

Three People Die In Omaha Shooting

BY MARGERY BECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Gunfire erupted during a crowded party in a vacant house in Omaha early Saturday, leaving three people dead and five wounded, and most witnesses refusing to help investigators, according to police.

As many as 50 people were in and around the small home when shots were fired “by multiple shooters” around 2 a.m., Omaha Police Chief Todd Schmaderer said. No arrests have been made, and police said they were confident the shootings were gang-related.

The vast majority of people at the scene refused to help police, the chief said during a news conference Saturday evening. He said he understood witnesses’ fear but pleaded for them to come forward.

“Now that you are away from that scene and have opportunity to be away from any intimidation, I’m asking you for the sake of the community to contact law enforcement,” Schmaderer said.

Police said 19-year-old JaKela Foster and 24-year-old Latencia Fox were declared dead at the scene, while 26-year-old Cameron Harris died several hours later. Schmaderer said it’s unclear if the victims were intended targets or bystanders.

Foster’s mother, Kristina Young, waited for hours outside the small, tan house in the city’s northeast side while investigators gathered evidence. She said she wasn’t going to leave until the body of her daughter was taken away.

Young said her boyfriend got a call from an aunt shortly before 2 a.m. telling him there was a shooting that may have involved Foster, who had a 1-year-old son. She said a friend later called to say Foster had been shot.

Young said her daughter knew the person throwing the party. She said she asked her daughter not to go, knowing there would be drinking and worried there could be violence.

“I’ve been in Omaha long enough to know generally what happens at these parties,” she said.

She said her daughter agreed and told her she was going elsewhere Friday night, but that she apparently went to the party anyway.

“To the person who pulled the trigger, I want to say it’s just senseless. It just needs to stop. I now have a 1-year-old grandson that has no mother,” Young said while fighting back tears.

The five people who were wounded were identified as Adrelet Bush, 25; Treveon Lillard, 20; Trenelle Miller, 21; Johnny Tiller, 21; and Jordyn Zyla, 20. Schmaderer said they were in stable condition late Saturday afternoon,

though other details about their conditions weren’t released.

Police were investigating whether the shooting was related to another shooting that happened just blocks away about four hours earlier that injured a man and a woman. Schmaderer said that shooting was also gang-related.

Douglas County property records list the home as belonging to Alonzetta Stevenson. A phone number for Stevenson at the Parker Street address was disconnected.

Dorothy Wayne, who lives across the street from the home, said she and her husband were asleep when a shot passed through the wall of their front bedroom and lodged in the far wall. Neither was hurt.

“I just immediately hit the floor,” Wayne said. “I’m just glad we weren’t hurt.”

Much of Omaha’s violent crime happens in the area, but Wayne said she was surprised by the shootings because it’s always been a quiet street.

“There are mostly old people on our block,” she said.

Police arrested two people on suspicion of disorderly conduct at the hospital following the shooting, police said. Officers were called to the hospital after a disturbance among victims’ relatives who had gathered at the hospital erupted.

Lake Oahe Conditions Improving For Fish

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakota wildlife officials say the conditions in Lake Oahe continue to improve for walleyes and other game fish.

The state’s Game, Fish and Parks Department has determined that baitfish populations devastated by the 2011 floods are rebounding, the *Capital Journal* reported. Estimates show the lake had about 20 million rainbow smelt last year — about double from 2013 — a relevant estimate because rainbow smelt have a high fat content and are among the reasons why Lake Oahe produces large walleyes.

Senior Fisheries Biologist Mark Fincel said another piece of good news for the lake was the estimated 167.2 million cool water baitfish that a state analysis found. Most of those were lake herring, which aren’t as fatty as smelt but can help fill in nutrition gaps and allow smelt to recover more quickly.

A strong baitfish population appears to have translated into a healthier walleye population, putting the average size of caught walleye in 2014 at 14.8 inches and doubling from 2013 the number of caught walleye that measured between 15 inches and 20 inches.

The abundance of baitfish, however, didn’t make things easier for anglers. Fincel said catch rates in 2014 were well below average.

“That’s actually a very good sign,” Fincel said, adding that it shows fish were harder to catch because they weren’t quite as hungry, meaning they were better fed and healthier on average.

