," she said, especially considering that many of the school board hopefuls the group endorses are first-time candidates running against incumbents. She also noted three Moms for Liberty members who won Florida House primaries, showing the group's reach into other political offices.

Trump spent several minutes of the fireside chat discussing transgender issues in adult sports, including the recent Olympics, where vitriol erupted over a female boxer who was widely misidentified as transgender.

Trump falsely claimed Algerian boxer Imane Khelif "transitioned" and said he wouldn't want to fight her. Khelif was assigned female at birth.

Trump's education proposals include promoting school choice, giving parents more say in education and awarding funding preference to states and school districts that abolish teacher tenure, financially reward good teachers and allow parents to directly elect school principals.

He also has called for terminating the Department of Education, barring transgender athletes from playing in girls' sports, and cutting funding from any schools pushing "inappropriate racial, sexual or political content" and from schools with vaccine mandates. He offered no new education proposals Friday.

The event took on a party-like atmosphere as the group awaited Trump's arrival to a hotel ballroom in Washington. Donning shirts with messages like "Moms for Trump" and "We don't co-parent with the government," attendees at the group's annual gathering ate buffet desserts, drank beer and cheered to a cover band playing country hits.

Vice President Kamala Harris has criticized her Republican opponent for his threats to dismantle the Department of Education. She also has spoken out against efforts to restrict classroom content related to race.

Democrats have lauded her running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, for an executive order he signed protecting the rights of LGBTQ people to receive gender-affirming health care in his state. Republicans, including Trump, have lambasted him for it.

During a campaign stop earlier Friday in Johnstown in the battleground state of Pennsylvania, Trump offered extensive criticism of the media for what he called unfavorable coverage and singled out CNN for its interview with Harris and Walz on Thursday.

Moments later, a man rushed the media area and made it over a bike rack barrier and close to a riser where television reporters were watching the rally. Private security pushed him back, and the man was eventually subdued by law enforcement using a Taser.

Trump at first said of the man, "he's on our side," but it's not clear what his intent was. As police led the man away, the former president declared, "Is there anywhere that's more fun to be than a Trump rally?"

Associated Press writer Jonathan J. Cooper in Phoenix contributed.

The Associated Press receives support from several private foundations to enhance its explanatory coverage of elections and democracy. See more about AP's democracy initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

NHL player Johnny Gaudreau and brother killed when bicycles hit by car on eve of sister's wedding

By STEPHEN WHYNO AP Hockey Writer

NHL player Johnny Gaudreau and his younger brother were killed on the eve of their sister's wedding when they were hit by a suspected drunken driver while riding bicycles in their home state of New Jersey, police said Friday.

New Jersey State Police said the Gaudreau brothers were cycling on a road in Oldmans Township on Thursday night when a man driving an SUV in the same direction attempted to pass two other vehicles and struck them from behind about 8 p.m., less than a half-hour after sunset. They were pronounced dead at the scene some 35 miles south of Philadelphia.

Gaudreau, 31, and brother, Matt, 29, are Carneys Point, New Jersey, natives and were set to serve as groomsmen at their sister Katie's wedding that was scheduled for Friday in Philadelphia.

Police said the driver, 43-year-old Sean M. Higgins, was suspected of being under the influence of alcohol and charged with two counts of death by auto, along with reckless driving, possession of an open container and consuming alcohol in a motor vehicle.

Higgins told a responding officer he had five or six beers prior to the crash and admitted to consuming alcohol while driving, according to the criminal complaint obtained by The Associated Press. He failed a field sobriety test, the complaint said, though his blood-alcohol level was not immediately available.

Higgins was jailed at a Salem County facility and will remain there until his pretrial detention hearing, which is scheduled for Sept. 5. A court spokesperson said Higgins at his first appearance Friday was represented by a public defender but indicated he planned to hire his own attorney. Public defenders in New

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 52 of 76

Jersey do not comment on cases.

Johnny Gaudreau, known as "Johnny Hockey," played 10 full seasons in the league and was set to enter his third with the Columbus Blue Jackets after signing a seven-year, \$68 million deal in 2022. He played his first eight seasons with the Calgary Flames, a tenure that included becoming one of the sport's top players and a fan favorite across North America.

"Just devastating news for all of us connected with the Gaudreau family," Jerry York, who coached the Gaudreau brothers at Boston College, said in a phone interview with the AP. "Both Matty and Johnny were terrifically admired by all of us. Wonderful young guys, and they impressed a lot of us off the ice."

York raved about parents Guy and Jane and the family's dedication to their children and hockey. Gaudreau had been married to his wife, Meredith, since 2021, and they have two children under 2, Noa, who was born in September 2022, and Johnny, who was born in February.

"We want to let everyone know we are receiving your messages of love and support, and we appreciated your continued thoughts and prayers," an uncle, Jim Gaudreau, said in a statement on behalf of the families involved. "We ask for your continued respect and privacy during this very difficult period of grief."

Fans laid flowers and hockey sticks for Gaudreau outside Nationwide Arena in downtown Columbus and outside the Flames' home rink in Calgary. Tributes reverberated near and far, with moments of silence in Cincinnati before a Major League Baseball game between the Reds and Milwaukee Brewers and prior to an Olympic qualifying hockey game between Slovakia and Hungary in the Slovakian capital of Bratislava.

The Blue Jackets said Gaudreau "was not only a great hockey player, but more significantly a loving husband, father, son, brother and friend."

"Johnny played the game with great joy which was felt by everyone that saw him on the ice," the team said in a statement. "He brought a genuine love for hockey with him everywhere he played."

Gaudreau's death is the latest off-ice tragedy for the Blue Jackets. Goaltender Matiss Kivlenieks died in July 2021 when he was struck in the chest by a firework while attending the wedding of then-Blue Jackets goaltending coach Manny Legace's daughter in Michigan.

Gaudreau, at 5-foot-9 and 180 pounds, was part of a generation of hockey players who thrived in an era of speed and skill that made being undersized less of a disadvantage. Winner of the Lady Byng Trophy in 2017 for sportsmanship and gentlemanly conduct combined with a high standard of play, he scored 20-plus goals six times and was a 115-point player in 2021-22 as a first-time NHL All-Star when he had a career-best 40 goals and 75 assists.

"While Johnny's infectious spirit for the game and show-stopping skills on the ice earned him the nickname 'Johnny Hockey,' he was more than just a dazzling hockey player; he was a doting father and beloved husband, son, brother and teammate who endeared himself to every person fortunate enough to have crossed his path," NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman said.

NHL Players' Association executive director Marty Walsh said players and staff were devastated by these losses, calling Johnny "a beloved teammate and friend in both Calgary and Columbus (and) a joy to watch during his 10 years and 763 games in the NHL."

A fourth-round pick by Calgary in 2011, Gaudreau had helped Boston College win the NCAA championship in 2012 and took home the Hobey Baker Award as the top college player in the country in 2014 — a season he and his brother played together for the Eagles.

Gaudreau was a nearly point-a-game player with 776 points in 805 regular-season and playoff games since breaking into the league. In 2022, he left the Flames to sign a big contract with the Blue Jackets that put him and his young family in central Ohio, closer to his family in New Jersey.

Social media was full of messages about Gaudreau, from USA Hockey to the Flames and beyond the sport itself. Former Flames teammate Blake Coleman posted that he was "completely gutted. The world just lost one of the best." Retired goaltender Eddie Lack called Gaudreau one of his favorite teammates.

"Always happy, always spreading positivity around him," Lack said. "Rest in Peace my friend and prayers for your wonderful family."

NBA superstar LeBron James, who is from Akron, Ohio, said he instantly got sad after seeing the news.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 53 of 76

"My thoughts and prayers goes out to the Gaudreau family," James said. "May Johnny and Matthew fly high, guide/guard and bless their family/s from the heavens above."

The tragedy comes as the Blue Jackets and other NHL teams prepare to open training camp for the season in about three weeks.

"We will miss him terribly and do everything that we can to support his family and each other through this tragedy," the team said.

AP Sports Writer Dan Gelston, Associated Press writer Bruce Shipkowski and AP Hockey Writer John Wawrow contributed.

AP NHL: <https://apnews.com/hub/NHL>

Travelers are getting a head start on the long Labor Day weekend

By DAVID KOENIG AP Business Writer

Airports, highways, beaches and theme parks are expected to be packed across the U.S. this Labor Day weekend as a lot Americans mark the unofficial end of summer the same way they celebrated the season's unofficial start: by traveling.

After what's already been a record-breaking summer for air travel, the Transportation Security Administration predicted its agents would screen more than 17 million people during a holiday period that started Thursday and runs through next Wednesday, about 8% more than last year.

The TSA anticipates Friday being the busiest day. In a sign the summer travel season really is winding down, however, the agency said that fewer than 2 million passengers passed through airport security checkpoints one day this week — the first time that has happened since early March.

If you plan to be part of the crowds heading out of town to enjoy one last blast of summer, here is a rundown of what you need to know.

How is holiday travel going so far?

Busy, as expected, and flight delays were common.

Airlines had canceled more than 200 U.S. flights as of late afternoon on the East Coast, a modest number by current standards. However, more than 4,500 other flights were delayed, led by Southwest and American, according to tracking service FlightAware.

Plenty of people appeared to have heeded experts' advice to get away as early as possible on Friday.

Lines of cars and passengers appeared at Los Angeles International Airport before the sun was up. Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport was buzzing early but slowed by midmorning, and parking spaces were still available.

Why travel over a holiday weekend?

Boston resident Dani Fleming flew across the country to visit her son, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren. She got to the airport at 4:30 a.m. for her departing flight and was pleasantly surprised by how quickly the lines moved both there and at San Francisco International Airport.

