



Snow Expected

9 a.m.: **25** | 3 p.m.: **30** | DETAILS: PAGE 2A

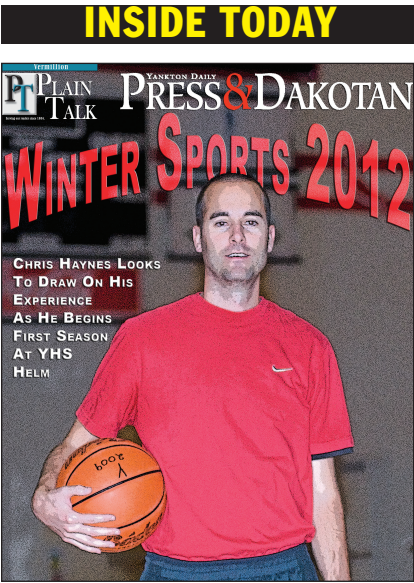
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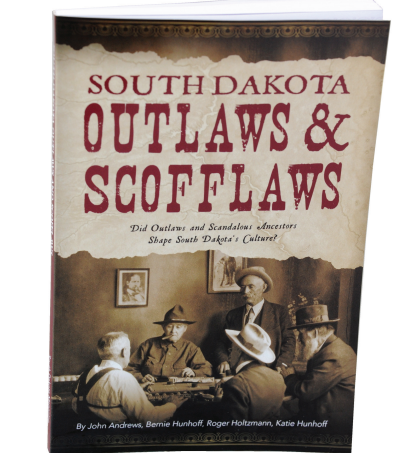
Our Winter Sports Preview

SPORTS



Gazelles Fall In Season Opener • 8A

RIVER CITY



Book Looks At Dakota's Shady Characters

INSIDE TODAY



USA Weekend

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



Dec. 7
18 shopping days to Christmas

Mike Flood Abandons Race For Neb. Gov.

State Senator Bows Out To Care For Ill Wife, Family

BY GRANT SCHULTE
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Nebraska's outgoing Speaker of the Legislature, state Sen. Mike Flood, bowed out of the 2014 governor's race Thursday less than a month after he declared he was running.

The Republican speaker announced he was withdrawing to care for his family because his wife, Mandi Flood, was diagnosed with breast cancer on Monday.

"My focus is going to be on being a full-time dad. We've got two young kids. I've got a very strong wife, and I want to assure you that everything is going to be OK, long-term," Flood said during a subdued news conference at the Capitol in which he was surrounded by colleagues and friends. "A lot of women across the state and across this country face these kinds of hurdles. And this will be OK."



Flood

Asked if he could see himself running again, Flood paused and said, "Not really."

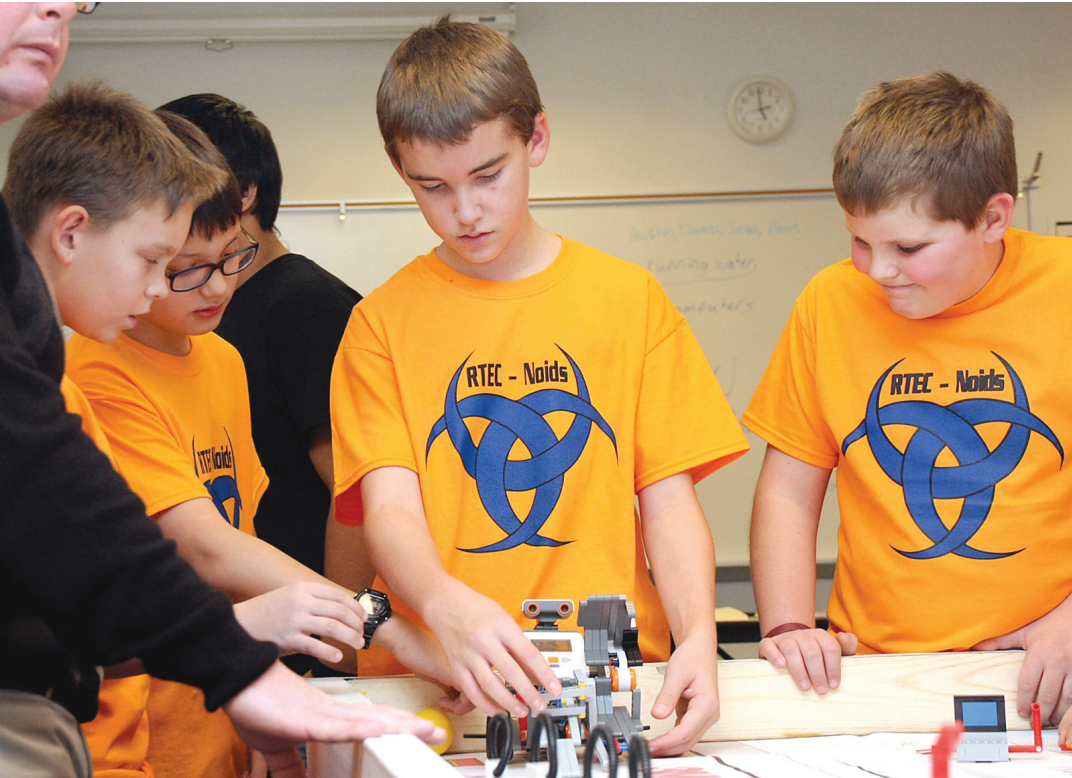
"I mean, this state matters to all of us," he said. "You don't serve in public service because you don't like the state. I've enjoyed being a state senator, and I've enjoyed my job. But we've got some pretty big things we need to address, and it puts things in perspective real quick."

