



Partly Cloudy

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75¢



Happy Holidays



Dec. 17
8 shopping
days to Christmas

* * *

SD Medicaid Expansion Panel Waiting For Federal OK

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE – The federal agency in charge of Medicaid hasn't issued its guidance yet that could decide whether South Dakota proceeds on Medicaid expansion in exchange for full federal payment of all American Indian healthcare services in South Dakota, a state official told the panel working on the issue Wednesday.

State Health Secretary Kim Malsam-Rysdon said she doesn't know the timeline for the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to release its decision. She said federal officials however seem attentive and responsive to South Dakota's request.

"I don't feel we're getting brushed off at all," Malsam-Rysdon said.

The state panel, known as the Health Care Solutions Coalition, met for the fifth time Wednesday and will gather again Jan. 6, one week before the start of the 2016 session of the Legislature on Jan. 12. The Legislature's last scheduled work day is March 29.

Malsam-Rysdon said the coalition members would stay in touch by teleconference every two weeks starting in mid-January.

The plan under development by the group calls for expanding key services that aren't available in reservation areas to American Indian patients or require substantial travel, such as mental health, cardiology, internal medicine, psychiatry and emergency telemedicine.

One of the coalition participants, Carol Diaz, a contracting officer in the federal Indian Health Service's Great Plains Area office at Aberdeen, said she has started work on behavioral health services and is moving next to stronger emergency medical services.

MEDICAID | PAGE 14

Where There's Smoke



Fire crews responded to a fire at an apartment complex in the 2900 block of Douglas Ave. around 3 p.m. Wednesday. Yankton Deputy Fire Chief Larry Nickles said the fire originated in an apartment laundry area. The building was completely evacuated and no injuries were reported, but one family — an adult and three children according to the American Red Cross — have been displaced for the time being while the damage is cleaned up and repaired. Nickles estimated damages to be around \$40,000-\$45,000.

KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Pets Help MMC Students Beat Test Stress

BY REILLY BIEL
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Is pet therapy an effective way to combat stress? Just ask the students at Mount Marty College (MMC).

On Wednesday, Heartland Humane Society brought dogs to MMC for students looking for a break from finals week.

The animals brought to the campus were a mixture of adult dogs who were shelter alumni and available for adoption. The one kitten there was content to sleep in the arms of whoever was holding it.

MMC first brought animals onto campus last year with the help of Fish N' Stuff in Yankton. Store owner Jan Springer brought dogs, cats and even a pig. The event proved to be a hit with students.

According to Student Activities director

Lisa Willcockson, more than 100 students visited the animals.

"A lot of students have pets back home that they miss and can't wait to see during Christmas break," she said. "Having animals here is a good way for students to reduce the stress of final tests and papers due. Everyone wants to cuddle and love on a dog or cat."

This year, the Heartland Humane Society reached out to MMC about bringing dogs as part of its animal visitation program. Previously, the only college Heartland did this with was the University of South Dakota.

"We are very excited to be doing student pet therapy," said Heartland director Kerry Hacecky. "Finals and holidays are the best time to do it. The students are wrapping up



REILLY BIEL/P&D

A MMC student plays with a dog from the Heartland Humane Society. Several dogs and a kitten were brought to MMC to help relieve the stress of finals week for the students.

MMC | PAGE 14

'Holiday Jam'



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Singer Allison Nash helped light up the YHS/Summit Activities Center theatre Wednesday night during the "Holiday Jam with the Hegg Brothers." The concert, sponsored by the Yankton Area Concert Association and Historic Downtown Yankton, featured jazz, blues, R&B and gospel renditions of holiday tunes, which were enjoyed by a large crowd. The show was part of a 12-concert holiday tour by the ensemble.

Hartington Expands Course Opportunities Through NECC

BY ALISSA WOOCKMAN
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HARTINGTON – Northeast Community College (NECC) of Norfolk has spent the past year expanding its programs in Hartington, Nebraska. The college has continued to add more credit and non-credit courses in several locations throughout the area, including Bloomfield, Wausa, Laurel and Hartington.

Hartington Regional Coordinator for NECC Russell Flamig has held his position for almost two years and doubled the amount of classes available for community members – from last fall offering approximately four non-credit courses, to this most recent semester offering 10.

"I'm just happy that it is growing, that there is success and there is a need for that here," Flamig said. "The economic development here asked Northeast to come up to this



Cedar County

area because there was a need, and I think that proved to be so." Flamig's time as

coordinator has been focused on the three-hour, non-credit courses one night of the week. His goal is to eventually get some classes offered for credit.

Currently, Flamig has 11 classes lined up for the spring and is in the process of adding three ITV classes – transferable courses that combine instructional video with an interactive course website and class meetings. The classes are specifically designed for working adults and busy students. These include: foundation of mathematics, introduction to sociology and elementary algebra. They begin in January.

The plan is to continue to travel to other towns throughout Knox and Cedar counties to spark interest in these local courses.

"I think the main improvement has been getting noticed – just getting out there, knowing that we offer classes and getting them advertised," Flamig said. "The awareness that we are here is why it's been growing."

The non-credit courses planned for the spring include: smartphone applications, Microsoft Excel, iPad basics, Google Docs, digital photography and basic computer III.

The main locations for many of these courses have been provided by town libraries and public schools. Flamig spends time traveling and talking with community members to see what needs can be met through these NECC courses.

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TOMORROW: YHS Begin Work On A Clawesome Spring Musical

YANKTON RECYCLING FOR THIS WEEK
SOUTH
OF 15TH STREET