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KELLY HERTZ/P&D
John Wescott of Yankton and his wife Judy received a lot of care and support last summer from the Avera Sacred Heart Hospital's hospice program after Judy was told of her terminal cancer. Pictured with John are Peg Stratman (left), an RN with Avera hospice, and social worker Megan Zweber. Judy passed away Sept. 30.

Hospice Serves As Helping Hand

Local Program Offers Care, Support And Comfort For The Dying

BY DEREK BARTOS
derek.bartos@yankton.net

When Judy Wescott was told last July she had only three months to live, she and her husband John faced with a difficult question. Is hospice care the right choice?

The Yankton woman had been diagnosed with brain cancer, and while radiation treatments could maximize the time she had left, the condition was terminal.

It is a situation that many families face, and one that carries with it many misconceptions, according to Mary Pistulka, hospice director at the Avera Sacred Heart Hospital (ASHH) in Yankton.

"Hospice care is care for people with a terminal illness who have chosen to focus on the comfort and quality of life and good symptom management," she said. "People think that hospice is about dying, but it's not. While it is for people with a terminal illness, it's about helping them live as comfortably as they can with that illness."

The opportunity to have his wife spend her remaining days in the comfort of her own home made choosing hospice care an easy decision, John said. As soon as the treatment Judy received at ASHH's nursing facility was finished, John took his wife home.

"We'd made a promise to each other that neither one of us would ever die in a nursing home," John said. "I wasn't going to leave her there."

HOSPICE | PAGE 3

HAPPY HOLIDAYS



Dec. 15
10 shopping days to Christmas

Twenty-Six Gunned Down At Connecticut Elementary School • 20 Children Among Victims • Suspect Dead

Conn. Carnage



CLOE POISSON/HARTFORD COURANT/MCT
A woman talks to a state police officer at the scene of a shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., Friday. Twenty-seven people, including 18 children, have been killed in a shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

Local Officials Shocked By Massacre

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
randy.dockendorf@yankton.net

Friday's shooting of 26 people at a Connecticut elementary school has shocked Yankton school officials and law enforcement.

But the shock doesn't mean the school district and police force would be left unprepared. Officials have an emergency plan in place and were already planning upgrades before Friday's tragedy, one of the worst mass murders in the nation's history.

Yankton school board chairman Chris Specht said he found it difficult to express his feelings as he followed Friday's developments.

"It makes you want to throw up. I can't imagine the feelings, the rage that one would feel (as a parent). It's unbelievable, surreal," he said. "And then, as a school board member, you think of our obligation to the students and staff to try to provide a safe environment."

Most people can't grasp the detailed planning and cold-bloodedness of Friday's mass killing of children, said Yankton police chief Brian Paulsen.

"This Connecticut episode will be analyzed deeply, and it will become a very strong political issue," the police chief predicted. "People are going to be on edge for a while. As law enforcement, you wish (these tragedies) never happened, but you plan for it."

Paulsen gathered his lieutenants Friday for a meeting to exchange information and to review department procedure in case of a school shooting.

"We have the 'active shooter' plan that we review every year," he said. "I told my (officers), that in light of the Connecticut shooting, we are looking at our active shooter policy and making the best available policy out there."

Friday's shooting wasn't the first time the Yankton police force studied a tragedy in another part of the nation, Paulsen said.



Paulsen



Gertsema

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REACTION | PAGE 5

BY JOHN CHRISTOFFERSEN
Associated Press

NEWTOWN, Conn. — A man killed his mother at their home and then opened fire Friday inside an elementary school, massacring 26 people, including 20 children, as youngsters covered in fear to the sound of gunshots reverberating through the building and screams echoing over the intercom.

The 20-year-old killer, carrying at least two handguns, committed suicide at the school, bringing the death toll to 28, authorities said.

The rampage, coming less than two weeks before Christmas, was the nation's second-deadliest school shooting, exceeded only by the Virginia Tech massacre that claimed 33 lives in 2007.

"Our hearts are broken today," a tearful President Barack Obama, struggling to maintain his composure, said at the White House. He called for "meaningful action" to prevent such shootings, saying, "As a country, we have been through this too many times."

Police shed no light on the motive for the attack. The gunman, Adam Lanza, was believed to suffer from a personality disorder and lived with his mother, said a law enforcement official who was briefed on the investigation but was not authorized to discuss it.

Panicked parents looking for their children raced to Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, a prosperous New England community of about 27,000 people 60 miles northeast of New York City. Police told youngsters at the kindergarten-through-fourth-grade school to close their eyes as they were led from the building so that they wouldn't see the blood and broken glass.

Schoolchildren — some crying, others looking frightened — were escorted through a parking lot in a line, hands on each other's shoulders.

Law enforcement officials speaking on condition of anonymity said that Lanza killed his mother, Nancy Lanza, then drove to the school in her car with at least three guns, including a high-powered rifle that he apparently left in the back of the vehicle, and shot up two classrooms around 9:30 a.m.

A custodian ran through the halls, warning of a gunman on the loose, and someone switched on the intercom, alerting people in the building to the attack — and perhaps saving many lives — by letting them hear

also

■ Massacre In Connecticut Revives Debate Over Guns. **PAGE 3**

SHOOTING | PAGE 12

Kettering Set For Retirement

Open House For Longtime United Way Director Tuesday

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
nathan.johnson@yankton.net

Leading United Way and Volunteer Services of Greater Yankton for more than 20 years has been an adventure, but Pam Kettering said it was during the last fundraising campaign season that she felt ready to give up the reins.

"(The campaign is) a big responsibility to give the agencies the resources to continue their programs," Kettering said. "Financing has become more of a challenge for them with government grants being reduced and the ups and downs of the local economy."

"To reach all different ages of the community, you have to be diversified as far as using multi-media resources," she added. "You need to keep growing and

"This job has been so rewarding, and it's because of the people and their volunteering, giving and commitment to the community."

PAM KETTERING

be savvy in your marketing. We're stepping up in that endeavor. But it feels like it's time for new ideas."

Kettering will step down from the executive director position at the end of the month.

An open house will be held Tuesday, Dec. 18, from noon to 4 p.m. at the Nonprofit Center, located at 610 West 23rd Street.

Kettering is looking forward to the event. "I want to say 'thank you' to a lot of people," she

RETIRING | PAGE 12



KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Pam Kettering is retiring as executive director of United Way and Volunteer Services of Greater Yankton at the end of the month. An open house for her will be held Tuesday, Dec. 18, from noon to 4 p.m. at the Nonprofit Center, located at 610 West 23rd Street.