"The flight was easy. (I) napped for a little bit, watched movies," Fleming said. "This was a breeze."

Benjamin Schmeiser and his wife and 16-year-old daughter planned to fly from Chicago to San Diego to attend a concert of 1970s rock bands. It was the family's first flight together since COVID-19 hit.

"We have been looking forward to this trip for quite some time, and I'm happy that we can get the whole family in on the trip," Schmeiser said while waiting at O'Hare International Airport. "A lot of us are huge live music fans, and we love sports. Now that travel is open, it's much more affordable, we're able to travel a lot more."

Where are the potential trouble spots?

Weather is the leading cause of flight delays. Forecasts call for rain and maybe scattered thunderstorms from Texas to New England plus parts of Florida over the weekend, spreading over more of the Southeast on Monday.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 54 of 76

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport was still working to restore all services after what airport officials described as a possible cyberattack last weekend. Flights have been running normally all week, but the airport told passengers to arrive extra early and to avoid checking bags, especially on smaller airlines, because of problems with the bag-sorting system.

Michael Novick got to SeaTac 30 minutes earlier than usual and checked three bags for his American Airlines flight to Dallas on Friday. "I was a little concerned about what things might look like, but it was absolutely seamless," he said. "It was a normal day."

The only thing out of the ordinary: gate agents checked boarding passes manually, Novick said.

What are prices like?

Motorists are getting a break on gasoline. The nationwide average Friday was \$3.35 per gallon, compared to \$3.83 a year ago, according to AAA.

For electric vehicles, the average price for a kilowatt of power at an L2 commercial charging station is about 34 cents. The average is under 25 cents in Kansas and Missouri but tops 40 cents in several states, including New Hampshire, Tennessee and Kentucky. Hawaii is the costliest, at 56 cents.

Average airfares in July were down 7.1% from June and 2.8% from July 2023, according to the government's consumer price index. Steve Hafner, CEO of the travel metasearch site Kayak, said airfares are dropping as the peak summer-vacation season ends.

When is the best time to hit the road?

Early morning or late evening. Transportation-data provider INRIX says traffic will be heaviest between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Saturday and from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday, when people head home.

When will airports be busiest?

The TSA expects to screen 2.86 million people Friday. That's impressive, but it won't rank among TSA's top 15 days — 14 of which were this year. The single-day record of 3.01 million was set July 7, the Sunday after Independence Day.

TSA says it has enough screeners to keep the time it takes to get through regular lines to 30 minutes or less and to no more than 10 minutes for PreCheck lines.

American Airlines expects to operate 6,400 flights Friday, the same as Thursday, and 6,300 on Labor Day itself.

What should I do if my flight is delayed or canceled?

Check your flight's status before leaving for the airport. It's better to be stuck at home than stranded at the airport.

If your flight is canceled, the airline might automatically rebook you. That might not be the best option.

"Get on the phone (to the airline's help center), get in front of an agent, reach out to the airline via social media if you have to, but find out what the other options are," says Julian Kheel, the founder and CEO of Points Path, a browser extension that lets users compare fares with deals available using frequent-flyer points.

Kheel said agents at the airport have more leeway to help but might be overwhelmed by the number of passengers needing help. DIY rebooking on the airline website or app might be faster, he said.

Phone tip: If the airline has international help numbers, call one of those to get through more quickly.

What about refunds and reimbursement?

Airlines are required to provide refunds — including for extra fees paid — to passengers whose flights are canceled for any reason. However, they are not required to pay cash compensation, and no major U.S. airlines do. Only Alaska, Southwest and JetBlue even promise travel vouchers if the cancellation is their fault.

If you're stuck overnight, ask the airline about paying for a hotel, meals and ground transportation. All major U.S. airlines except Frontier promise to help with all three for "controllable" disruptions, according to the Transportation Department's airline-policy dashboard.

Keep receipts for all out-of-pocket expenses in case you can file a claim later.

A few final tips

— Leave early. Everything will take longer than you expect, including getting through airport security.

— Watch the weather. Even if skies are clear at home, there could be storms at your flight's destination or along your road route. Have a backup route.

— Don't check a bag. About one in every 170 checked bags was lost, damaged or stolen in May, the latest month covered by government figures.

— Be nice. "Go with the flow. You don't need to hate on the customer-service people. They're doing the best they can," said Shannon Beddingfield of Texas as she prepared to board a flight to Orlando, Florida.

— Teresa Crawford in Chicago, Mat Otero in Dallas, Haven Daley in San Francisco and Jae C. Hong in Los Angeles contributed reporting.

Ukrainian president fires air force commander after fatal F-16 crash

By ILLIA NOVIKOV and HANNA ARHIROVA Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy fired the commander of the country's air force Friday, four days after an F-16 warplane that Ukraine received from its Western partners crashed during a Russian bombardment and killed the pilot.

The order to dismiss Lt. Gen. Mykola Oleshchuk was published on the presidential website.

"We need to protect people. Protect personnel. Take care of all our soldiers," Zelenskyy said in an address minutes after the order was published. He said Ukraine needs to strengthen its army on the command level.

Lt. Gen. Anatolii Kryvonozhko was appointed acting air force commander, the army's general staff said.

The dismissal came on the same day that Oleshchuk directed scathing criticism at a lawmaker who is deputy head of the Ukrainian parliament's defense committee for her claims that the F-16 was downed by a Patriot air-defense system. Ukraine has received an unspecified number of the U.S.-made systems.

Mariana Bezuhla cited unnamed sources for her claim and demanded punishment for those responsible for the error.

Oleshchuk accused Bezuhla of defaming the air force and discrediting U.S. arms manufacturers and said that he hoped she would face legal consequences for her claims.

"The truth will win," Bezuhla posted on X shortly after the dismissal order was published.

The air force did not directly deny that the F-16 was hit by a Patriot missile.

U.S. experts have joined the Ukrainian investigation into the crash, the air force said.

Meanwhile, a Russian attack on the northeastern city of Kharkiv using powerful plane-launched glide bombs killed six people, including a 14-year-old girl on a playground, and wounded 47 others, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said.

The bombs struck five locations across the city, which had a prewar population of 1.4 million people, the governor said.

One of the bombs hit a 12-story apartment block, setting the building ablaze and trapping at least one person on an upper floor. Emergency crews searching for survivors feared the structure could collapse.

In other developments, Ukrainian rockets hit the Russian city of Belgorod and its surroundings on late Friday, killing five people and injuring 37, said regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov. The region borders northern Ukraine and comes under drone or artillery attacks almost daily.

Zelenskyy pointed to the Kharkiv strikes as further evidence that Western partners should scrap restrictions on what the Ukrainian military can target with donated weapons.

The Kharkiv strike "wouldn't have happened if our defense forces had the capability to destroy Russian military aviation at its bases. We need strong decisions from our partners to stop this terror," Zelenskyy said.

F-16s are one of the weapons that could be used to hit Russian bases behind the front line.

Oleshchuk said on Telegram that "a detailed analysis" was already being conducted into why the F-16 jet went down Monday, when Russia launched a major missile and drone barrage at Ukraine.

"We must carefully understand what happened, what the circumstances are, and whose responsibility it is," Oleshchuk wrote in the post shortly before his dismissal.

The crash was the first reported loss of an F-16 in Ukraine, where the warplanes arrived at the end of last month. At least six are believed to have been delivered by European countries.

Military analysts say the planes will not be a game-changer in the war, given Russia's massive air force and sophisticated air-defense systems. But Ukrainian officials welcomed the supersonic jets, which can carry modern weapons used by NATO countries, for offering an opportunity to hit back at Russia's air superiority.

On the ground, the Russian army is making slow but gradual progress in its drive into eastern Ukraine, while Ukrainian forces are holding ground in the Kursk border region of western Russia after a recent incursion.

The Institute for the Study of War said it expected that Ukraine would lose some Western-provided military equipment in the fighting.

But the Washington-based think tank added that "any loss among Ukraine's already limited allotment" of F-16s and trained pilots "will have an outsized impact" on the country's ability to operate F-16s "as part of its combined air defense umbrella or in an air-to-ground support role."

In other developments, European Union defense ministers agreed in Brussels to boost their training program for Ukrainian troops.

"Today the ministers agreed to raising the target to 75,000, adding 15,000 more by the end of the year," EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell told reporters after the meeting.

"The training has to be shortened and adapted to the Ukrainian training needs," Borrell said. He added that the EU would set up a small "coordination and liaison cell" in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv to make the training effort more effective.

So far, 60,000 troops have passed through the bloc's training scheme, which is conducted outside Ukraine.

Associated Press Writer Lorne Cook in Brussels contributed to this report.

Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

A Palestinian TikTok star who shared details of Gaza life under siege is killed by Israeli airstrike

By ISABEL DEBRE and FATMA KHALED Associated Press

CAIRO (AP) — It was another day of war in Gaza, another day of what 19-year-old Palestinian TikTok star Medo Halimy called his "Tent Life."

As he often did in videos documenting life's mundane absurdities in the enclave, Halimy on Monday walked to his local internet cafe — rather, a tent with Wi-Fi where displaced Palestinians can connect to the outside world — to meet his friend and collaborator Talal Murad.

They snapped a selfie — "Finally Reunited" Halimy captioned it on Instagram — and started catching up.

Then came a flash of light, 18-year-old Murad said, an explosion of white heat and sprayed earth. Murad felt pain in his neck. Halimy was bleeding from his head. A car on the coastal road in front of them was engulfed in flames, the apparent target of an Israeli airstrike. It took 10 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. Hours later doctors pronounced Halimy dead.