Growing Need For S. Citizen Housing

GRAND ISLAND, Neb. (AP) — More Nebraskans need housing designed for senior citizens’ needs, but in many communities, especially rural ones, that can be hard to find.

The *Grand Island Independent* reports developers are starting to respond to those needs in some cities.

Dean and Gwen Garringer recently moved into a new duplex in Aurora designed especially for seniors. The Garringers didn’t think they’d be able to have a home of their own again after deciding they couldn’t maintain their home in Phillips.

Currently, about 14 percent of the state’s population is 65 or older, and the percentage is higher in many rural counties. That group is expected to grow significantly over the next decade as more baby boomers retire.

Davison Co. Adds Courthouse Officer

MITCHELL (AP) — Davison County has joined the short list of South Dakota counties with an officer dedicated to courthouse security.

The county commission last year approved the additional full-time deputy position whose main duty is to provide security.

The county previously had a deputy in court only when there was a higher risk of trouble.

Josh Peterson was hired for the job and splits his time between the courthouse in Mitchell and the public safety center where the sheriff’s office is based.

He says unforeseen benefits of the position include keeping people who are drunk from entering and checking for active arrest warrants of people coming to court.

A 2013 statewide survey by *The Daily Republic* newspaper found that only Minnehaha, Lincoln and Pennington counties had full-time security officers.

Neb. Irrigation Use Down 30 Percent

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Irrigators and other water users consumed 30 percent less water last year compared with 2014 across a wide swath of Nebraska, according to new data.

Water use averaged 7 inches per acre in 2014, compared with 10.1 inches the previous year, the *Lincoln Journal Star* reported.

Terry Martin, president of the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts, which represents the state’s 23 Natural Resources Districts credited the NRDs for doing a good job in managing Nebraska’s groundwater during dry and wet periods.

A recent report by the U.S. Geological Survey indicates that, on average, the condition of the Ogallala Aquifer is stable and significantly healthier in Nebraska than in other states.

The amount of water in storage in the Ogallala Aquifer in Nebraska had decreased just 0.1 percent during that time, the report said.

A depletion that small could be wiped out by a cycle of higher-than-average precipitation. A similar report by USGS showed that Nebraska in 2011 had more groundwater than it did before groundwater irrigation began in the 1950s.

The USGS report said that in 2013, the aquifer held about 2.92 billion acre-feet of water. That’s enough to cover the U.S. with more than 15 inches of water.

Roughly two-thirds of the water in the Ogallala Aquifer, or 1.9 billion acre-feet, is believed to be in Nebraska.

BHSU Students Get Real-Life Tourism Planning Experience

BY MEREDITH COLIAS
Rapid City Journal

HILL CITY — Learning by the book is one thing, but putting those plans into action in the real world is often a daunting task for college students.

But for a class of 10 undergraduate business students at Black Hills State University, developing a live-action tourism improvement plan for Hill City was a surprisingly doable task.

This is the third year students in Ignatius Cahyanto’s advanced tourism management class have put together a plan for a South Dakota town — after Redfield and Belle Fourche.

What they find often, he said, is that the theory they study in class takes another form when sharing proposals with clients.

For tourism planning in the Black Hills, he said it’s as much about coming up with realistic ideas and learning how to effectively work with people who may have contradictory ideas, he said.

For a small, charming town of less than 1,000 people, that meant no dreamy, extravagant “Disneyland”-like ideas, Cahyanto said.

Tourists searching for fun things to do via the Chamber of Commerce’s website often found activities buried in a list with things going on well outside of town, she said.

In order to draw them and their dollars there, Cahyanto said, students recommended the Chamber of Commerce do smaller-scale things like revamp its website to make it more “user friendly,” highlighting places to go and shops to visit, while also beefing up its social media game on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

Other suggestions included hanging banners over Main Street and applying for state tourism grants.

The important thing from a business perspective was to do a better job of telling people why they should visit, Cahyanto said.

Hill City Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jerry Cole, who asked Cahyanto to have them come up with suggestions, said he was interested in putting some of the students’ suggestions on marketing and their website into place.

