

Women, Toddler Killed In Fire Identified

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A 29-year-old woman who died trying to save a 2-year-old boy from a fire is a hero, Sioux Falls Fire Chief Jim Sideras said Wednesday.

Sulmi Siomara Guerra Sandoval, 29, was taking care of two of her five children and babysitting two others Tuesday morning when fire broke on the first floor of the split-level apartment, Police spokesman Sam Clemens said.

Guerra Sandoval lowered three of the children down to passersby but died trying to rescue 2-year-old Eli Galicia, who also was killed.

The surviving kids all suffered smoke inhalation.

Guerra Sandoval's 4-year-old daughter was taken to a Minneapolis hospital, and her 2-year-old daughter is in stable condition in Sioux Falls. Galicia's 4-year-old brother is in critical condition in a Sioux Falls pediatric intensive care unit.

"Anybody that puts their life in jeopardy like that is a hero, there's no question about it," Sideras told *The Argus Leader*.

The two passersby tried to convince Guerra Sandoval to climb out, Clemens said, but she would not.

Warren Vick, 54, was on his way to work when he saw smoke from the corner of his eye. Instead of driving to work, he drove the other way to help. A second passerby, Cullen Dossett, 42, arrived as Vick was placing the third child on the ground. Vick then lifted Dossett toward the window and at one point, Dossett held Guerra Sandoval's hand.

"I had her in my hands, hand in hand," he said. "It was so slippery (her hand) slipped out of my hand. 'Please help me,' she kept saying. I can still see her face. The terror on her face will haunt me forever."

The surviving children are staying with their fathers, Clemens said.

Galicia's mother lives in Guatemala, and Sideras said the city is working to get her the necessary paperwork for a return to the U.S. KELO-TV reported that a fund has been set up for the victims at CorTrust Bank in Sioux Falls or at the Calvary Chapel.

Federal Budget Cuts Claim Neb. Air Show

OFFUTT AIR FORCE BASE, Neb. (AP) — This year's air show at Offutt Air Force Base at Bellevue, just south of Omaha, has been canceled because of federal budget cuts.

Base officials recently decided to cancel the 2013 Defenders of Freedom Open House and Air Show, which had been scheduled for Aug. 24-25, according to a written release from the base issued Wednesday. The show has been held on the base since 1972.

No dates for future Defenders of Freedom shows have been set. Col. John Rauch, 55th Wing commander, said in the release that base officials understand the importance of the air show to the local community and lamented the cancellation, saying the show "gives us a chance to provide the public with an up-close look at our military, its capabilities and the amazing things our military members do each and every day."

But the budget cuts are forcing the Air Force to prioritize, he said.

"We sincerely enjoy opening our gates to the public and appreciate the tremendous support we get from Bellevue, Omaha and the surrounding communities, but with the current guidance and fiscal restraints, we can't host an air show," Rauch said.

More than a dozen air shows across the country this year have been canceled or had military acts cut from the program because of the \$85 billion in automatic budget cuts that took effect March 1.

Board Of Regents Endorse Tech Jobs, Academy

ABERDEEN (AP) — A South Dakota Board of Regents committee has endorsed a plan to create a training academy that could result in bringing 1,000 new tech jobs to South Dakota.

Minnesota-based Eagle Creek Software Services announced last month it wanted to bring 1,000 information technology consultant jobs to South Dakota. The company plans to build a new project center in Vermillion and partner with the University of South Dakota to help train potential employees.

USD will work in consultation with Dakota State University to create the academy and offer customized courses.

Paul Turman is the regents' vice president of research and economic development. He says the partnership is an exciting opportunity for South Dakota and its universities.

One Burned In Neb. Elevator Explosion

LEXINGTON, Neb. (AP) — One person has been injured in a grain elevator explosion at a feed yard in south central Nebraska.

The explosion occurred Wednesday morning at Dawson Feeders in Lexington. Office Assistant Tracey Johnson says Zellidhay Villatoro was working when she was burned in the explosion. She is being treated at the burn center at Saint Elizabeth Regional Medical Center.

Authorities have not released more details. KRVN reports Lexington Fire Chief Dahlas Holbein says the blast destroyed the upper portion of the building, but it did not cause a fire.

Regina Shields with the Nebraska State Fire Marshal's Office says the explosion has been deemed an accident. She says the old wooden elevator was being used as a feed mill.

A message left for the burn center was not immediately returned.

Regent Honored For Service To S.D. Education

ABERDEEN (AP) — The South Dakota Board of Regents has honored a regent who is retiring after 18 years.

James Hansen was given an honorary Doctorate of Public Service for his work in South Dakota on Wednesday. In addition to his nearly two decades on the Board of Regents, Hansen has spent time as a K-12 educator and served as secretary of the South Dakota Department of Education.

While on the Board of Regents, Hansen has served as secretary, vice president and president.

Regents president Kathryn Johnson says Hansen has always been a strong advocate for students.