"He represented a message," Murad said on Friday, still recovering from his shrapnel wounds and reeling from the Israeli airstrike that killed his friend. "He represented hope and strength."

The Israeli military said it was not aware of the strike that killed Halimy.

Tributes to Halimy kept pouring in Friday from friends as far afield as Harker Heights, Texas, where he spent a year in 2021 as part of an exchange program sponsored by the State Department.

"Medo was the life of the hangout ... humor and kindness and wit, all things that can never be forgotten," said Heba al-Saidi, alumni coordinator for the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study program. "He was bound for greatness, but he was taken too soon."

His death also catalyzed an outpouring of grief on social media, where his followers expressed shock

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 57 of 76

and sadness as if they, too, had lost a close friend.

Israel's campaign in Gaza has killed more than 40,000 Palestinians — according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which doesn't distinguish between civilians and militants — and spawned a humanitarian disaster. It has also transformed legions of ordinary teenagers, who have nothing to do every day but survive, into war correspondents for the social media age.

"We worked together, it was a kind of resistance that I hope to continue," said Murad, who collaborated with Halimy on "The Gazan Experience," an Instagram account that answered questions from followers around the world trying to understand their lives in the besieged enclave, which is inaccessible to foreign journalists.

Halimy launched his own TikTok account after taking refuge with his parents, four brothers and sister in Muwasi, the southern coastal area that Israel has designated a humanitarian safe zone. They had fled Israel's invasion of Gaza City to the southern city of Khan Younis before escaping the bombardment again for the dusty encampment.

Sparked by Hamas' surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 people and resulted in about 250 people taken hostage, the Israel-Hamas war has produced a torrent of images now numbingly familiar to viewers around the world: Bombed-out buildings, contorted bodies, chaotic hospital halls.

But Halimy's content "came as a surprise," said his friend, 19-year-old Helmi Hirez.

Turning his camera on the intimate details of his own life in Gaza, he reached viewers far and wide, revealing a maddening tedium that's largely left out of news coverage about the war.

"If you wonder what living in a tent is actually like, come with me to show you how I spend my day," Halimy says in his first of many "tent life" diaries filmed from the sprawling encampment.

He filmed himself going about his day: waiting restlessly in long lines for drinking water, showering with a jar and a bucket ("there's no shampoo or soap, of course"), scavenging ingredients to make a surprisingly tasty baba ganoush, the Middle East's smoky eggplant dip ("Mama mia!" he marvels at his creation), and becoming very, very bored ("then I went back to the tent, and did nothing").

Hundreds of thousands of people around the world were captivated. His videos went viral — some amassing more than 2 million views on TikTok.

Even when recounting tragedies (his grandmother died, he mentioned at one point, largely because of Gaza's acute medication and equipment shortages) or fretting over Israel's bombardment, Halimy's friends said that he found salve in channeling his grief and anxiety into deadpan humor.

"Very annoying," he says with an eye roll when the buzz of an Israeli drone interrupts one of his TikTok recipe videos.

"As you can see, the transportation here is not five stars," he says when crammed between men in a pickup truck heading to the nearby town of Deir al-Balah.

"We proceeded to play, anyway," he says of his Monopoly game, when the whooshing of Israeli projectiles sounds in the skies above him and his friends. "Anyway, I lost."

In his last video, posted hours before he was killed, Halimy films himself scribbling in a notebook, its pages covered with mysterious black redaction bars.

"I started designs for my new secret project," he said from the tent cafe that would later be struck, in the same tone he always used, one part playful, one part serious.

___ Isabel DeBre reported from Buenos Aires, Argentina.

US clears updated COVID shots from Novavax, adding a 3rd fall vaccine option

By The Associated Press undefined

U.S. regulators have cleared a third updated COVID-19 vaccine for this fall, shots made by Novavax Inc. Already, Pfizer and Moderna are shipping shots modified to better match more recent strains of the ever-evolving coronavirus. Those doses can be used in adults and children as young as 6 months.

Friday, the Food and Drug Administration gave the OK to the updated Novavax formula, too — and those

shots are open to anyone 12 and older.

While most Americans have some degree of immunity from prior infections or vaccinations or both, that protection wanes. Despite this summer's wave, winter surges of COVID-19 tend to be worse and health officials are urging Americans to get one of the vaccine options this fall.

Novavax makes a protein-based vaccine mixed with an immune booster, a different technology than Pfizer and Moderna's so-called mRNA vaccines.

This year there's another slight difference in the formulations. The Pfizer and Moderna recipes are tailored to a virus subtype called KP.2. The Novavax formula targets its parent strain, called JN.1. The FDA considers both closely enough related to currently circulating strains to offer cross-protection.

The Associated Press Health and Science Department receives support from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's Science and Educational Media Group. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Trump film 'The Apprentice' finds distributor and will open before the election

By JAKE COYLE AP Film Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — After struggling to drum up interest following its Cannes Film Festival premiere, "The Apprentice," starring Sebastian Stan as a young Donald Trump, has found a distributor that plans to release the film shortly before the election in November.

Briarcliff Entertainment will release "The Apprentice" on Oct. 11 in U.S. and Canadian theaters, just weeks before Americans cast their ballots on Nov. 5.

Director Ali Abbasi, the Danish Iranian filmmaker, had prioritized getting "The Apprentice" into theaters before voters head to the polls. After larger studios and film distributors opted not to bid on the film, Abbasi complained in early June on X that "for some reason certain power people in your country don't want you to see it!!!"

Steven Cheung, communications director for the Trump campaign, in a statement Friday called the film's release "election interference by Hollywood elites right before November."

"This 'film' is pure malicious defamation, should never see the light of day, and doesn't even deserve a place in the straight-to-DVD section of a bargain bin at a soon-to-be-closed discount movie store, it belongs in a dumpster fire," Cheung said.

Part of what dampened interest in "The Apprentice" was the potential threat of legal action. After its Cannes premiere in May, Cheung called the movie "pure fiction" and said the Trump team would file a lawsuit "to address the blatantly false assertions from these pretend filmmakers."

"The Apprentice" chronicles Trump's rise to power in New York real estate under the tutelage of defense attorney Roy Cohn (played by Jeremy Strong). Late in the movie, Trump is depicted raping his wife, Ivana Trump (played by Maria Bakalova). In Ivana Trump's 1990 divorce deposition, she stated that Trump raped her. Trump denied the allegation and Ivana Trump later said she didn't mean it literally, but rather that she had felt violated.

Abbasi has argued Trump might not dislike the movie.

"I would offer to go and meet him wherever he wants and talk about the context of the movie, have a screening and have a chat afterwards, if that's interesting to anyone at the Trump campaign," Abbasi said in May.

Briarcliff Entertainment has released films including the 2022 documentary "Gabby Giffords Won't Back Down" and the Liam Neeson thriller "Memory." The indie distributor is run by Tom Ortenberg, who at Lionsgate helped released Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11" and as chief executive of Open Road backed the best picture Oscar winner "Spotlight."

Takeaways from the AP's report on Mexican mothers searching for their disappeared children

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — According to official figures, at least 115,000 people have disappeared in Mexico since 1952, though the real number is believed to be higher.

During the country's "dirty war," a conflict that lasted throughout the 1970s, disappearances were attributed to government repression.

In the past two decades, as officials have fought drug cartels and organized crime has tightened its grip in several states, it's been more difficult to trace the perpetrators and causes of disappearances.

Human trafficking, kidnapping, acts of retaliation and forced recruitment by cartel members are among the reasons listed by human rights organizations. Disappearances impact local communities as well as migrants who travel through Mexico hoping to reach the U.S.

Among the thousands of relatives affected are mothers whose children have vanished.

Here are some takeaways from the AP's report on how some of these women have taken the search in their own hands, supported by a few faith leaders who offer spiritual guidance.

Why mothers search for their children on their own

Diego Maximiliano was 16 years old when he vanished in 2015 after leaving home to meet with friends. He and his mother, Verónica Rosas, lived in Ecatepec, a Mexico City suburb where robbery, femicide and other violent crimes have afflicted its inhabitants for decades.

Kidnappers took him and requested an amount of money that Rosas was unable to get. They apparently agreed to a lower sum, but Diego was never released.

To find their relatives, people like Rosas initially trust the authorities, but as time passes and no answers or justice comes, they take the search into their own hands.

They distribute bulletins with photos of the missing person. They visit morgues, prisons and psychiatric institutions. They walk through neighborhoods where homeless people spend the day, wondering if their sons or daughters might be close, affected by drug abuse or mental health problems.

Three months after Diego's disappearance, Rosas got tired of waiting to hear from the police. She opened a Facebook page called "Help me find Diego" and, though she was frightened of stepping out of her home, she started looking for him, dead or alive.

For three years, her search was lonely. Relatives, co-workers and friends commonly distance themselves from people with missing family members, claiming that "they only talk about their search" or "listening to them is too sad."

It wasn't until 2018 that Rosas joined an annual protest in which thousands of mothers demand answers and justice and became aware of a wider problem. After meeting other women like her, she wondered: What if we use our collective force in our favor?

And so, as other mothers have done in Mexican states like Sonora and Jalisco, Rosas created an organization to provide mutual support for their searches. She called it "Uniendo Esperanzas," or Gathering Hopes, and it currently supports 22 families, mostly from the state of Mexico.

What's been the government's reaction to the disappearances?

The resentment and disappointment from Mexicans affected by nationwide violence has increased recently.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Claudia Sheinbaum, who will succeed him on Oct. 1, constantly minimize the relatives' recriminations, claiming that homicide rates decreased during the current administration.

