

Attendance Down Slightly At Dakotafest

MITCHELL (AP) — Attendance during this year's Dakotafest farm show near Mitchell was down only about 6 percent from 2014, despite one day of the event being canceled due to bad weather.

The *Daily Republic* newspaper reports that an estimated 30,000 people attended this year's two-day event, down only slightly from the 32,000 who took in last year's three-day show.

This year was the show's 20th anniversary.

Man Accused Of Kidnapping, Raping Girl

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A Lincoln man described by his father as troubled is accused of kidnapping a sleeping 8-year-old girl from her home and raping her.

Police arrested 20-year-old Cody Riddle early Friday. Police spokeswoman Katie Flood says investigators suspect Riddle went into an open garage late Wednesday to steal something and then went into the house and saw the girl. She told officers she woke up inside another garage with her hands bound and her mouth taped over. She says the man raped her and then freed her after telling her he'd kill her and her family if she talked.

She got home around 4 a.m. Thursday and told her parents.

Riddle's father, Andy Riddle, told reporters that his son has mental health issues and was a state ward for much of his life.

It's unclear whether Cody Riddle has a lawyer who could be contacted to comment on his behalf. Online court records don't yet list the case.

Court Arguments Made In Farm Dispute

PARKER (AP) — A dispute over a large egg-laying operation planned near Parker remains on hold as a judge considers whether area residents had enough chance to weigh in on changes to Turner County's zoning rules.

Sioux Falls-based Sonstegard Foods plans to put 6 million birds on a farm 2½ miles from Parker. Opponents who believe that's too close and will cause problems such as odor sued, contending the County Commission approved new zoning regulations without proper public notice or input.

The county maintains the commission followed the law and did nothing wrong.

The *Argus Leader* newspaper reports that Judge Timothy Bjorkman heard arguments in the case Thursday but did not immediately rule.

Whichever side loses will have the right to appeal.

Man Gets Probation To Pay Restitution

YORK, Neb. (AP) — A 47-year-old man has been given probation so he'll have a chance to pay back a Nebraska farmer he was accused of defrauding.

George Nelson had pleaded no contest and was convicted of attempted theft in a building scheme. Nelson was sentenced Monday by Judge James Stecker, who ordered Nelson to pay \$17,000. The *York News-Times* says county attorney Candace Dick told Stecker that she recommended probation "because the victim wants to be paid back." She noted that Nelson owes \$60,000 restitution in another state.

Nelson's attorney told the judge that Nelson had a job waiting for him in Tennessee.

Dick has dropped a theft charge filed against Nelson's wife, Karla. Dick told The Associated Press Friday that she wasn't sure she had enough evidence for a conviction.

Student Data Breach Reported By Mines

RAPID CITY, S.D. (AP) — Officials at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology say an email that a university employee inadvertently sent to graduate students included an attachment with names, student identification numbers and grade point averages of about 350 students.

Spokeswoman Dani Mason says Social Security numbers were not included in the attachment.

All students who received the email have been told to delete it and to confirm that they've complied.

Mason says the Rapid City school is determining additional steps to ensure a similar incident doesn't occur again.

Minatare Signs Agreement For Plant

MINATARE, Neb. (AP) — The city of Minatare has taken a big step toward construction of a beef processing plant that could bring an estimated 600 jobs to the Nebraska Panhandle community.

The City Council on Wednesday voted to sign a preliminary agreement with F2E Global LLC. Still to be worked out are annexation of the proposed site and approval of tax increment financing for the processing, storage and shipping facility. F2E hopes to break ground in late 2016.

Early projections say the facility ultimately could process 1,500 cattle a day.

Rally, Weather Help SD Tourism Rev Along In 2015

JAMES NORD
Associated Press

PIERRE — The South Dakota tourism industry is surging this year, spurred on by good weather, low gas prices and landmark events such as the 75th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, officials say.

Expectations for 2015 have been high because of key events like the historic rally and the 50th Custer State Park Buffalo Roundup. Across the state, businesses and officials say it's shaping up to be a big year for tourism, a pillar industry that brought in an estimated \$2 billion to South Dakota's economy last year.

