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Artist Mark Balma paints a huge mural of Cecil in Dr. Walter Palmer's parking lot on Wednesday at River Bluff Dental in Bloomington, Minn. Balma went to school in the Twin Cities and was visiting friends when he decided to come down for a "silent protest" against Dr. Walter Palmer and the killing of the lion in Zimbabwe. He also painted the frescoes at the University of St. Thomas Law School. He hopes to see the painting to raise money for wildlife preservation efforts.

Dentist Rarely Discussed Hunting With Patients

BY BRIAN BAKST
AND FARAI MUTSAKA
Associated Press

ST. PAUL, Minn. — A Minnesota dentist who has become the target of worldwide outrage for hunting and killing a protected lion in Zimbabwe advised patients Wednesday to seek care elsewhere and said he rarely discussed his big-game hunting because it can be a "divisive and emotionally charged topic."

Walter James Palmer remained secluded in the face of protests at his suburban Minneapolis clinic and intense condemnation online. He has not appeared in public since being identified Tuesday as a party to the lion's death.

Palmer, whose practice offers general and cosmetic dentistry, is an active big-game hunter, with many kills to his name, some of them registered with hunting clubs. The North Dakota native "enjoys all outdoor activities," according to the biography page on his now-dark clinic website. "Anything allowing him to stay active and observe and photograph wildlife is where you will find Dr. Palmer when he not in the office."

In Zimbabwe, a hunting guide and a farm owner appeared in court on allegations they helped Palmer kill the lion named Cecil. And the head of Zimbabwe's safari as-

sociation said the big cat with the black mane was lured into the kill zone and denied "a chance of a fair chase."

The Zimbabwean men were accused of aiding Palmer, who reportedly paid \$50,000 to track and kill a lion. Zimbabwe police have said they are looking for Palmer, whose exact whereabouts were unknown.

Palmer, 55, referenced the situation in a note to his patients. "I understand and respect that not everyone shares the same views on hunting," he wrote in the letter, which was obtained by the local Fox television affiliate, KMSP.

The married father of two was the subject of a 2009 New York Times article about big-game hunting in which he said he learned to shoot at age 5. The article said Palmer had a reputation for being capable of "skewering a playing card from 100 yards" with a compound bow and having "a purist's reputation for his disinclination to carry firearms as backup."

During the nighttime hunt, the Zimbabwean men tied a dead animal to their car to draw the lion out of a national park, said Johnny Rodrigues, chairman of the Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force.

The American is believed to have shot the lion with a crossbow. The wounded cat was then tracked for 40 hours before Palmer fatally shot him with a gun, Rodrigues said. A professional hunter

named Theo Bronkhorst was accused of failing to "prevent an unlawful hunt." Court documents said Bronkhorst was supervising while Palmer shot the animal.

Bronkhorst was released on \$1,000 bail after appearing in court in Hwange, about 435 miles (700 kilometers) west of the capital Harare, according to his defense lawyer, Givemore Muvhiringi.

If convicted, Bronkhorst faces up to 15 years in prison. A second man, farm owner Honest Trymore Ndlovu, also appeared in court but was not charged and was released from custody, his lawyer Tonderai Makuku said.

The court documents made no mention of Palmer as a suspect.

Using bait to lure the lion is deemed unethical by the Safari Operators Association of Zimbabwe, of which Bronkhorst is a member. The association has since revoked his license.

"Ethics are certainly against baiting. Animals are supposed to be given a chance of a fair chase," Emmanuel Fundira, the association's president, said. "In fact, it was not a hunt at all. The animal was baited, and that is not how we do it. It is not allowed."

It was not entirely clear whether baiting is allowed by Zimbabwe law. Fundira said the practice was both unethical and illegal. The conserva-

tion group Lion Aid says it is unethical but not expressly forbidden.

Palmer attended dental school at the University of Minnesota and built his practice in the Minneapolis suburb of Bloomington. He said in a statement that he did not know the lion was protected and relied on his guides to ensure a legal hunt.

"I had no idea that the lion I took was a known, local favorite, was collared and part of a study until the end of the hunt," Palmer said in statement issued through a public relations firm.

Cecil was being studied by an Oxford University research program.

Social media were filled with condemnation of the killing just outside Zimbabwe's Hwange National Park. On Twitter, the hashtag CecilTheLion was in wide use.

A couple of hundred protesters gathered Wednesday outside Palmer's office with signs, including one that said, "Let the hunter be hunted!" Signs also were taped on Palmer's office door. Sarah Madison brought her two children, including her 3-year-old son dressed in a lion costume. She said she was hunting, even if legal, was "immoral" and "disgraceful."

Organizations that foster and defend big-game hunting distanced themselves from Palmer, including those where he was a member.

Health System Asks For Cooperation

RAPID CITY (AP) — A health care system in western South Dakota is asking for its patients' cooperation during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally that begins Monday.

KNBN-TV reports that Regional Health is asking patients to visit their primary care providers or urgent care clinics if their condition is not considered an emergency.

The health system says the emergency department of Rapid City Regional Hospital is busier than usual during the weeklong rally.

Regional Health says emergency department care should be sought for chest pain, shortness of breath, severe pain, altered mental state or confusion, head and eye injuries, serious burns, bleeding that won't stop or other serious conditions.

The health system's urgent care clinics will have expanded weekend hours during the rally that will run through Aug. 9.