Neb. Works To Recruit Dairy Farmers From Other States

SEWARD, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska is trying to attract dairy farmers from other states with the promise of abundant land, plentiful water and feed, and agriculture-friendly rules.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* reports that’s a sales pitch that could be particularly effective in California, where dairy producers face drought, urban sprawl and high costs.

“Our message is water, land and opportunity in Nebraska,” said Rod Johnson, director of the Nebraska Dairy Association, and one of the state’s top dairy promoters.

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture estimates the state’s 55,000 dairy cows generate roughly \$275 million a year in local economic activity. But the state is currently better known for its beef cattle and feedlots, not for dairies.

Marty De Hoog is one of two California dairy farmers to move operations to Nebraska in the past four years, according to the state Agriculture Department. He brought his family and about 500 cows with in him 2013.

De Hoog said he likes the people in Nebraska and the readily available water, but he’s still not wild about the cold.

De Hoog told the newspaper that his family farm that his grandfather started east of

Los Angeles was getting squeezed by housing and commercial development. Out there, De Hoog’s dairy had to ship in feed and ship out manure because the nearby fields had been filed with homes.

“Our corn came from the Midwest, our soybeans came from the Midwest, so we’re cutting out the freight by moving where the corn is,” De Hoog said.

De Hoog decided on Nebraska after looking at options in Texas, Iowa and Minnesota.

Nebraska’s dairy production grew roughly 10 percent last year because a couple new farms opened and some existing dairies expanded, Johnson said.

Until 2014, the number of dairy cows in the state had declined since peaking at 820,000 cows in 1934, at which point the state’s dairies were producing 2.9 billion pounds of milk.

Last year, the state’s dairy herd grew to 55,000 and produced just over a billion pounds of milk.

Most of Nebraska’s 195 licensed dairy farms are in the eastern end of the state, closer to milk processors and consumers. Johnson said there’s great potential for a dairy in western Nebraska, but so far expansion there has been limited because of the lack of processors.

Family

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Cowboy Rowland, who played at Saturday’s event with his Yankton-based Feather River Band, helped organize the fundraiser. He had never previously known the McGruders. However, he decided to take on the fundraiser after running into Sadie at a local store immediately following the fire and learning of their losses.

Rowland served as a master of ceremonies for Saturday night’s program, welcoming the McGruders on stage and invited them to share the fire’s details.

Adam picked up the story where Sadie left off, telling how Izzy woke him up to a house filled with smoke.

“I couldn’t breathe, everything happened so fast,” he said.

Fortunately, the girls were sleeping downstairs rather than on the second floor because of remodeling at the house. Sadie got four girls out of the house, while Adam dashed to Grace’s room to rescue her.

“I ran 60 feet through smoke to grab Grace and ran for the front door,” he said. “Everybody else was out except for me and Grace.”

The family was horrified to realize Izzy was still trapped inside. Adam wanted to rush back into the house and rescue the dog, but the fire had become too intense.

Meanwhile, first responders received the call shortly before 5 a.m. Responses came from the Yankton Gayville and Volin fire departments, the Yankton County emergency medical services (EMS) unit, the Yankton

County sheriff’s department and the Red Cross.

Nickles estimated a response time of less than 10 minutes, including the drive of about five miles. He called the response time “exceptional” and praised not only his department but also the Gayville and Volin firefighters.

“When you respond at that hour of the morning, you’re coming out of a dead sleep, and it takes time to get things together and go five miles,” he said. “At Yankton, we send a couple of trucks and our firefighters drive out to the scene and meet us there. But in the rural districts, you first have to go to the fire station to get the trucks, water and supplies.”

The three fire units combined their engines, tankers and air trailer pack, Nickles said. He estimated more than \$1 million in apparatus was on the scene, and the units used 8,000-9,000 gallons of water to fight the blaze.

“The outcome wasn’t the best, but the house was gutted and time was against us,” Nickles said.

SEEING THE DAMAGE

As part of the program, Nickles showed photos taken during and after the fire. He received the McGruders’ permission to show the photos since they hadn’t seen the images.

The fire apparently started in the kitchen area and quickly spread to the second floor, Nickles said.