But it's not just violence that victims resent. On a recent evening, in the state of Zacatecas, a mother like Rosas stormed into a session of Congress. Drenched in tears, she screamed that she found her son — with a gunshot to the head — at the morgue. He had been there since November 2023, she said, but the authorities failed to notify her in spite of her tireless efforts to get information about what happened to him.

What role does religion play in the mothers' searches?

Many faith leaders — regardless of their religious affiliation — are unwilling to address the disappearances in Mexico or to console anguished mothers.

"Not everyone has the sensitivity to endure such pain," said Catholic Bishop Javier Acero, who meets regularly with mothers like Rosas. He pushed for celebrating Mass in Mexico City's Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe to remember their disappeared children for the first time in 2023.

"But the numbers of disappearances keep rising and the government doesn't do anything about it, so, where the state is absent, the church offers guidance," Acero said.

Some mothers regard him as an ally, and leaders from the Catholic church have raised their concerns against Lopez Obrador's security policy since two Jesuit priests were murdered in 2022. But, in parallel, some relatives of missing people claim that many Catholic priests, nuns and parishioners have shown little empathy for their pain.

Soon after her son disappeared, Rosas rushed to a nearby parish and asked the priest to celebrate Mass so she could pray for Diego, but he refused.

She said he told her, "I can't say that people are being kidnapped, madam. I encourage you to pray for your son's eternal rest."

In contrast, faith leaders from an ecumenical group called "The Axis of Churches" are constantly supportive. Methodists, evangelicals, Indigenous spiritual leaders, theologians and feminists are among its members. Sometimes they pray; on other occasions they share a meal, draw mandalas or simply listen to the mothers.

"We have the legitimate hope of finding our treasures alive," said the Rev. Arturo Carrasco, an Anglican priest who offers spiritual guidance to families with missing members. "We are no fools and we understand that there's a risk they might be dead. But as long as we have no evidence of that, we will keep searching."

Like Carrasco, Catholic nun Paola Clericó has walked with the mothers through muddy terrain where excavations were made in search for human remains. They have celebrated Mass in the middle of busy streets and next to canal drainages. They have joined them in visiting prisons and morgues, comforting them no matter what sorrow may come.

"We live with a such a profound pain that only God can help us endure it," Rosas said. "If it wasn't for that light, for that relief, I don't think we would be able to still stand."

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

A centuries-old cemetery for people who were enslaved is reclaimed in New York

By MICHAEL HILL Associated Press

KINGSTON, N.Y. (AP) — On a residential block in upstate New York, college students dig and sift backyard dirt as part of an archaeological project that could provide insights into the lives of African Americans buried there centuries ago.

This spot of tightly-packed houses in the city of Kingston was a cemetery for people who were enslaved as far back as 1750 and remained a burial ground until the late 1800s, when the cemetery was covered over as the city grew.

Now, college students are carefully digging in the green backyards of the homes and making all sorts of discoveries.

In the last three summers, the remains of up to 27 people have been located. Grave markers have been found, one for Caesar Smith, who was born enslaved and died a free man in 1839.

Advocates hope more mysteries could be unlocked. While the names of people buried here may be lost, tests are planned on their remains to shed light on their lives and the identities of their descendants.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 61 of 76

"The hardships of those buried here cannot just go down in vain," said Tyrone Wilson, founder of Harambee Kingston, the nonprofit community group raising money to turn the spot, called the Pine Street African Burial Ground, into a respectful resting place. "We have a responsibility to make sure that we fix that disrespect."

The site is one of many forgotten or neglected cemeteries for African Americans around the U.S. that are getting fresh attention.

Advocates in this Hudson River city purchased a residential property covering about half the old cemetery several years ago and now use the house there as a visitor center.

While the more-than-half-acre (0.2 hectares) site was designated as a cemetery for people who were enslaved in 1750, it might have been in use before then. Burials continued through about 1878, more than 50 years after New York fully abolished slavery. Researchers say people were buried with their feet to the east, so when they rise on Judgment Day, they would face the rising sun.

Remains found on the Harambee property are covered with patterned African cloths and kept where they are. Remains found on adjoining land are exhumed for later burial on the Harambee property.

Students from the State University of New York at New Paltz recently finished a third summer of supervised backyard excavations in this city 80 miles (129 kilometers) upriver from Manhattan. The students get course credit, though anthropology major Maddy Thomas said there's an overriding sense of mission.

"I don't like when people feel upset or forgotten," Thomas said on a break. "And that is what's happened here. So we've got to fix it."

Harambee is trying to raise \$1 million to transform the modest backyard into a resting spot that reflects the African heritage of the people buried there. Plans include a tall marker in the middle of the yard.

While some graves were apparently marked, it's still hard to say who was buried there.

"Some of them, it's obvious, were marked with just a stone with no writing on it," said Joseph Diamond, an associate professor of anthropology at New Paltz.

The only intact headstone recovered with a name visible was for Smith, who died in 1839 at the age of 41. A researcher mined historical records and came up with two more people potentially buried there in 1803: a man identified as Sam and a 16-year-old girl named Deyon who was publicly hanged after being convicted of murdering the 6-year-old daughter of her enslavers.

The cemetery was at first covered by a lumberyard by 1880, even though some gravestones were apparently still standing at that date.

In 1990, Diamond was doing an archaeological survey for the city and noticed the cemetery was marked on a map from 1870. He and the city historian went out to find it.

Coincidentally, Pine Street building owner Andrew Kirschner had just discovered buried bone chips while digging in front of the building in search of a sewer pipe. He put the pieces in a box. Kirschner said he was still digging when Diamond told him what they were looking for.

"The conversation begins and then I go, 'Well, let me show you what I found.' Of course, they were amazed," said Kirschner, who had owned the building next to the current Harambee property.

Even after the discovery, Diamond said it was difficult to convince people that there were graves on Pine Street. There were even plans in 1996 to build a parking lot over much of the site. Advocates purchased the property in 2019.

Similar stories of disregard and rediscovery have played out elsewhere.

In Manhattan, the African Burial Ground National Monument marks the site where an estimated 15,000 free and enslaved Africans were buried until the 1790s. It was discovered in 1991 during excavations for a federal building. Farther up the Hudson River, the renovation in Newburgh of a century-old school into a courthouse in 2008 led to the discovery of more than 100 sets of remains.

Antoinette Jackson, founder of The Black Cemetery Network, said many of the 169 sites listed in their online archive had been destroyed.

"A good deal of them represent sites that have been built over — by parking lots, schools, stadiums, highways. Others have been under-resourced," said Jackson, a professor of anthropology at the University of South Florida.

She added that the cemeteries listed in the archive are just the “tip of the iceberg.”

Given the meager historical record in Kingston, advocates hope tests on the remains will help fill in some of the gaps. Broken bones may point to occupational hazards. Isotopic analyses could provide information on whether individuals grew up elsewhere — like South Carolina or Africa — and then moved to the region. DNA analyses could provide information on where in Africa their ancestors came from. The DNA tests also might be able to link them to living descendants.

Wilson said local families have committed to providing DNA samples. He sees the tests as another way to connect people to their heritage.

“One of the biggest issues that we have in African culture is that we don’t know our history,” he said. “We don’t have a lot of information of who we are.”

This story has been corrected to say University of South Florida, not Southern Florida.

Black students are still kicked out of school at higher rates despite reforms

By ANNIE MA, CHEYANNE MUMPHREY, and SHARON LURYE Associated Press

Before he was suspended, Zaire Byrd was thriving. He acted in school plays, played on the football team and trained with other athletes. He had never been suspended before — he’d never even received detention.

But when Byrd got involved in a fight after school one day, none of that seemed to matter to administrators. Byrd said he was defending himself and two friends after three other students threatened to rob them. Administrators at Tri-Cities High School in Georgia called the altercation a “group fight” — an automatic 10-day suspension. After a disciplinary hearing, they sent him to an alternative school.

The experience nearly derailed his education.

“The last four years were a lot for me, from online school to getting suspended,” said Byrd, who started high school remotely during the pandemic. “I could have learned more, but between all that and changing schools, it was hard.”

In Georgia, Black students like Byrd make up slightly more than one-third of the population. But they account for the majority of students who receive punishments that remove them from the classroom, including suspension, expulsion and being transferred to an alternative school.

Those disparities, in Georgia and across the country, became the target of a newly energized reform movement a decade ago, spurred by the same racial reckoning that gave rise to the Black Lives Matter movement. For many advocates, students and educators, pursuing racial justice meant addressing disparate outcomes for Black youth that begin in the classroom, often through harsh discipline and underinvestment in low-income schools.

The past decade has seen some progress in lowering suspension rates for Black students. But massive disparities persist, according to a review of discipline data in key states by The Associated Press.

In Missouri, for example, an AP analysis found Black students served 46% of all days in suspension in the 2013-2014 school year — the year Michael Brown was shot and killed by police in that state, days after he completed high school. Nine years later, the percentage had dropped to 36%, according to state data obtained via a public records request. Both numbers far exceed Black students’ share of the student population, about 15%.

And in California, the suspension rate for Black students fell from 13% in 2013 to 9% a decade later — still three times higher than the white suspension rate.

Incremental progress, but advocates say bias remains

The country’s racial reckoning elevated the concept of the “school-to-prison pipeline” — the notion that being kicked out of school, or dropping out, increases the chance of arrest and imprisonment years later. School systems made incremental progress in reducing suspensions and expulsions, but advocates say the underlying bias and structures remain in place.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 63 of 76

The upshot: More Black kids are still being kicked out of school.

"That obviously fuels the school-to-prison pipeline," said Terry Landry Jr., Louisiana policy director at the Southern Poverty Law Center. "If you're not in school, then what are you doing?"