Fargo Takes Action To Lessen Impact Of Flooding

BY DAVE KOLPACK

Associated Press

FARGO, N.D. — The landscape has changed dramatically since the record flooding of the Red River: Hundreds of once-vulnerable homes are now gone and miles of concrete floodwalls and clay levees add new protections as communities on the river's banks brace for it to overflow yet again.

Those changes over the past several years have built a buffer of green space that gives residents on the Minnesota-North Dakota border confidence as they prepare for a fourth major flood in five years — the worst in 2009.

Having gained plenty of unwanted practice in dealing with floodwaters, Fargo kicked off its annual rite of spring Wednesday when hundreds of junior high school students got out of school to help fill sandbags.

Few residents of Fargo or Moorhead, Minn., just across the river, are complaining that their clear view of the waterway has since been replaced by a wall. For a metropolitan area just four years removed from a record flood that forced thousands to evacuate — some by hovercraft or helicopter — such sacrifices now seem a small price to pay for safety.

"A flood wall is reassurance," said Michael Redlinger, Moorhead city administrator. "It's peace of mind. A lot of mental security."

The city and county governments have allocated more than \$200 million, mostly in federal funds, to build 25 miles of permanent levees and buy out about 500 homes. Fargo City Commissioner Brad Wimmer said the area has been able to cut its flood fighting efforts in half since 2009, including the number of structures that will need sandbagging.

"We were just learning at that time," Wimmer said Wednesday from Sandbag Central, a city-owned storage building that usually houses garbage trucks. "From there to now, it's night and day. We're way better off."

The National Weather Service is predicting

a 50 percent chance of the river reaching 38 feet in Fargo, which is 20 feet above the point of spilling over its banks. Officials estimate 117 homes would need to be sandbagged at that level, which would eclipse the fifth-highest flood on record for the area.

The record flood of 2009 topped out at nearly 41 feet.

The floodwalls, which the city has tried to jazz up with an ornate brick pattern, are a hit with residents, Wimmer said. Darren Dunlop, who has lived near the river in north Fargo for 20 years, calls the massive floodwall that protects his north side neighborhood a beautiful thing, both for their appearance and his peace of mind.

"We're finding that the walls have been an attraction," Wimmer said. "As time goes on, they will become part of the community. They're not a detriment at all."

The changes have come with heartache. Some neighborhoods that were thriving in 2009 now only have a smattering of homes, surrounded by empty lots where houses were either destroyed or bought out. In at least one case, an entire subdivision is gone. Heritage Hills, which once had 40 homes along the confluence of the Red and Wild Rice rivers south of Fargo, no longer exists.

Kolbjorn and Solvi Rommesmo were the last to leave Heritage Hills, turning out the lights on the neighborhood in 2010 after taking a buyout.

"I drove through there last fall. Everything was gone of course," Kolbjorn Rommesmo said. "We are missing the place out there. The lots were big, there were a lot of trees and it was quiet. But we needed a boat to get out of there."

Rommesmo has moved to a higher part of town where he feels more protected from flooding.

"I think we should be all right," he said.

"The city has done a lot of work on flood protection, but I guess you never know."

Fargo has spent about \$107 million on flood protection projects since 1997 and

Moorhead has committed \$88 million since 2009. Cass County, on the North Dakota side, has spent \$20 million. Most of it is federal money, though Fargo voters have on two occasions approved sales tax measures to go toward flood protection.

Fargo has been budgeting \$100,000 a year to help residents raise their level of flood protection. The program covers all engineering and construction expenses. Applications are approved on a first-come, first-serve basis.

If the 38-foot flood prediction comes close, Moorhead will have only seven homes that need sandbagging, most of them in the central part of the city. That would take 33,000 sandbags. As a comparison, a similar flood before the mitigation efforts would have threatened about 140 homes and required 670,000 sandbags.

Moorhead city engineer Bob Zimmerman said the city didn't have the money to offer the lone residents in harm's way a buyout until a year ago, after a mild winter led to a "non-flood" season.

"The sense of urgency from them probably was very different than it was for some of the earlier buyouts," Zimmerman said. "Maybe this spring might have changed some minds. We want to go back and visit with those folks."

The 10-day campaign to fill 1 million bags for Fargo and Cass County started Wednesday with students filling 15,000 bags in the first hour, with the help of three machines that can pour sand into 12 funnels at a time. The city and county plan to have nearly 2 million bags ready to go by April 13.

"This is probably as neat an operation as I've ever seen in the last 15 years," Fargo Mayor Dennis Walaker said Wednesday from Sandbag Central. "What I mean by that, it's so organized. It's nice to see all the activity."

Eighth-grader Matt Veit, among the students who were tying bags and stacking them, said it was hard work but worth it.

"We want to help the community, like Good Samaritans," he said. "I think we'll be OK. People here in Fargo, we tend to do a nice job."



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