At the end of July, there were nearly \$350 million in tourism taxable sales, which is more than 14 percent higher than the same period last year, according to information provided by the state Tourism Department. That translates to a jump of nearly 17 percent for the state tourism tax from the same time last year.

"This is excellent," said Kirk Hulstein, research and visitor services manager at the tourism department. "As we come to a conclusion of the summer months,

indicators are showing that this could be one of our biggest years ever."

State and national park visits and hotel occupancy are also up over last year, Hulstein said.

At Custer State Park, visitors were up about 6 percent through the end of July compared to the year before and revenue was up about 13 percent. Craig Pugsley, park visitor services coordinator, said around rally time, Custer brought in about \$560,000 from motorcycles entering the park — over \$200,000 more than during the same period last year. Pugsley is also expecting larger-than-usual crowds for the Buffalo Roundup in September, which he called "a good economic shot in the arm" for that time of year.

"The park is a special place, and it attracts lots of people who have very fond memories of their experience here," he said. "It is a gem."

Rick Hustead, chairman of Wall Drug, said revenue is running about 12.5 percent over this time last year. That margin was significantly higher around the rally, he said, and Wall's tourist magnet brought on a dozen extra employees to handle

the rally business. "Six percent would be good," he said of the gains this year. "Twelve percent is amazing."

Jacquie Fuks, executive director of Southeast South Dakota Tourism, said tourism advertising has started coming out earlier. She said sites and businesses in the region also started seeing large numbers of visitors earlier than usual this year.

"The weather was perfect and kind of got people out and going," she said. "Gas prices didn't hurt."

Scott Carlson, from Lakeville, Minnesota, visited South Dakota for about a week in June with his son. The retired 59-year-old said they drove from Minnesota and fished near Chamberlain on the Missouri river before heading to the Black Hills area to explore Custer and the Badlands.

Carlson said his sister and her husband are planning to visit South Dakota in September from Illinois.

"After I described the trip to them, they got very interested, so they're heading out, too," he said.

Architect Dismissed On Northern Project

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

The building committee for the Johnson Fine Arts Center expansion at Northern State University voted to fire the architecture and engineering firm Friday.

The committee voted 3-0 to terminate the contract with Baldrige and Nelson.

No public discussion preceded the vote.

The decision came after a private executive session.

The meeting was held by teleconference between officials at the Aberdeen campus, the Board of Regents

central office in Pierre and the state engineer office in Pierre.

No one from the Sioux Falls-based firm was on the call.

State Engineer Kristi Honeywell received authority from the building committee to locate a replacement.

A formal groundbreaking ceremony was held May 13. Jeff Nelson from the firm participated.

Northern State President Jim Smith said in a telephone interview after the meeting Friday afternoon that KyburzCarlson Construction

was on track to complete the expansion project in May or June of 2016.

"We're doing fine with the construction part," Smith said. "We're in good shape on the building and I don't want people to misunderstand that."

He added, "We're going to stay on schedule and we want to stay on schedule."

Smith said he couldn't discuss details of why the Baldrige and Nelson firm was let go.

"We decided we had to go a different direction," he said. "We couldn't complete

the project with the architect we had."

Asked for a specific reason, Smith said: "That's largely a contractual thin and I can't say much about that."

Questions e-mailed to company contacts Scott Amundson and Nelson on Friday afternoon didn't immediately receive responses.

The firm recently worked on other public projects such as renovation of the South Dakota State University student union in Brookings and the State Library-MacKay Building renovation in Pierre.

SD National Guard Members Visit Suriname

RAPID CITY (AP) — South Dakota National Guard members recently traveled to the South American country of Suriname (SUR'-ih-nahm) to share with officials ways in which military personnel can help during disaster relief efforts.

Three guardsmen met with members of Suriname's defense forces, disaster relief coordinators and other

officials during their trip that began Aug. 19.

A Defense Department-sponsored partnership was established between South Dakota and Suriname in 2006 and numerous exchanges have since taken place to develop military, political, social and economic ties.

U.S. Army Maj. Kenn Kerfont traveled to Suriname. He says the guardsmen showed

officials how military personnel can provide logistics, maintenance, security and medical support during a disaster.

The South Dakota National Guard says the delegation frequently referenced the involvement of guardsmen in the response to the Missouri River flooding.

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