Students who are suspended, expelled or otherwise kicked out of the classroom are more likely to be suspended again. They become disconnected from their classmates, and they're more likely to become disengaged from school. They also miss out on learning time and are likely to have worse academic outcomes, including in their grades and rates of graduation.

Nevertheless, some schools and policymakers have doubled down on exclusionary discipline since the pandemic. In Missouri, students lost almost 780,000 days of class due to in-school or out-of-school suspensions in 2023, the highest number in the past decade.

In Louisiana, Black students are twice as likely to be suspended as white students and receive longer suspensions for the same infractions, according to a 2017 study from the Education Research Alliance for New Orleans. Yet a new law goes into effect this year that recommends expulsion for any middle- or high-school student who is suspended three times in one school year.

Educators — and parents — seek to keep kids in school

Federal guidelines to address racial disparities in school discipline first came from President Barack Obama's administration in 2014. Federal officials urged schools not to suspend, expel or refer students to law enforcement except as a last resort, and encouraged restorative justice practices that did not push students out of the classroom. Those rules were rolled back by President Donald Trump's administration, but civil rights regulations at federal and state levels still mandate the collection of data on discipline.

In Minnesota, the share of expulsions and out-of-school suspensions going to Black students dropped from 40% in 2018 to 32% four years later — still nearly three times Black students' share of the overall population.

The discipline gulf in that state was so egregious that in 2017 the Minnesota Department of Human Rights ordered dozens of districts and charter schools to submit to legal settlements over their discipline practices, especially for Black and Native American students. In these districts, the department found, almost 80% of disciplinary consequences issued for subjective reasons, like "disruptive behavior," were going to students of color. School buildings were closed for the pandemic during much of the settlement period, so it's hard to assess whether the schools have since made progress.

Khulia Pringle, an education advocate in St. Paul, says her daughter experienced repeated suspensions. The harsh discipline put her on a bad track. For a time, Pringle said, her daughter wanted to drop out of school.

Pringle, then a history and civics teacher herself, quit her job to become an advocate, hoping to offer one-on-one support to families experiencing harsh school discipline.

"That's when I really began to see it wasn't just me. Every Black parent I worked with was calling me about suspensions," she said.

Education reform emerged quickly as a goal for the Black Lives Matter movement. In 2016, when the Vision for Black Lives platform was finalized, it included a call for an education system that acknowledged students' cultural identities, supported their mental and physical health and did not subject them to unwarranted search, seizure and arrest inside schools.

"We need to end mass incarceration and mass criminalization, and that begins in the school," said Monifa Bandele, a policy leader with the Movement for Black Lives. "Data shows that with each expulsion or suspension, students are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system."

In addition to being disciplined at higher rates, Black students receive more severe punishments than their white peers for similar or even the same behavior, said Linda Morris, a staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union.

"Students of color are often not given the same benefit of the doubt that their white counterparts receive, and might even be perceived as having harmful motives," Morris said.

Attention to these disparities has led to some changes. Many districts adopted restorative justice practices, which aim to address the root cause of behavior and interpersonal conflicts rather than simply suspending

students. Schools increased investment in mental health resources.

And, for a time, some districts, including Chicago and Minneapolis, worked toward removing police from schools. Those efforts gained new momentum in 2020, after the murder of George Floyd in Minnesota by a white police officer.

Schools take a harder line on discipline after pandemic

Calls for stricter discipline and more police involvement resurfaced in recent years, as schools struggled with misbehavior after monthslong pandemic closures.

Activists point to a deeper reason for the pro-discipline push.

"That backlash is also somewhat a response to progress being made," said Katherine Dunn, director of the Opportunity to Learn program at the nonprofit Advancement Project. "It's a response to organizing. It's a response to power that Black and brown and other young people have been building in their schools."

After his suspension, Byrd, the Georgia student, was sent to an alternative disciplinary program. A district spokesman said the program is supposed to help students continue their education and receive social and emotional support while they're being disciplined.

Byrd says he waited in line each day for a head-to-toe search before he was allowed into the building. The process, the district said, ensures safety and is administered by the company that runs the alternative school.

"It definitely changed him," said his mother, DeAndrea Byrd. "He wasn't excited about school. He wanted to drop out. It was extremely difficult."

Byrd finished his junior year at the alternative school. He transferred to a different public school for his senior year, where he felt supported by the administration and managed to graduate. He's since found work near home and plans to attend college at an HBCU in Alabama where he hopes to study cybersecurity.

When he reflects on the fight and its fallout, Byrd said he wished the school could have viewed him as a kid who had never gotten in trouble before, rather than pushing him out.

"I wish they would have never expelled me for my first offense, gave me a second chance," he said. "None of us should be punished for one mistake."

The Associated Press' education coverage receives financial support from multiple private foundations. AP is solely responsible for all content. Find AP's standards for working with philanthropies, a list of supporters and funded coverage areas at AP.org.

When the US left Kabul, these Americans tried to help Afghans left behind. It still haunts them

By REBECCA SANTANA and FARNOUSH AMIRI Associated Press

The United States' longest war is over. But not for everyone.

Outside of San Francisco, surgeon Doug Chin has helped provide medical assistance to people in Afghanistan via video calls. He has helped Afghan families with their day-to-day living expenses. Yet he remains haunted by the people he could not save.

In Long Beach, California, Special Forces veteran Thomas Kasza has put aside medical school to help Afghans who used to search for land mines escape to America. That can mean testifying to Congress, writing newsletters and asking for donations.

In rural Virginia, Army veteran Mariah Smith housed an Afghan family of four that she'd never met who had fled Kabul and needed a place to stay as they navigated their new life in America.

Smith, Kasza and Chin have counterparts scattered across the country — likeminded people they may never have heard of.

The war in Afghanistan officially ended in August 2021 when the last U.S. plane departed the country's capital city. What remains is a dedicated array of Americans — often working in isolation, or in small grassroots networks — who became committed to helping the Afghan allies the United States left behind. For them, the war didn't end that day.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 65 of 76

In the three years since the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, hundreds of people around the country — current and former military members, diplomats, intelligence officers, civilians from all walks of life — have struggled in obscurity to help the Afghans left behind.

They have assisted Afghans struggling through State Department bureaucracy fill out form after form. They have sent food and rent money to families. They have fielded WhatsApp or Signal messages at all hours from Afghans pleading for help. They have welcomed those who have made it out of Afghanistan into their homes as they build new lives.

For Americans involved in this ad hoc effort, the war has reverberated through their lives, weighed on their relationships, caused veterans to question their military service and in many cases left a scar as ragged as any caused by bullet or bomb.

Most are tired. Many are angry. They grapple with what it means for their nation that they, ordinary Americans moved by compassion and gratitude and by shame at what they consider their government's abandonment of countless Afghan allies, were the ones left to get those Afghans to safety.

And they struggle with how much more they have left to give.

The network was born out of chaos

The American mission in Afghanistan started with the goal of eradicating al-Qaida and avenging the group's Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. But the mission morphed and grew over two decades. Every president inherited an evolving version of a war that no commander-in-chief wanted to lose — but that none could figure out how to win.

By the time President Joe Biden decided to pull the U.S. military from Afghanistan by Aug. 31, 2021, the American mission there was riddled with failures. But by early August the Taliban had toppled key cities and was closing in on the capital. With the Afghan army largely collapsed, the Taliban rolled into Kabul and assumed control on Aug. 15. The Biden administration scrambled to evacuate staff, American citizens and at-risk Afghans.

One Biden administration official recently described the chaos of those three weeks to The Associated Press, saying that it felt like nobody in the U.S. government was able to steer the ship. With the Taliban in control of the capital, tens of thousands of Afghans crowded the airport trying to get on one of the planes out.

That is when this informal network was born.

Past and current members of the U.S. military, the State Department and U.S. intelligence services were all being besieged with messages begging for help from Afghans they'd worked with. Americans horrified by what they were seeing and reading on the news reached out as well, determined to help.

Veterans who'd served multiple tours in Afghanistan and civilians who'd never set foot there all spent sleepless weeks working their telephones, fighting to get out every Afghan they could and to help those still trapped.

The work to get visas is difficult

One of those civilians was Doug Chin. A plastic surgeon in Oakland California, he was already familiar with Afghanistan, although he'd never been there. A few years before the Taliban takeover, he'd become involved with the then Herat-based Afghan Girls Robotics Team. So impressed was he with their mission that he'd joined their board and sometimes traveled to their international events.

Then, in August 2021, the Taliban entered Herat. Eventually came the scenes out of Kabul airport: mothers hoisting children over barbed wire, men falling to their deaths as they clung to the bottom of departing planes. Chin, working contacts, worked to help the team, their extended families, staff and others get on flight manifests, navigate checkpoints and eventually escape Kabul.

The work was so intense that he shut down his business for three months to focus on helping Afghans. For a time, he was supporting dozens of people in Afghanistan.

Now, three years later, the work is shifting. It's a matter of trying to get visas for Afghans so they can escape — an educational visa to study in Europe, for example.

He advocates for human rights activists in Afghanistan and also helps provide medical services remotely to people in there. Once or twice a week he gets requests via the secure messaging app Signal to help

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 66 of 76

someone in Afghanistan. Chin will either give advice directly or help them get in touch with doctors in Afghanistan that can help.

Some memories still move him to tears. In one case, in August 2021, a busload of people he'd helped evacuate was heading to the Kabul airport. One woman wasn't on the passenger manifest. U.S. officials coordinating the evacuations told him that the Taliban controlling access to the airport might turn the entire bus around because of this one passenger. Chin had to order her off the bus. She later escaped Afghanistan, but it remains painful for him.

