

S.D. Plans Campaign To Find More Foster Parents

CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — South Dakota’s child protection program is planning an advertising campaign to recruit more foster parents for children with particular needs.

The Department of Social Services has requested that companies submit proposals to develop a campaign that would feature first lady Linda Dugaard as its spokesperson. The state would spend up to \$150,000 on ads targeted at recruiting foster parents to care for Native American children, teenagers, siblings or those with medical problems.

The ads would be targeted at Sioux Falls, Rapid City, Eagle Butte and Mission, identified as areas that need foster parents.

Virgena Wieseler, director of the state Division of Child Protection, said South Dakota now has about 700 foster homes for the approximately 1,000 children in foster care at any one time. She said it’s hard to find foster families in general, but tougher to find those who can care for a child with medical problems or other special needs.

“It’s about matching the needs of the child with the strength of the family. We have to meet the individual needs of the kids,” Wieseler said.

But Richard Wexler, director of the National Coalition for Child Protection Reform, which

seeks to reduce the number of children unnecessarily placed in foster care, said the state’s recruitment effort is “nonsense.”

“South Dakota does not have too few foster parents. South Dakota has too many foster children,” Wexler said. “If South Dakota stopped tearing apart families at one of the highest rates in the country, there would be plenty of room in good, safe foster homes for all the children in South Dakota who really need it.”

Wieseler said the agency has to find foster homes when law enforcement agencies or judges determine children need to be removed from their homes, which happens mainly for their safety.

Presto residents Jan and Bob Fuller have fostered more than 200 infants over the past 40 years. She believes there is always a need for more foster parents, and doesn’t think South Dakota puts too many children in foster care.

“To put those children at risk and leave them in the home to me is totally wrong,” said Fuller, 64. “I’d rather see them removed and get those issues resolved and then return them as quickly as possible.”

Fuller said the state sets a limit of six children per home — including the foster parents’ biological children — and no more than two children can be under the age of two.

She also said that children sometimes have to stay in foster care for months, even years,

because it can take that long for parents to resolve problems with substance abuse or other issues.

The average South Dakota child stays in foster care for just under 14 months, according to state officials.

The Division of Child Protection recently reported the number of children in foster care dropped from 1,704 in 2005 to 1,404 in 2011. The 17 percent drop is partly due to expanded support for troubled families and more placements with extended family members, Wieseler said.

Wexler said South Dakota should pay attention to a three-part National Public Radio series that aired last year, which said South Dakota has routinely broken the Indian Child Welfare Act and disrupted the lives of Native American families. Federal law requires that Native American children removed from their homes be placed with relatives or put in foster care with other Native American families, except in unusual circumstances.

The NPR report said 90 percent of the Native American children removed from their homes in South Dakota each year are sent to foster care in non-Indian homes or group homes. It also reported that Native American children are placed in the foster care system at a disproportionate rate — only 15 percent of children in South Dakota are Native American, but half the children in foster care are Native American.

Cool Temps Bring Minimal Relief For S.D. Crops

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Cool temperatures across South Dakota brought little relief to farmers.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture says in its weekly crop and weather report that several low temperatures were set or tied across the state. Precipitation was scattered throughout, with an average of 6.6 days of fieldwork.

Topsoil moisture was rated at 51 percent very short, 30 percent short and 19 percent adequate.

About 84 percent of corn has reached the dough stage and 44 percent the dented stage, both ahead of the five-year averages.

Seventy-one-percent of cattle conditions were rated good to excellent range, 23 percent fair and 6 percent poor to very poor.

Jackley Seeks Oct. Execution Date For Robert

PIERRE (AP) — A South Dakota State Penitentiary inmate who killed a prison guard could be put to death in about two months.

Attorney General Marty Jackley has asked a judge to set an execution date for 50-year-old Eric Robert the week of Oct. 14.

Robert pleaded guilty to killing guard Ron Johnson during a failed escape attempt last year and asked to be put to death. He was to be executed by lethal injection in May but the state Supreme Court postponed the execution so it could do a mandatory review of the sentence. The high court last Thursday unanimously upheld the death sentence.

A second inmate involved in the escape attempt also has pleaded guilty and been sentenced to death, but is appealing. A third inmate was given a life sentence.

