

Planned Parenthood Sets Adoption Services

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Planned Parenthood of the Heartland has made arrangements to offer adoption services in Nebraska through its longtime partner in arranging Iowa adoptions. Avalon Center, of Mason City, Iowa, has been licensed in Iowa to provide adoption services since 2002 and has been working with the Planned Parenthood chapter. Avalon Center said it's now been granted a Nebraska license. The center provides counseling and adoption services to people facing unintended pregnancies. Avalon Center will have offices at Planned Parenthood's health centers in Lincoln and Omaha, with office hours and a 24-hour phone line. Staff members also can meet with people anywhere across the state.

Residents Allowed Into Homes On Rosebud

ROSEBUD (AP) — Authorities have lifted an evacuation order for a community on the Rosebud Indian Reservation following improving weather conditions that have helped firefighters battle several wildfires. Fire Information Officer Beth Hermanson says authorities are lifting evacuation orders for the Longhorn Complex, a set of fires that has burned nearly 70 square miles in south-central South Dakota. The fires are 70 percent contained. Residents of the Spring Creek community will be allowed back into their homes Wednesday afternoon, and the Red Cross will be closing its shelter for evacuees.

Officials Say Myrtle Fire Completely Contained

PRINGLE (AP) — Authorities say the Myrtle Fire near Pringle has been 100 percent contained. The fire scorched nearly 16 square miles of land in the Black Hills before firefighters were able to completely contain it Tuesday night. About 120 crew members are still working to mop-up and patrol the area, while other crews have been reassigned to other fires. The fire started last Thursday. A forest service special agent determined the most probable cause of the fire was when the grader's metal blade fractured a rock on the road surface and ignited grass on the roadside.

Omaha Hit And Run Driver Leaves Plate Behind

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Omaha police have a good lead in the search for a hit and run driver — his vehicle's license plate. Omaha television station KETV reports that a driver crashed into a parked sport utility vehicle early Wednesday, then drove away. The crash left the parked a Ford Escape on its side. Officers who responded about 1 a.m. found a license plate along with parts of a Jeep's bumper. Police were still searching for the Jeep's driver Wednesday.

Weather Helps Slow Nebraska Fires

BY MARGERY A. BECK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — After days of scorching heat and strong winds, Mother Nature lent firefighters a helping hand Wednesday in battling three north-central Nebraska wildfires burning along the scenic Niobrara River. An overnight cold front made the temperatures drop, humidity increase and winds die down in the area, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency spokesman Mike Wight said. "There's a little bit of cloud cover, and that keeps the overall heat level down and therefore the fires just don't burn as well," Wight said. Temperatures, which had topped 100 degrees in recent days, dropped into the upper 80s Wednesday, according to the National Weather Service. Wight said the biggest help came from a shift in the wind, which had been coming from the south and pushing flames into trees and other growth along stream beds, called "draws." With the wind now blowing from the northwest, it helped keep the fire out of those channels. "If the wind doesn't go down the draws, it

doesn't fan the flames nearly as much," Wight said. Firefighters won't know until early Thursday whether they were able to keep the fires from spreading. Authorities have been flying over the fires at night and used infrared equipment to gauge the size of the blazes. The main Fairfield Creek fire, just west of Springview, expanded from 92 square miles on Tuesday to more than 104 square miles by Wednesday, Wight said. Two other smaller fires about 20 miles east of the main fire had burned nearly nine square miles by early Wednesday morning. The main fire had threatened to force the evacuation Tuesday of the small community of Sparks, but firefighters managed to keep the flames far enough away. The fire moved about a mile closer to the town overnight, Wight said, but remained a little more than three miles south of Sparks on Wednesday morning. The fires have destroyed at least 10 structures, some of them homes, although no other reports of buildings being burned were reported by Wednesday morning. However, the flames remained a threat to over 100 structures in the region, Wight said.

More than 300 firefighters and support personnel are battling the fires. Four helicopters are also dumping water on the flames, Wight said. Three firefighters were injured in the first days of fighting the fire, but no other injuries have been reported since Sunday. Gov. Dave Heineman visited the area Tuesday, receiving a briefing from fire officials and promising to send any state resources the fire crews need. Rep. Adrian Smith, who represents Nebraska's vast, rural 3rd District in which the fires are burning, also issued a statement, saying his office is ready to respond to any requests for federal assistance to help contain the fires. A surge of new firefighters had been expected to join the fight over the coming days, but Wight said Wednesday that authorities are asking volunteer firefighters from around the state not to leave their communities to help with the wildfire effort unless they're asked. "It's dry everywhere," Wight said. "We're concerned with brining volunteer firefighters up here to help ... and they leave their areas less protected. We really would prefer that they stay home and protect their own area."

Black Hills Businesses Ordered To Pay Back Wages

RAPID CITY (AP) — Six businesses in western South Dakota's Black Hills have been ordered to pay almost \$300,000 in fines and back wages to temporary foreign workers for violating the terms of a special visa program. The companies, which included a campground, four motels and a Mount Rushmore concessions operator, hired more than 360 temporary workers through a Sturgis agency that is now out of business. Most of the workers were

from Indonesia and the Philippines, the U.S. Labor Department said Tuesday in a statement announcing the fines. The agency investigated the alleged violations from July 2009 through July 2011. The employees were brought to South Dakota on temporary visas that are extended to foreign workers. The Labor Department statement said some of the businesses did not pay the employees' travel expenses and others did not pay for overtime hours

worked, both of which were required under the terms of the workers' visas. "It is their responsibility to know the rules and follow them," Labor Department spokesman Scott Allen told the *Rapid City Journal*. Russ Jobman, the general manager of Xanterra Parks and Resorts, said he is no longer using the visa program. It is too costly to pay a foreign worker's transportation costs, Jobman said. Xanterra operates conces-

sion and dining facilities at the Mount Rushmore National Memorial. "They were excellent employees, very good," Jobman said of the foreign workers. "But it wasn't worth the cost and it wasn't fair." Karim Merali, owner of the Adoba Eco Hotel in Rapid City, said he has paid the wages and fines the department ordered. "We didn't know we were supposed to pay their airline tickets," Merali said.

Trial Set On S.D. Man's Death Sentence Appeal

RAPID CITY (AP) — A South Dakota judge scheduled a November trial on a convicted murderer's request to reopen his death-penalty case. Charles Rhines has filed a petition claiming that South Dakota's death penalty law is unconstitutional. He contends prosecutors violated his rights, that the judge at his trial improperly dismissed a juror and that his defense lawyer was ineffective during his sentencing. On Tuesday, Circuit Judge Thomas Trimble set a Nov. 26 opening date for a trial on Rhines' petition. Trimble set aside four days for the proceeding.

Rhines was convicted of murder and sentenced to death for the March 1992 stabbing of Donivan Schaeffer at a Rapid City doughnut shop. Authorities contend Schaeffer, 22, a part-time employee at the shop, had surprised Rhines during the burglary. Donivan Schaeffer's parents, Ed and Peggy Schaeffer, attended Tuesday's hearing. "It's difficult because every time a hearing comes up, you have to reprogram yourself and get yourself back into the mental mode to hear a lot of the ... bad things that have happened," Peggy Schaeffer told the *Rapid City Journal*. "In order to get this resolved, we need to do this."

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