Flood officially jumped into the Republican primary race on Nov. 12. He was the second GOP candidate to confirm his candidacy, behind Republican Lt. Gov. Rick Sheehy.

While the election is still two years away, Flood's depar-

FLOOD | PAGE 5A

ON YOUR MARK!



KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Drew Wenande, center, prepares a robot to run through an obstacle course at the Technical Education Center Thursday. He is the team leader of the Noids, the first Yankton team to compete in the FIRST LEGO League.

Yankton Youth Take On LEGO Robotics Challenge

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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Can LEGO provide solutions to the challenges faced by the elderly?

By encouraging the creativity of youth across the country, the FIRST LEGO League (FLL) hopes to do just that, and Yankton students are now part of the effort.

Through a \$7,000 grant from the Otto Ulrich Trust Fund, the Regional Technical Education Center (RTEC) was able to purchase the robots and computers necessary to start up the first LEGO League team in Yankton. They are called the Noids.

Since September, a group of a dozen 9-14-year-olds have been meeting at the Technical Education Center, where it was up to them to meet a variety of

challenges, including the programming and assembling of robots to run an obstacle course.

On Saturday, the Noids will have their first challenge while at the South Dakota Robotics LEGO League Regional Qualifying Competition in Brandon. More than 80 teams will be in attendance.

"It's been a great experience," said Josh Svatos, who coaches the team along with Yankton High School senior Juan Gutierrez. "We've had our questions. We've had our ups. We've had our downs. But now we're ready to go on Saturday."

It all comes down to the team members, he added.

"We give the kids guidance, but at the end of the day, it's on their shoulders to do everything," Svatos

LEGO | PAGE 2A



PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
National Park Service officials are cracking down on illegal activities and damage, such as these all-terrain vehicle (ATV) tracks, at the Bow Creek Recreation Area near Wynot, Neb. Rangers are patrolling the area to educate visitors about regulations and will issue tickets, if warranted.

NPS Rangers Crack Down On Damage At Wynot Recreation Site

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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WYNOT, Neb. — The National Park Service (NPS) is cracking down on illegal activities and damage at the Bow Creek Recreation Area near Wynot, which it owns and manages.

As part of the effort, law enforcement rangers from Mt. Rushmore National Monument are patrolling the area, according to NPS officials. The rangers will periodically continue the patrols in the coming months.

The greatest problems come with all-terrain vehicle (ATV) damage on public property designated only for foot traffic, said Brian Korman, biological technician for the Missouri National Recreational River (MNRR).

"It was really bad this summer, and then it tapered off until fall when hunting season started," he said. "Lately, we have had problems with people damaging the fencing so they can drive all-terrain vehicles onto the property. This causes damage to the natural resources and also can cause problems for neighboring landowners who graze livestock on adjoining land."

Recent unlawful activity at NPS properties along the Missouri River include trespass by motorized vehicles, property destruction and violation of park service hunting regulations, Korman said.

With the patrols, rangers will make contact with visitors to educate them about park rules and regulations. The rangers will also issue citations, as appropriate, to protect resources and to provide for the safe enjoyment of the properties by all visitors.

The Mount Rushmore rangers can exercise law enforcement authority not held by NPS officials in Yankton, according to Chris Wilkinson, the MNRR chief of interpretation and education.

The MNRR usually gets its law enforcement from the Niobrara National Scenic River headquarters, Wilkinson said. However, those staff members are currently unavailable for the Bow Creek patrol.

"The overriding thing we want to get out there (to the public) is to try to protect the area for everyone," he said. "It's a very small parcel of land. But if we have people on ATVs, it will de-

NPS | PAGE 13A

U.S. Drought Levels Off After 2 Weeks Of Worsening

BY JIM SUHR
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The nation's worst drought in decades leveled off last week after a two-week spell in which overall conditions slightly worsened, but a persistent lack of rain in the Midwest and Plains has barge operators fearing Mississippi River traffic could soon slow to a crawl or even stop altogether.

The weekly U.S. Drought Monitor report released Thursday shows that more than 62 percent of the contiguous U.S. remains in some form of drought as of Tuesday. One-fifth of the lower 48 states still is in extreme or exceptional drought — the two worst classifications.

Among the hardest hit, all of South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma are listed as being in some form of drought, with more than 90 percent of Nebraska and Oklahoma gripped by extreme or

exceptional drought.

Northern farmers who depend on snowpack to moisten the soil before spring planting haven't had much luck, as Midwest cities in Nebraska, Iowa and elsewhere are recording less snow than ever by this time of year. Chicago and Milwaukee haven't had measurable snow at all this season, although that could change this weekend, according to the National Weather Service.

While heavy precipitation pummeled portions of the West over the past week, much of the Midwest got left out, fanning worries that an already low Mississippi River levels could drop to a point where barge traffic along the vital commerce corridor will soon be restricted or shut down.

Months of drought have left the Mississippi at

DROUGHT | PAGE 13A

‘DEAR DIARY’



KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Mrs. Claus (Aly Fedde) describes (via writing in her diary) some of the chores and issues she faces during December in a scene from "The North Pole Diaries," presented by fourth- and fifth-graders from Yankton's Lincoln Elementary School Thursday night at the YHS/Summit Activities Center theatre. The elves, the reindeer and Santa Claus himself also got to weigh in on this hectic time of the year. To see or purchase images from this event, visit spotted.yankton.net.