"The only thing I can think of," he says, "is the people that I haven't helped."

Many Afghans are still waiting

In those initial months, there was a frantic intensity to the efforts to get Afghans into the Kabul airport and onto the American military planes. Volunteers pushed U.S. contacts in Kabul to let Afghans into the airport, coordinated to get them onto the flight lists, lobbied any member of Congress or government official they could find and helped Afghans in Kabul find safe places to go. Even leaders of the U.S. administration and military resorted to the volunteer groups and journalists to get out individual Afghan friends or ex-colleagues.

By the time the last plane lifted off on Aug. 30, 2021, about 76,000 Afghans had been flown out of the country and eventually to the U.S. Another 84,000 have come since the fall of Kabul – each a victory for the Americans helping them over the Taliban and over a tortuous U.S. immigration process.

But more are still waiting. There are about 135,000 applicants to the special immigrant visa program and another 28,000 waiting on other refugee programs for Afghans connected to the U.S. mission. Those numbers don't include family members, meaning potentially hundreds of thousands more Afghans are waiting in limbo and in danger in Afghanistan.

In 2009, Congress passed legislation creating a special immigrant visa program to help Afghans and Iraqis who assisted the U.S. government emigrate to the United States. The idea was that they'd risked their lives to help America's war effort, and in return they deserved a new life and protection in America.

But ever since its inception, the SIV program has been dogged by complaints that it has moved too slowly, burdening applicants with too much paperwork and ultimately putting America's wartime allies in danger as they waited for decisions.

Under the Biden administration, the State Department has taken steps to streamline the process and has boosted the number of special immigrant visas issued each month to Afghans. The department says that in fiscal year 2023, it issued more SIVs for Afghans in a single year than ever before — more than 18,000 — and is on track to surpass that figure this year. State has also used what it's learned to streamline processing of SIV applicants to increase the number of refugees it is admitting to the United States from around the world.

The Biden administration official said most people remember only the chaos of those last two weeks of August and have no idea about the work that has been done in the three years since. But for those still waiting to come, they do so under constant threat and stress.

No One Left Behind, an organization helping Afghans who used to work for the U.S. government get out of Afghanistan, has documented 242 cases of reprisal killings with at least 101 who had applied or were clearly SIV-eligible.

Some are trying to push the government along

Faraidoon "Fred" Abdullah is one of the volunteers often referred to as caseworkers. He has helped hundreds of Afghans fill out immigration and visa forms or hunt down letters of recommendation from former employers.

"They're eligible. They have the documentation, but (the) Department of State is too slow," Abdullah says.

His journey to this work started a little differently. The 37-year-old Afghanistan native began to work with the U.S. military as a translator during the war. He left his home country in 2016 through the same program he's trying to help people through now. A year later, he enlisted in the U.S. Army.

"I lost many American friends while they served my country, while they were helping Afghan people," Abdullah says. "So it was always like a dream for me to wear the uniform officially as a part of the United

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 67 of 76

States military to pay them back with my service, with my time.”

He describes the work he has done over the last several years — as one of the few people who speaks the language and understands Afghan culture — as similar to that of a social worker. The calls come at random and varying hours of the night and day, he says.

“It’s like PTSD, and they might just snap at you like for no reason,” Abdullah says about the people he’s tried to help. “And not everybody has the patience and tolerance and the ability to deal with that.”

He was on active duty when the United States decided to withdraw. He had left his mom, siblings and other relatives in Afghanistan, thinking that the democracy that had been slowly built over the years would endure. It didn’t.

Over the last few years, Abdullah has been able to relocate a few family members out of Afghanistan. But more than a dozen still remain stuck in a process run by the departments of State and Defense. Now he worries that attention has faded from Afghanistan as other conflicts take precedence. The same urgency to donate, volunteer or sustain Afghans as their status remains in limbo is no longer there.

“Afghanistan is, right now, not an important issue — not a hot potato anymore,” Abdullah says. “That focus has shifted to Ukraine, Gaza, Israel and Haiti. And then we are kind of like, you know, nowhere.”

The Special Forces notion of ‘by, with and through’ is important

To understand what has taken place since the last U.S. flight left Afghanistan, former military members will point you to the Special Forces operational approach titled, “by, with and through.”

The term effectively means that nothing the United States does on the ground in a partner state is done without allies. In the case of Afghanistan, that’s the Afghans who — at great risk to themselves — turned against the Taliban to work with the Americans.

So when Kabul fell, the obligation to their Afghan allies left behind was equal to the responsibility to their own fellow service members. Just as they would never leave another service member behind, so too with the Afghans they worked with.

It is a commitment Thomas Kasza knows all too well.

He spent 13 years active duty in the U.S. military, 10 as part of U.S. Army Special Forces, with tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. As he prepared to leave active duty in August 2021, Kasza was planning to go to medical school. Then came the evacuation.

Like many U.S. military veterans, Kasza started helping Afghans he knew who were still in Afghanistan. At first, he was determined to limit his involvement.

Today, the notion of medical school has been abandoned. He’s the executive director of an organization called the 1208 Foundation. The group helps Afghans who worked with the Special Forces to detect explosives to come to America. Kasza and another Special Forces member and six Afghans do the work.

The foundation does things like pay for housing for the Afghans when they travel to another country for their visa interviews or paying for the required medical exams. They also help Afghans still in Afghanistan where they’re hunted by the Taliban. In 2023 they helped 25 Afghan families get out of Afghanistan. Each is a hard-fought victory and a new life. But they still have about another 170 cases in their roster, representing more than 900 people when family members are included.

To focus on the mission — getting those Afghan team members to safety — he limits the conversations he has with them. “You have to maintain a separation for your own sanity,” he says.

As the third anniversary of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan arrives, Kasza is preparing to step back from the executive director role at the organization he helped found although he’ll still be involved in the organization. Everything that’s happened over the last three years still weighs on him.

“I can’t do what our government did and look the other way,” he says.

Scott Mann, a retired Green Beret who spent several deployments training Afghan special forces, describes the work of the past few years as “being on the world’s longest 911 call” and unable to hang up. “It is like one of the most taboo things in the world to leave a partner on the battlefield in any way,” he says.

Scott adds that many veterans, like himself, are only alive now “because on at least two occasions Afghan partners prevented” them from getting killed.

“And now those very people are asking me to help their father or their mother who were on the run,”

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 68 of 76

he says. "How do you hang up the phone on something like that?"

They're trying to fix 'moral injury'

Some of the volunteers spoke of tapping their own retirement accounts, or their children's college funds, to keep stranded Afghan allies housed and fed, sometimes for years. Marriages reached breaking points over the time that volunteers were putting into the effort. Spouses and children warned their loved ones that they had to cut back.

One veteran who worked at the heart of the logistics network by which volunteers got grocery and rent money to Afghan allies talked of the loneliness of the work, where once he'd had fellow troops with him in tough times. As the effort went on, he upped his antidepressants. Then did it again. And again.

"Moral injury" is a relatively new term that is often referred to in the discussion about how many volunteers, especially military veterans, feel about the aftermath of the U.S. pullout from Afghanistan and the treatment of allies. It refers to the damage done to one's conscience by the things they've had to do or witnessed or failed to prevent — things that violate their own values. In this case, they feel betrayed by their country because they feel it has failed to protect Afghan allies.

It is a concept that Kate Kovarovic feels passionate about.

She is not a veteran, nor does she come from a military family. But she became involved in the effort after a friend reached out to her in 2021 to ask for her social media expertise. From there Kate got more and more involved until she became the director of resilience programming for #AfghanEvac, a coalition of organizations dedicated to helping Afghans trying to leave Afghanistan. She held that position for over a year. She describes it as the hardest job of her life.

During the evacuation and its aftermath, volunteers were focused on helping Afghans flee or find safe houses. But a few months later volunteers started realizing that they needed support as well, she says.

The ease of communication meant volunteers were always getting bombarded with pleas for help.

Kovarovic says they tried a little bit of everything to help the volunteers. She held a series of fireside chats where she'd talk to mental health professionals. They created a resource page on #AfghanEvac's website with mental health resources. And she helped create a Resilience Duty Officer support program where volunteers needing someone to talk to could call or text a 24-hour hotline. She describes that program as "catastrophically successful."

The volunteers weren't just calling to vent a little. Kovarovic says the calls were graphic. Desperate.

"I personally fielded over 50 suicide calls from people," she recalls. "You were hearing a lot of the trauma."

She lost weight, wasn't sleeping and developed an eye twitch that made it difficult to see. Loved ones asked her to stop. In 2023, she took a break. Home from a two-week vacation, she landed at the airport and her eye twitch immediately returned. She sat down and texted colleagues that it was time for her to stop.

"I wept. I have never felt such a heavy sense of guilt. I felt like I hadn't done enough and that I had failed people by abandoning them," she says.

She now hosts a podcast called "Shoulder to Shoulder: Untold Stories From a Forgotten War" with a retired Air Force veteran that she met during the evacuation. They talk to guests like a Gold Star mother and an Afghan interpreter who lost his legs in a bomb blast.

She wants people outside the community to know that the work of helping Afghans during the withdrawal and all that has happened since has been its own front line in the war on terror.

"What I hope that people will understand one day is that these are lifelong conditions," she says. "So even people who leave the volunteer work, even if you never speak to another Afghan again, this is going to sit with you for the rest of your life."

A lot of work remains

Everyone in the movement, spread out across time zones, has varying views of where this effort goes from here. Many want Congress to pass the Afghan Adjustment Act, which would provide a permanent emigration pathway for Afghans. Others would like support for volunteers' mental health concerns. Many just want accountability.