“When we got there, we knew it was going to be an exterior fire from the get-go,” he said. “We went into a defense mode because the odds of anyone going in (the house) and to survive it was zero.”

After the fire was extinguished, Nickles shared in one heartbreaking responsibility — locating and helping

remove Izzy from the scene. He found the dog in the master bedroom, apparently overcome by the fire or making another attempt to locate and save the family.

“It wasn’t my dog, but it’s still hard on a first responder,” he said.

When conditions became safe, Nickles brought Adam McGruder to the site so they could take a look. The house remains standing but is gutted and a complete loss.

In the daylight, Nickles became shockingly aware of McGruder’s close call.

“There was singed hair on Adam and the little one (from running through the fire),” Nickles said. “And I noticed Adam wasn’t wearing any shoes. I asked him why, and he said he couldn’t get to them (in the fire). We found his boots, and they were melted.”

Adam McGruder could only stand in shock, looking at what had been an older home. “I took Adam to the kitchen window, and all he could ask was, ‘Where did my ceiling go?’ And his stairway was gone,” Nickles said.

During their conversation, Nickles learned something that becomes common during the panic and chaos of escaping a fire.

“Adam didn’t go through the patio doors, and he said he never thought of it,” the deputy fire chief said. “People don’t always go to the closest exit. They choose (the path) where they go every day.”

The fire, while a devastating loss, could have been so much worse, Nickles said.

“The house burned down, but so be it,” he said. “Everyone got out, and that’s the important thing.”

Miller, the Yankton firefighter, offered two words of advice for anyone caught in a burning structure — get out.

“In many cases, you become overcome with smoke and carbon monoxide,” he said, warning against the temptation to remain in the house and save possessions. He added that homeowners need to make sure their smoke detectors work properly.

LENDING A HELPING HAND

Miller appeared on the program for another reason. He presented a \$500 check to the McGruders on behalf of the Fire and Iron motorcycle organization.

Miller serves as vice president of Station 57 Lewis and Clark chapter, the local affiliate of the national organization. The chapter represents southeast South Dakota and raises its money through raffles and other fundraisers.

Besides the \$500 donation, Miller said the chapter would donate an additional \$5 to the McGruders for every raffle ticket that was sold at Saturday night’s fund-raiser. The original \$20 would still go toward the general mission of serving charities and people

in needs after disasters such as fires.

Miller said he was glad to present the money to the McGruders. “I can’t imagine what it’s like — these folks have lost everything,” he said.

Saturday night’s fundraiser included a variety of events such as a live auction, silent auction, raffle and other activities. One of the items included a doghouse made at Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield.

Tammy Huether of Irene brought along eight tickets donated by the Irene Rodeo Club for its June event at the Irene rodeo grounds.

It was more personal for Kari Nelson of Volin and Sarah Miller of Gayville, whose daughters, Kylee Nelson and Andrea Miller, attend third grade with Fayth McGruder in the Gayville-Volin schools.

And Pat and Tammy Ernster felt a special bond with the McGruders. Not only did the Ernsters lose their home to a fire two years ago next

month, but the McGruders sold their residence to the Ernsters at the time in helping get them on their feet.

The Ernsters admit their fire still haunts them two years later, with Pat suffering nightmares. However, they wanted to be present at Saturday’s fundraiser to show their support and reassure the McGruders that better times lie ahead.

“It’s going to get better, but it will take time,” Tammy Ernster said.

Monetary donations are being handled through First National Bank in Yankton.

For more information on what donations are being sought for the family members, visit <http://www.feather-riverband.com/fund-raisers-know-someone-who-needs-help>.

You can follow Randy Dockendorf on Twitter at twitter.com/RDockendorf. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

MORNING COFFEE
WEEKDAYS
MONDAY-FRIDAY
AM 1450
Tuesday, January 27
7:40 am The Center (Christy Hauer)
8:20 am Crofton Community (Joyce Stevens)
8:45 am Dakota Museum (Crystal Nelson)
Wednesday, January 28
7:40 am Second Chance Prom (Jill Wermers, Tess Welter)
8:20 am Hy-Vee Foods (Chef Staci)
8:45 am Mount Marty College (Kristi Tacke)

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