

Murdo Gym To Bear Thune Family Name

MITCHELL, S.D. (AP) — A Jones County high school gym now bears the name of South Dakota Sen. John Thune's father. The Murdo High School gym is to be unveiled Saturday as the Harold Thune Arena during halftime of the county's Invitational Tournament championship game. The *Daily Republic* reported that the elder Thune, who's now 93, was a longtime teacher, coach and athletic director at Murdo High School. He's a member of the South Dakota High School Basketball Hall of Fame, having played first at Murdo and later for the University of Minnesota. "This is awfully nice of the town and the school," Sen. Thune said, adding that it's a "great honor for my dad." The floor at the gym is being named for Jerald Applebee, who, like Harold Thune, taught and coached at Murdo. Former superintendent Maurice Haugland is also being honored. Harold Thune launched the tournament in the late 1960s; this marks its 45th year. Sen. Thune played in the tournament four times; his team won the invitational in 1977 and 1978. The senior Thune was an assistant coach on those teams.

Artist Starts Project For Newtown School

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A former elementary arts teacher living in a tiny western South Dakota town is working with local students to send origami cranes to youngsters in Newtown, Conn., as a sign of love and peace. Lorri Acott, a sculptor in Hill City, has provided a template, instructions and a video that teaches the process of how to fold a paper crane. Students are then instructed to write a personalized message or prayer. Acott says making the paper cranes, which are a symbol of peace and hope for the future, give both kids and adults a way to help out from afar. An organization working to coordinate arts-focused donations to the Newtown community says it has received a wide variety of donations, including artwork, photos, music and offers to hold performance events.

Authorities Probe Death Of 10-Year-Old Boy

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Authorities are investigating the death of a 10-year-old boy who collapsed at his home on the west side of Omaha. The Douglas County Sheriff's Office says the boy's mother called 911 early Friday, saying her son was sick and had collapsed. Medics who were dispatched say they found the boy unresponsive. Authorities say he was taken to a hospital, where he died. An autopsy has been ordered. He was a student at Omaha's King Science and Technology Magnet Center.

Man Gets Prison For Involuntary Manslaughter

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A South Dakota man has been sentenced to more than two years in prison for involuntary manslaughter. U.S. Attorney Brendan Johnson announced Friday that 38-year-old Mark Clairmont, of Norris, was sentenced to two years and nine months in prison. Clairmont pleaded guilty to the charge in June. Prosecutors say Clairmont was driving drunk in February 2012 when he lost control of his vehicle and it rolled. A passenger in the car was ejected and died. Clairmont's blood-alcohol content level was .281, more than three times the legal limit for driving, two hours after the crash.

No New Trial For Man Who Killed Boyfriend

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The Nebraska Supreme Court has denied a new trial for a Lincoln man originally accused of helping his boyfriend commit suicide but later sentenced to 50 years to life in prison for second-degree murder. Dallas Huston was convicted for the 2009 death of 22-year-old Ryan Johnson, who was asphyxiated. Huston was initially charged with assisting a suicide, but police later determined that Huston suffocated Johnson with a pillow after Johnson tried to free himself. In his appeal, Huston argued that the trial court should not have allowed some evidence and that his trial lawyer was ineffective. On Friday, the state Supreme Court rejected those arguments, saying Huston's lawyer failed to object to the evidence at trial, but that the failure was not enough to show that the lawyer was ineffective.

Corn

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improved plants' ability to withstand drought. "We learned that corn plants can build roots very, very deep," said Brent Wilson, technical services manager for DuPont Pioneer, a major seed company. In some areas, farmers got yields that require 40 percent more water than was available in the top few feet of their soil, Wilson said. That means plant roots were driven deeper to reach the subsoil. While the drought eventually spread to cover two-thirds of the nation, its impact varied widely from one region of the corn belt to another. Some Iowa farmers saw decent results, while those in parts of Illinois and Indiana could only watch as plants withered and died after months of drought. Friday's reports showed that Illinois, typically the nation's second-largest corn producer, fell to fourth place behind Iowa, Nebraska and Minnesota. Iowa, coming off its driest year since 1989, remains the largest corn producer with 1.87 billion bushels, down 20 percent from the year before. Minnesota was second with 1.37 billion bushels, followed by Nebraska with 1.29 bil-

lion and Illinois with 1.28 billion. Corn production in Illinois fell 34 percent from 2011 and Nebraska's production was off 16 percent. Minnesota, where the drought was not as severe as in other states, produced 14 percent more corn last year than the year before. The USDA had predicted a record average yield of 166 bushels per acre of corn when warm weather got farmers in the fields early. But the government began scaling back estimates as the drought spread across two-thirds of the nation. The year-end average was 123.4 bushels per acre. While Williams and other farmers were eager to say goodbye to last year, they still have reason to be anxious. The U.S. Drought Monitor's weekly updates have shown few signs the drought is relenting. Sixty percent of the continental U.S. is still in some form of drought, and climatologists say it would take an absurd amount of snow for conditions to change much during the winter. "For us, winter's just not a time of year to make much progress with drought," said Harry Hillaker, Iowa's state climatologist. "Our next hope is a wetter spring." And even that wouldn't guarantee an end to drought, Hillaker said: "In a nutshell, one hot, dry summer tends to be followed by another year on the dry, warm side of normal."

