

Presence Of West Nile Confirmed

COLUMBUS, Neb. (AP) — An eastern Nebraska health department has confirmed the presence of West Nile virus in mosquitoes collected in the area.

The *Columbus Telegram* reports that the East Central District Health Department in Columbus — about 80 miles west of Omaha — found the virus in mosquitoes collected June 26 in Platte County.

The Department of Health and Human Services says there has been one human case of West Nile in Nebraska so far this year — a male between the ages of 14 and 25 somewhere in central Nebraska.

West Nile is transmitted to people through mosquitoes that feed on an infected bird. Most infected people have no symptoms or only mild flu-like symptoms. A small percentage develops a serious illness.

Man Found Guilty Of Felony Sex Offenses

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A jury in Sioux Falls has convicted a rural Garretson man of sexually abusing a woman for nearly 14 years.

Jurors issued their verdict against 52-year-old Ronald Neels on Thursday.

He was charged with multiple felony sex offenses, including eight counts of rape. He was found guilty on all counts.

Neels, a truck driver, pleaded not guilty to all counts last year. His attorney could not immediately be reached to comment on the verdict.

The now 23-year-old victim has told detectives that she was abused by Neels for 13 years, starting when she was 9. She says the abuse ended just months before Neels was arrested in October.

A sentencing hearing for Neels hasn't been scheduled. He faces up to life in prison.

Woman Pleads Not Guilty In Stabbing

PIERRE (AP) — An Eagle Butte woman accused of stabbing a man to death during a fight has pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder.

Thirty-six-year-old Richelle Bowker is charged in the June 9 death of Rocky Elk Eagle on the Cheyenne River Indian Reservation. A preliminary autopsy showed there were three stab wounds to his chest, involving his heart and lungs.

The *Capital Journal* reports that Bowker appeared in U.S. District Court in Pierre on Wednesday. Her jury trial could be held in early September. She's being held without bail.

Man Pleads To Sex Trafficking

COLUMBUS, Neb. (AP) — A 31-year-old Texas man accused of raping a teenage girl in a Nebraska motel has pleaded no contest to a count of sex trafficking of a minor in a deal with prosecutors.

The *Columbus Telegram* says Erick Mills faces up to 50 years in prison when he's sentenced on Aug. 4.

Court documents say Mills was working in Columbus when he met a 16-year-old Omaha girl and later agreed to pick her up in the city on Jan. 23.

Prosecutors say Mills and the teen ended up at a Columbus hotel with two other men, where Mills forced the girl to sniff cocaine. Authorities say he later raped her multiple times over several hours after the other men refused to pay him to have sex with the girl.

Investigation Of Jail Has Begun

GRAND ISLAND, Neb. (AP) — An investigation of the Hall County Jail has begun following a letter sent to the Hall County Board of Supervisors by a retired jail employee voicing concerns about the jail's operation and management.

Hall County Attorney Jack Zitterkopf tells The *Grand Island Independent* that attorneys from a Lincoln law firm arrived in Grand Island this week to conduct interviews of jail staff and administrators.

Zitterkopf declined to say whether any jail officials have been put on leave during the investigation.

Zitterkopf confirmed the county's receipt of a letter by a retired jail sergeant outlining the concerns, but has declined to release the letter, saying it's part of an investigation and protected personnel file.

Paramedic Arrested On Theft Charge

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — A paramedic who law enforcement authorities accuse of stealing about \$44 from a dead woman's home in Sioux Falls has been arrested on a petty theft charge.

The *Argus Leader* reports the 35-year-old Sioux Falls man was arrested Wednesday evening in connection with the June 30 incident.

Police in Sioux Falls say officers saw a wallet and cash at the woman's home when they arrived, but later noticed the money was missing. Spokesman Sam Clemens says some cash was then found in the paramedic's backpack.

Clemens says the money in the backpack appeared to be the same amount missing from the wallet.

Michael Bureau with Paramedics Plus says their employee has been fired.

It's unclear if the paramedic, who'll make his first court appearance July 29, has an attorney.

Earnings, Job Placements Will Be On A New Web Site

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — Data will be available soon at a new web-site showing job placements and earnings for graduates of specific programs at South Dakota's colleges, universities and technical institutes, state Labor Secretary Marcia Hultman said Thursday.

Hultman told the Legislature's Planning Committee that her department is working with the state Department of Education and the state Board of Regents on the project.

She said it will help parents, job-seekers, legislators and the general public know more about whether post-secondary education is meeting the needs in South Dakota's jobs markets.

"So we can try to get a correlation: Are they in a job relevant to the education they pursued?" Hultman told the panel.

Rep. Shawn Bordeaux, D-Mission, said he is concerned about helping the six South Dakota counties that are among the 11 poorest in the nation.