Weather Service Offices In South Dakota Get Radar Upgrade

SIoux FALLS (AP) — National Weather Service offices in South Dakota have new radar equipment aimed at helping meteorologists do a better job of tracking the weather and informing the public.

Offices in Aberdeen, Rapid City and Sioux Falls got the upgrades, the *Argus Leader* newspaper reported.

The new radar makes it easier

to see what it is inside storms and clouds by showing a two-dimensional view.

“We’ll be able to provide more complete information on what is happening out there,” Sioux Falls meteorologist Philip Schumacher said. “Before, all we could see was how heavy the precipitation was by different colors, but now we get information by the shape of the droplets. It can tell us if

snow is melting as it falls toward the ground and indicate if it’s freezing rain or snowfall, which impacts people driving.”

National Weather Service offices and Department of Defense facilities around the country are

receiving radar upgrades. The upgrade in Sioux Falls was finished July 27.

The federal government will spend about \$50 million on the effort, which is about halfway done, Schumacher said.



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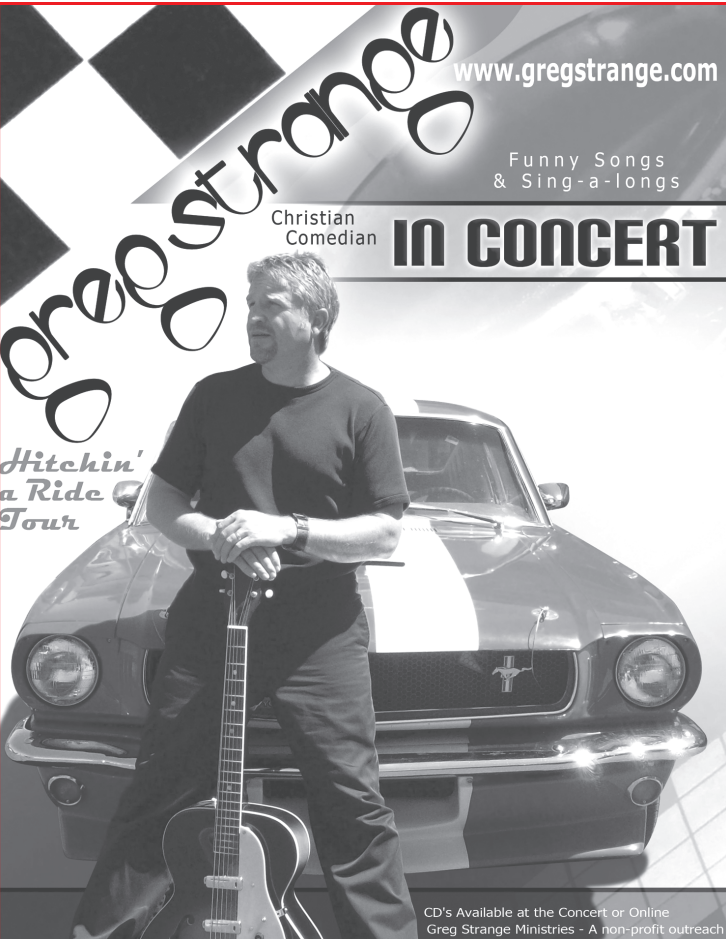


End of summer and heading back to school is cause for celebration, but underage drinking often leads to harmful consequences for youths and families. Our youth deserve to live and grow in an environment where alcohol is not misused. Lets host alcohol-free parties with plenty of fun activities to show our youth we care about their future.

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Beginning Aug. 17, Dr. Mark Ptacek will assume duties as the Medical Director of the Avera Sacred Heart Hospital Emergency Department.

Dr. Ptacek, who has been practicing in Holt County, Neb., for more than 20 years (and with Avera Medical Group - O'Neill for the past 10 years), said he is looking forward to this challenging new phase in his life. It should be noted that Dr. Ptacek is no stranger to the Avera Sacred Heart Hospital Emergency Department as he has provided physician coverage there for several years.

Dr. Ptacek is a 1984 graduate of the University of Nebraska Medical Center School of Medicine. He completed his residency at the United Hospital Center Family Practice Residency Program in Clarksburg, West Virginia.

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