None of the four presidents who oversaw the war in Afghanistan has taken public responsibility for the

chaos and destruction that followed America's withdrawal. Biden, in charge when U.S. troops left, has come under the most criticism.

The Biden administration official, who spoke to AP on the condition of anonymity, said that the unwillingness by the U.S. government to admit its mistakes in regards to Afghanistan is perpetuating the moral injury felt by those who stepped up.

In the meantime, the work goes on — getting Afghans to safety and helping them once they're here.

In 2022, at Dulles International Airport, Army veteran Mariah Smith got to experience that moment. Smith spent three tours in Afghanistan and one in Iraq. With retirement from the military nearing in 2020, she joined the board of No One Left Behind. Then came the U.S. withdrawal.

One of the Afghans the group was helping was a woman named Latifa who had worked for the U.S. government. With the Taliban encircling and constant concerns over bombings, Latifa and her family didn't want to risk taking the young children to the airport.

She was eventually able to get a visa to what is likely one of the least used Afghan immigration routes: Iceland. From there, No One Left Behind helped her process her special immigrant visa. That's how Smith and the woman started talking.

They discussed where the woman and her family were going to live. Mariah lives in Stephens City on a farm in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley countryside. She also owns a home in town that she usually rents out but was empty at the time. She offered it to Latifa and her family.

Mariah was amazed at the response by the town of roughly 2,000 people where the Afghan family lived. Latifa, her husband and two kids came with the luggage they could carry, but Mariah said the mayor, police chief, town clerk, town manager and others all pitched in with furniture, toys and household items: "People really, really tried hard. And that was wonderful to see too." The Afghan family stayed for over a year before moving to Dallas.

Why did she make that offer of a place to stay? Smith says it was a way to help a woman, her family, her children who'd had everything taken from them in their home country — helping them find a safe place, showing them that it was possible to start over here. Filling a gap. Helping.

"It felt like being a part of, I guess, the fabric of America."

Associated Press journalist Ellen Knickmeyer in Washington contributed to this report.

How Trump and Georgia's Republican governor made peace, helped by allies anxious about the election

By THOMAS BEAUMONT and JEFF AMY Associated Press

ATLANTA (AP) — The effort to make the peace between Donald Trump and Georgia's powerful Republican governor began in a sprawling neo-Victorian mansion in the exclusive Atlanta enclave of Buckhead.

It was at an Aug. 7 fundraiser hosted by former Georgia Sen. Kelly Loeffler that fellow Republican Lindsey Graham approached Gov. Brian Kemp. Graham, the South Carolina senator and longtime confidant of the former president, was already planning to attend the fundraiser.

Now, Graham had a renewed purpose: to try to ease years of tensions between Trump and Kemp that endangered the GOP's chances in a crucial 2024 battleground.

Graham and Kemp met privately at Loeffler's house. And over the coming weeks, say Graham and others familiar with the matter, allies of both men arranged the two-part détente that played out publicly last Thursday to the surprise of many political watchers.

First, Kemp did an interview with Fox News host Sean Hannity — another Trump ally — in which he said, "We need to send Donald Trump back to the White House." Moments later, Trump went on his social media site to praise Kemp for his "help and support."

A true alignment, if it lasts, could benefit both men: Trump may need the help of Kemp's renowned political operation to win back Georgia in a tightly contested race with Democratic nominee Kamala Harris, while Kemp wants to be in the good graces of Trump supporters for a future run at the U.S. Senate or the

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 70 of 76

presidency in 2028. Kemp attended a fundraiser for Trump on Thursday and could join more campaign events with less than 70 days before Election Day.

Trump still argues falsely that he won Georgia based on unproven and debunked claims of voter fraud, something he brings up consistently on the campaign trail. And Kemp, who refused to stop the certification of Trump's loss four years ago, has repeatedly pushed him to move on.

Trump's campaign did not respond to questions about what happened but pointed back to his post on Truth Social in which he says about Georgia, "A win is so important to the success of our Party and, most importantly, our Country."

Days before the fundraiser at Loeffler's house, Trump mocked Kemp and his wife, Marty, at a packed rally in Atlanta. In an interview Thursday with The Associated Press, Graham described what he told Trump afterward.

"You're not going to win Georgia this way," Graham said. "And Georgia is yours to lose."

How a meeting in Buckhead launched the détente

Graham was playing the diplomat.

Six days earlier, Trump had railed for 10 minutes against Kemp during the Atlanta campaign rally for not supporting his false theories of election fraud and blamed the governor for not stopping a local district attorney from prosecuting him and others for their efforts to overturn the election results after his loss in the state four years ago.

"He's a bad guy. He's a disloyal guy. And he's a very average governor," Trump said of the second-term Kemp, who won reelection in 2022 after soundly beating Trump's handpicked Republican challenger, David Perdue, in the GOP primary. "Little Brian. Little Brian Kemp. Bad guy."

Trump also criticized Marty Kemp, who had said in April she would write in her husband's name on her ballot in November.

Kemp shot back, posting on X, "My focus is on winning this November and saving our country from Kamala Harris and the Democrats — not engaging in petty personal insults, attacking fellow Republicans, or dwelling on the past."

"You should do the same, Mr. President, and leave my family out of it," Kemp's post concluded.

Graham, in an interview, said he talked to the campaign after that attack and remembers saying, "There's no excuse for this."

At Loeffler's mansion, Graham, Gov. Kemp and Marty Kemp met privately and Graham also spoke to some of the governor's top staff about moving past the tensions that had simmered since the 2020 election. Their discussions were detailed by Graham and another person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to disclose the private conversation.

Adding urgency to the talks was Harris' entry into the race. Georgia has become newly competitive with President Joe Biden's departure from the race and a resulting wave of Democratic enthusiasm. Republicans are worried Harris, who is running to become the first Black woman and first person of South Asian descent to serve as president, has energized people of color and younger voters in ways that Biden couldn't.

Kemp told Graham that he would continue supporting the former president, even if he didn't appreciate Trump's rally comments. Graham tried to focus on shifting the Trump-Kemp relationship into a "more positive direction," one of the people familiar with the conversation said.

That meeting began the process over the next two weeks. Others who spoke to Kemp included Ohio Sen. JD Vance, Trump's running mate.

"The way that I approached my conversation with him was: 'I'm not going to convince you that you should change your mind on the president in the same way that I'm not going to convince the president that he should change his mind on you. But you guys agree on 90% of the things. You can put whatever personal differences aside,'" Vance told NBC News. "And I think there were probably 150 people delivering that message to both the president and Brian Kemp, and I'm glad that (Kemp) got to a good place, but I don't claim any responsibility or credit for it."

Graham does. He said he consulted with Trump about the message praising Kemp. And he and others worked to have Kemp deliver his praise in a strategic venue.

"We worked to get Kemp on Hannity where we know Trump would see it," Graham said.

The path forward

Cody Hall, who leads Kemp's political organization, confirmed the governor attended a fundraiser for Trump on Thursday.

Hall said Kemp's political organization, Hardworking Georgians, is working for Trump and the Republican ticket in a number of competitive state House districts, mostly in the Atlanta suburbs. Hall said the organization hasn't expanded statewide in part because it doesn't have the money needed for such an effort.

"But plans can change," Hall said.

At least one close Kemp backer, Alec Poitevint, said he began hearing that Trump and Kemp were patching things up days before Kemp went on Fox. Poitevint is a rare Republican who has maintained good relations with both Kemp and the Trumpier parts of the Georgia state party. Despite his support of Kemp, the Trump-dominated Georgia party elected Poitevint as a delegate to the Republican National Convention.

"I had felt earlier that things were in motion," he said this week. "Gov. Kemp and Trump are both very popular in Georgia."

This story has been corrected to reflect that the fundraiser where Graham and Kemp met was on Aug. 7, not Aug. 9.

Beaumont reported from Des Moines, Iowa. Associated Press writer Jill Colvin in New York contributed to this report.

One day, their children didn't make it back home. Faith helps these Mexican mothers' search for them

By MARÍA TERESA HERNÁNDEZ Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Each time the kidnapper hung up the phone, Veronica Rosas and her relatives did the only thing they could think of: kneel, grab each other's hands and pray.

"I told God: Please help me," said Rosas, who has spent the past nine years searching for her son, Diego Maximiliano.

The 16-year-old vanished in 2015 after leaving home to meet with friends. They lived in Ecatepec, a Mexico City suburb where robbery, femicide and other violent crimes have afflicted its inhabitants for decades.

"Many joined us in prayer," said Rosas, who 10 days after the kidnapping received one of her son's fingers as proof of life. "Christians, Catholics, Jehovah Witnesses. I opened my door to everyone and — maybe — that's why I didn't die."

For weeks, she could barely eat or sleep. How could she, if Diego might be famished, exhausted or wounded?

In spite of her efforts, Rosas was unable to gather the amount of money requested by the kidnappers. And though they agreed to a lower sum, Diego was never released.

According to official figures, at least 115,000 people have disappeared in Mexico since 1952, though the real number is believed to be higher.

During the country's "dirty war," a conflict that lasted throughout the 1970s, disappearances were attributed to government repression, similar to the dictatorships in Chile and Argentina.

In the past two decades, as officials have fought drug cartels and organized crime has tightened its grip in several states, it's been more difficult to trace the perpetrators and causes of disappearances.

Human trafficking, kidnapping, acts of retaliation and forced recruitment by cartel members are among the reasons listed by human rights organizations. Disappearances impact local communities as well as migrants who travel through Mexico hoping to reach the U.S.

For thousands of relatives like Rosas, the disappearance of their children is life-altering.