Bordeaux said those regions lack development and opportunities and are in need of help in learning how to get access to more government money.

Sen. Mike Vehle, R-Mitchell, asked Hultman to update Native American employment data on a regular basis to the Legislature, along with the data for veterans, retired

people and people with disabilities.

Vehle also asked for a deeper look at South Dakotans who live on incomes below the federal poverty level.

Thank You!

We want to thank our family for having such a wonderful party for our 70th anniversary and 90th birthdays. A special thanks to all the friends who came and surprised us. Thanks also to everyone who sent a card. They mean a lot to us. This was a day we will always remember.

God bless you all
Wayne (Bud) & Glennys Jepsen

60th Anniversary Celebration

Alvin and Laurel Sommer will celebrate their 60th anniversary on July 25, 2015.

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Mr. and Mrs. Sommer

County Attorney Finds Deputies Justified In Shooting

By The Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Douglas County Attorney Don Kleine said the actions of two deputies during last month's encounter with an armed man were justified because their lives were threatened.

He said Wednesday that he has found no wrongdoing by deputies Wade Grim and Chad Miller after reviewing reports, interviewing witnesses and watching patrol camera footage of the June 23 encounter. Both were put on paid administrative leave while the incident was under investigation but have since returned to work, the Sheriff's Office said last week.

The sheriff has said the incident

began after a store clerk told one of the deputies that the 32-year-old man appeared to be drunk and had just bought a six-pack of beer. Deputies later ordered the man out of his vehicle but he confronted them with a gun.

Investigators say a struggle over the gun ensued and a shot was fired from the man's gun. Grim then shot the man, who was taken to a hospital in critical condition.

Kleine said criminal charges are possible against the man, who remains hospitalized. An update on his condition hasn't been released, the *Omaha World-Herald* reported.

The Sheriff's Office plans to improve the way deputies are alerted to dangerous people after the incident. A notice

was sent to law enforcement in the Omaha area warning them that the man had threatened to shoot police if they tried to arrest him.

All deputies should have seen the alert, but Grim and Miller didn't recognize the man by his appearance, his driver's license or his vehicle description when they stopped him from leaving the parking lot outside a convenience store, said Chief Deputy Tom Wheeler.

Wheeler said that police would have been warned by 911 dispatchers about the threats if they had been dispatched to the man's home address. He said that the Sheriff's Office is now working with the 911 communications center to figure out how to attach alerts to both a person's name and address.

Daugaard Urges Watchfulness, Care On Roads For Sturgis Rally

BY JAMES NORD
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — Officials in South Dakota who have spent years planning for what could be a record-setting 75th Sturgis Motorcycle Rally said Thursday they are as prepared as possible for the expected influx of bikers to the Black Hills area next month.

An estimated 442,000 people attended last year's rally, and officials are expecting more bikers than ever for this year's landmark rally, from Aug. 3-9. Public safety officials said they've planned effectively and that they don't expect violence like the deadly May shootout at a Texas restaurant where nine people were killed, which initially gave pause to law enforcement officials involved with the rally.

"We are as ready as we can be," South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard said at a Thursday press conference where he urged the public to be careful on roads and to be alert for suspicious activity. "In 74 years, we've never had what we would call a major emergency event in Sturgis where it required the governor to declare an emergency, and our hope is to get through the 75th rally in that same way with that record intact."

Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies partner to handle public safety at the rally, which has not been immune to biker gang activity. In 2006, six people were injured in an exchange of gunfire between two rival clubs. Sturgis Police Chief Jim Bush said the information he's gotten doesn't indicate gang activity will have a larger impact at this rally than any other year.

"Just because there's something happening in Waco don't mean something is going to happen here," he said.

FBI spokesman Kyle Loven declined to discuss details of his agency's preparations for the rally.

Bush, who has worked rallies for nearly 40 years, said extra officers will be

coming from seven or eight states to supplement his small department, but he declined to share specific numbers.

"I don't give that to anybody," he said. "They think I have thousands, and I kind of like it that."

State Transportation Secretary Darin Bergquist also said officials are working to prevent motorcycle accidents, which are a significant concern at the rally. Transportation preparation efforts

include street sweeping, message boards and systems that detect congestion and inform travelers that traffic may be backing up ahead.

As far as how many people to expect at the rally, there are no firm numbers. But city spokeswoman Christina Steele said the rally has gotten a huge amount of publicity and the city had issued dramatically more vendor licenses last week than it had at that time last year.

The state Tourism Department's research vendor in May reported a surge in search volume for South Dakota hotels around the Sturgis rally dates, which is an indicator of demand.

Heidi Kruse, executive director of the Sturgis Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau, said inquiries and requests for visitor packets also have jumped dramatically.

"Our postage budget is out of control," she said.

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