S.D. Lawmakers Eyeing Business Recruitment Plans

House, Senate Leaders From Both Parties To Confer On Replacement Plan For Defeated Measure

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — South Dakota legislative leaders said Friday they are working to find a new way to provide financial incentives that would help recruit new large industrial projects, to the state. In November, voters rejected Republican Gov. Dennis Daugaard's plan to use tax money to provide incentive grants to attract companies to South Dakota, leaving the state without an incentive program for large construction projects, such as manufacturing plants and wind farms. House and Senate leaders from both parties plan to meet next week to begin discussions on a replacement plan. They spoke Friday at separate news conferences, outlining their priorities for the just-started legislative session, which runs through March. House Republican Leader David Lust of Rapid City said it's crucial that South Dakota competes with nearby states that offer breaks on construction taxes or other incentive programs. "It certainly plays a role at the end of a decision-making process when they're deciding between a state that is offering incentives and a state that is not," Lust said. House Democratic Leader Bernie Hunhoff of Yankton said he does not oppose incentive programs, but doesn't want to finance it with

money that would be better spent to support school districts.

Hunhoff said Republicans and Democrats will likely agree on many economic development issues, such as those dealing with college scholarships and workforce training. But the Legislature will have more trouble agreeing on an incentive plan, Hunhoff said, "because it comes down to priorities." Supporters argue that giving large businesses a break on taxes that apply during construction pays off in the long run because those businesses create jobs and pay other taxes once they are operating. South Dakota levies a 2 percent excise tax on a contractor's gross receipts for a project, and business representatives have said that puts South Dakota at a disadvantage compared with surrounding states that have no such tax. For years, the state refunded construction taxes for big industrial projects, but that program was allowed to expire on Dec. 31. Daugaard's plan was to take its place, putting 22 percent of the receipts from the contractor's excise tax — an estimated \$16 million a year — into a fund could be used for incentive grants. But 58 percent of voters in the November election rejected the plan after opponents criticized it for using money that should be spent on education and other priorities. Senate Republican Leader Russell Olson of



Hunhoff

Wentworth said he supports creating a new incentive plan, and noted that 85 percent of the large projects that got tax refunds in the past were ethanol plants, wind energy and other endeavors related to agriculture. Among the other priorities for this session, leaders from both parties said they support a plan, outlined by Daugaard in Tuesday's State of the State address, to cut prison spending by treating more people convicted of crimes outside prison walls through intensive probation, parole and alcohol and drug programs. Democrats said they hope to find extra money for school districts beyond the 3 percent inflationary increase recommended by the governor. The minority party also hopes to win legislative approval for expanding Medicaid to 48,000 additional low-income people under the federal health care overhaul law. Daugaard has recommended against the expansion because of uncertainty whether the federal government can afford to pay its share. Republicans said they are pleased the Legislature cut spending to balance the budget two years ago rather than using reserve funds, because South Dakota's state government is now in much better financial shape than many other states. Lust said the Legislature's passage of a state budget in March might be more complicated than usual because that's about the same time President Obama and Congress are supposed to decide how to cut federal spending. If federal support for some programs is cut, the Legislature would have to decide whether to use state money to replace the lost federal funds.

South Dakota

State Museum Becomes Smithsonian Affiliate

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — The South Dakota State Historical Society's museum in Pierre has become an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., a move that will give the historical society access to the Smithsonian's vast resources, officials announced Friday. The partnership will allow the museum at the state's Cultural Heritage Center to borrow artifacts and exhibits from the Smithsonian, the world's largest museum. The partnership also will give South Dakota museum staff a chance to work with the

Smithsonian — which has 19 museums and nine research centers — to create new educational programming for schools. "This exciting new endeavor brings the Smithsonian, in all its breadth and scope, to our prairie home and offers opportunities for the public to explore perspectives on history and culture," State Historical Society director Jay D. Vogt said at a news conference. Harold Closter, director of Smithsonian Affiliations, said there are 18,000 museums in the United States, but only 177 are Smithsonian affiliates. "We know that not everyone can come to Washington to visit

our museums," Closter said. "We feel we have an obligation to make it easier for people to experience the Smithsonian in their own communities." Jay Smith, director of the state museum in Pierre, said South Dakota eventually might send an exhibit to the Smithsonian. He said it will take a while to

get the partnership up and running at full speed. The Cultural Heritage Center was completed in 1989 as part of South Dakota's centennial celebration. It houses the state's museum, archives, publishing and historical preservation programs.

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Nebraska

Legislation Would Allow Traffic Stops For Texting

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Law enforcement would have the authority to pull over motorists who are texting while driving under a bill introduced Friday by a western Nebraska lawmaker. The bill, sponsored by Scottsbluff Sen. John Harms, would make it a primary offense to type, read or send messages from an electronic device while driving. Harms sponsored Nebraska's current texting-while-driving law in 2010, which classifies it a secondary offense, meaning police can only cite drivers who have been stopped for some other traffic offense. Officials with the Nebraska Highway Safety Administration have said they support the bill. First-offense texting while driving carries a \$200 fine, a second offense imposes a \$300 fine, and drivers who violate the rule three or more times pay \$500. Lawmakers have introduced 155 bills and three proposed con-

stitutional amendments since the session began on Wednesday. Another measure introduced Friday would require schools to enact tobacco-free policies. Omaha Sen. Jeremy Nordquist said his proposals would require that policies apply to students, staff and visitors. The policy would ban smoking on school grounds and at school-sponsored events. "It is our obligation to create a healthy learning and working environment and do our best to expose children to positive behaviors before kids begin a life-long habit that is difficult to break," Nordquist said Friday. Another bill by Lincoln Sen. Amanda McGill would lower the state's voter registration age from 18 to 16. The voting age would stay at 18. The measure was inspired in part by studies that show early registration increases turnout among young voters.

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