"A disappearance puts a family's life on pause," said the Rev. Arturo Carrasco, an Anglican priest who offers spiritual guidance to families with missing members.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 72 of 76

"While searching for them, they neglect their jobs. They lose their sense of security and many suffer from mental health problems," he added. "In many cases, families fall apart."

Relatives initially trust the authorities, but as time passes and no answers or justice comes, they take the search into their own hands.

To do that, they distribute bulletins with photos of the missing person. They visit morgues, prisons and psychiatric institutions. They walk through neighborhoods where homeless people spend the day, wondering if their sons or daughters might be close, affected by drug abuse or mental health problems.

"Ninety percent of the people who search are women," said Carrasco. "And from that percentage, most of them are housewives who suddenly had to face a crime."

"They lack legal and anthropological tools to do that," he added. "But they have something that the rest of the population does not: the driving force of love for their children."

A mother's search

When Rosas was pregnant with Diego, she made a decision: "This will be my one and only son."

She raised him on her own, juggling several jobs and finding the time to check his homework every night. They lived a simple, joyful life.

Diego practiced karate and soccer. At his birthday parties, he loved to wear costumes. Their shared hobby was going to the movies. Their favorite films? "Transformers" and "Spider-Man."

Now, with him gone, Rosas has been to the movies only once. She agreed because a friend she made after Diego's disappearance — a Catholic nun named Paola Clericó, who comforts relatives with missing children — was there, holding her hand.

It doesn't feel right for her to have fun, to take a break. But if she does not take care of herself, who will find out what happened to her son?

Three months after Diego's disappearance, she got tired of waiting to hear from the police. She opened a Facebook page called "Help me find Diego" and, though she was frightened of stepping out of her home, she started looking for him, dead or alive.

For three years, her search was lonely. Relatives, co-workers and friends commonly distance themselves from people with missing family members, claiming that "they only talk about their search" or "listening to them is too sad."

It wasn't until 2018 that Rosas met Ana Enamorado, a Honduran woman who moved to Mexico to search for her son after he migrated and disappeared. They got acquainted and Enamorado invited Rosas to an annual protest in which thousands of mothers demand answers and justice.

The resentment and disappointment from Mexicans affected by nationwide violence has increased recently. President Andrés Manuel López Obrador and Claudia Sheinbaum, who will succeed him on October 1, constantly minimize the relatives' recriminations, claiming that homicide rates decreased during the current administration.

But it's not just violence that victims resent. On a recent evening, in the state of Zacatecas, a mother like Rosas stormed into a session of Congress. Drenched in tears, she screamed that she found her son — with a gunshot to the head — at the morgue. He had been there since November 2023, she said, but the authorities failed to notify her in spite of her tireless efforts to get information about what happened to him.

This is the reality that Rosas became aware of at the 2018 protest.

"When I got there, I saw a mother, and then another and another," she said. "Who are you looking for?" we asked each other. It was an awakening. It was horrible."

After meeting other women like her, she wondered: What if we use our collective force in our favor?

And so, as other mothers have done in Mexican states like Sonora and Jalisco, Rosas created an organization to provide mutual support for their searches. She called it "Uniendo Esperanzas," or Uniting Hope, and it currently supports 22 families, mostly from the state of Mexico, where Diego disappeared.

All members learn legal procedures together. They put pressure on judicial authorities who are not always willing to do their jobs. They dress up in boots, sun hats and gloves to explore remote terrain where they have found human remains.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 73 of 76

From time to time, they find missing family members. Sometimes alive. Others, regrettably, dead. Whatever the result, as any family would do, they hug and pray and cry.

Sometimes it's hard, Rosas said. Or ambiguous. "When we find other people, I feel a lot of joy and I thank God, but at the same time, I ask him: Why don't you give me Diego back?"

Together, we search, we pray

On a recent Sunday, Benita Ornelas was mostly serene. But when Carrasco named her son, Fernando, during a Mass to honor him on the fifth anniversary of his disappearance, tears began flowing down her cheeks.

Not many faith leaders — regardless of their religious affiliation — are willing to address the disappearances in Mexico. Or to console hurting mothers in need of spiritual comfort.

"Not everyone has the sensitivity to endure such pain," said Catholic Bishop Javier Acero, who meets with mothers like Rosas and Ornelas on a regular basis. He pushed for celebrating Mass in Our Lady of Guadalupe's basilica to remember their disappeared children for the first time in 2023.

"But the numbers of disappearances keep rising and the government doesn't do anything about it, so, where the state is absent, the church offers guidance," Acero said.

Some mothers regard him as an ally and leaders from the Catholic church have raised their concerns against Lopez Obrador's security policy since two Jesuit priests were murdered in 2022. But, in parallel, relatives of missing people claim that many Catholic priests, nuns and parishioners have shown little empathy for their pain.

Soon after their children disappeared, Ornelas and Rosas rushed to nearby parishes. "Please, father, celebrate Mass so we can pray for our sons," both requested. But the priests refused.

"I cried and cried," Rosas said. "But he responded: 'I can't say that people are being kidnapped, madam. I encourage you to pray for your son's eternal rest.'"

On another occasion, Rosas recalled, she approached a group of elders praying the rosary, and asked them to pray for her son. "Why don't you accept it? Hand him to God," one replied.

In contrast, rain or shine, faith leaders like Carrasco and Clericó are always there for the mothers. They have walked with them through muddy terrain where excavations have been done. They have celebrated Mass in the middle of busy streets and next to canal drainages. They have joined them in visiting prisons and morgues, comforting them no matter what sorrow may come.

"We have the legitimate hope of finding our treasures alive," Carrasco said. "We are no fools and we understand that there's a risk they might be dead. But as long as we have no evidence of that, we will keep searching."

Faith leaders like Carrasco and Clericó are part of an ecumenical group called "The Axis of Churches." Methodists, Evangelicals, spiritual leaders from Indigenous communities, theologians and feminists are among its members. Sometimes they pray, but on other occasions they share a meal, draw mandalas or simply listen to the mothers.

"When I have a problem and I don't know what to do, I go to them," Rosas said. "They always share examples of God's life, which allows me to flow with love and peace."

They alone, Rosas said, can understand what she's been through.

"When a friend tells me that I only speak of my searches or my organization, I answer: 'You wake up every morning to cook breakfast for your child and take him to school, but I wake up trying to find where mine is,'" Rosas said.

"I'm still a mother. My maternity did not disappear, though it now feels sad and unfair."

Among the mothers of her organization, their missing sons and daughters are always present.

For the gathering to remember Fernando, Ornelas cooked tacos, a Mexican dish her son loved. "They are his favorites," his mother said.

That Sunday evening, under the rain, Sister Clericó, Rosas, and the rest of the group shared the tacos with homeless people around a Catholic church in Mexico City. The food ran out in an hour, after which Carrasco celebrated Mass and the group hugged Ornelas.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 74 of 76

"We live with a such a profound pain that only God can help us endure it," Rosas said. "If it wasn't for that light, for that relief, I don't think we would be able to still stand."

Associated Press religion coverage receives support through the AP's collaboration with The Conversation US, with funding from Lilly Endowment Inc. The AP is solely responsible for this content.

Today in History: August 31, Diana, Princess of Wales, dies in Paris crash

By The Associated Press undefined

Today is Saturday, Aug. 31, the 244th day of 2024. There are 122 days left in the year.

Today in history:

On Aug. 31, 1997, Diana, Princess of Wales, was killed as the car she was riding in crashed on the Pont de l'Alma bridge in Paris; her partner Dodi Fayed and driver Henri Paul (who was found to have been intoxicated at the time of the accident) also died.

Also on this date:

In 1881, the first U.S. tennis championships (for men only) began in Newport, Rhode Island.

In 1886, an earthquake with an estimated magnitude of up to 7.3 devastated Charleston, South Carolina, killing at least 60 people.

In 1962, the Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago became independent of British colonial rule.

In 1980, Poland's Solidarity labor movement was born with an agreement signed in Gdansk (guh-DANSK') that ended a 17-day-old strike.

In 1992, white separatist Randy Weaver surrendered to authorities in Naples, Idaho, ending an 11-day siege by federal agents that had claimed the lives of Weaver's wife, son and a deputy U.S. marshal.

In 1994, Russia officially ended its military presence in the former East Germany and the Baltics after half a century.

In 2006, Edvard Munch's painting "The Scream" was recovered by Norwegian authorities after being stolen nine days earlier.

In 2010, President Barack Obama announced the end of the U.S. combat mission in Iraq, declaring no victory after seven years of bloodshed and telling those divided over the war in his country and around the world: "it's time to turn the page."

In 2019, a gunman carried out a shooting rampage that stretched ten miles between the Texas communities of Midland and Odessa, leaving seven people dead before police killed the gunman outside a movie theater in Odessa.

Today's Birthdays: World Golf Hall of Famer Isao Aoki is 82. Violinist Itzhak Perlman is 79. Singer Van Morrison is 79. Rock musician Rudolf Schenker (The Scorpions) is 76. Actor Richard Gere is 75. Actor Stephen McKinley Henderson is 75. Attorney and author Marcia Clark is 71. Olympic gold medal hurdler Edwin Moses is 69. Rock singer Glenn Tilbrook (Squeeze) is 67. Rock musician Gina Schock (The Go-Go's) is 67. Singer-composer Deborah Gibson is 54. Queen Rania of Jordan is 54. Golfer Padraig (PAH'-drig) Harrington is 53. Actor Chris Tucker is 53. Actor Sara Ramirez is 49. Former NFL wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald is 41. NBA All-Star Jalen Brunson is 28.

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 75 of 76

Groton Daily Independent

Saturday, August 31, 2024 ~ Vol. 32 - No. 067 ~ 76 of 76