8 Serious Cheating Incidents In Testing

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A report shows that Nebraska public schools have reported eight serious cheating incidents by school personnel during statewide academic testing since 2010.

The Nebraska Department of Education report doesn't offer specifics of the incidents, which it describes as security breaches. But it does give examples of what the agency considers a serious breach, including changing a student's answers, directly coaching a student, or providing test answers to a student.

The Omaha World-Herald had sought detailed information on testing security breaches, which Education Commissioner Matthew L. Blomstedt denied on an exception to the state's public records law. He said releasing the details of security incidents could discourage local officials from self-reporting violations.

"We rely, honestly, on folks being willing to submit that information," he said.

Instead, the department released the report to the newspaper Tuesday that summarized incidents statewide over the years.

Students in the state's public schools take math, reading, writing and science tests each year to see how well students are learning state academic standards, which reflect content that skills that state leaders believe a child should know at each grade level.

Blomstedt said the eight serious cases involved individuals acting alone in the classrooms. Of the eight, three from the 2014-15 school year are still under investigation. The people involved in the remaining cases have been disciplined.

A fourth-grade teacher in the Allen Consolidated Schools had her teaching certificate suspended for one year for fixing students' writing on the fourth-grade writing test. In the other four cases, the people involved received public reprimands.

The report indicates that 107 security breaches have been reported since 2010. In addition to the eight serious cheating incidents, 29 were considered moderately serious, and 70 were classified as by the state as least serious.

Examples of a moderately serious incident include allowing students to use calculators when it's not allowed or an adult reading a reading-test passage to a student. An example of a least serious incident is leaving up a wall poster describing the writing process in a testing room.

Lawsuit Over Student Death Dismissed

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A federal judge has dismissed a wrongful death lawsuit against Nebraska college officials over a 19-year-old student who went missing five years ago.

Judge John Gerrard said in his Tuesday ruling that officials could have done more to protect Peru State College student Tyler Thomas from a male student who later was identified as suspect in the case. But Gerrard said the decision to not expel that student for prior sexual harassment claims didn't rise to the level of deliberate indifference by college officials.

In 2010, Thomas disappeared after leaving an off-campus party, and a death certificate was issued in 2013, though her body hasn't been found. The male student wasn't charged in her case but has been imprisoned for an unrelated sexual assault conviction.

Thomas' family sued the Nebraska State Colleges Board of Trustees, which oversees Peru State, and the man. The college board requested the lawsuit's dismissal.

"What happened to Tyler is a profound tragedy," Gerrard wrote. "But the law does not permit this court to judge the board with the benefit of hindsight."

Lincoln attorney Vince Powers said the Thomas family was disappointed by the ruling but has not given up on the case. They will likely appeal to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

"This is just a stumbling block that we will overcome," Powers told the Lincoln Journal Star on Tuesday night.

Powers had argued in court that college administrators knew of accusations of sexual harassment and assault involving the male student. An attorney representing the board said officials took appropriate action with information they had at the time.

"Based on the facts it knew, the board's response — while far from thorough, and perhaps even negligent — was not deliberately indifferent," Gerrard said.

He said the law requires Thomas' mother to prove that college officials acted with "deliberate indifference" to a known or obvious risk.

Former County Prosecutor Pleads Guilty

PIERRE (AP) — A former South Dakota county prosecutor who authorities accuse of child rape has pleaded guilty to two counts.

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley says former Walworth County State's Attorney Christopher Jansen entered guilty pleas Wednesday to two counts of first-degree rape.

The 35-year-old Selby man was accused of child rape in Hughes County, and having child pornography on his computer. He was indicted in state and federal courts last summer.

Jackley says the rape charges against Jansen stem from several incidents at a Hughes County home that involved three children ages 5 through 13.

A sentencing hearing in the case is scheduled for Sept. 25. Jackley says each rape charge carries a minimum sentence of 15 years in custody.

A trial is scheduled for October for the federal charges.

Campaign To Ease State's Pot Laws Kicks Off

BY KEVIN BURBACH
Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — Sponsors of a proposed measure to decriminalize the possession of marijuana in South Dakota are officially kicking off their campaign in Sioux Falls.

The group South Dakotans Against Prohibition planned to host a fundraising event Wednesday at a local sports bar, complete with glass blowing and free beer. The pot proponents began circulating petitions several weeks ago and need to collect almost 14,000 signatures by Nov. 9 to get the measure on the ballot in November 2016.

Under the proposed measure, possession of one ounce or less of marijuana would no longer be a criminal penalty, but a civil penalty, like a speeding ticket.

Ryan Gaddy, the administrator of the pro-pot group, said he thinks the measure has a real shot at getting on the ballot and passing, especially considering the estimated fiscal impact.

Gaddy and the group argue that law

enforcement resources should be spent elsewhere, particularly on violent offenders.

The Legislative Research Council released a fiscal impact statement earlier this month found that estimated that, if implemented, the measure would result in almost 3,200 fewer convictions for possession and ingestion of marijuana, and also possession of paraphernalia.

"(Sioux Falls) is just exploding with crime and the police really should redirect their focus on the people who need to be put in cages, not nonviolent offenders for plants," he said.

But the push for looser pot laws will face opposition, particularly from state officials and law enforcement, who oppose any efforts to ease the state's marijuana laws.

Pennington County Sheriff Kevin Thom said Rapid City and other parts of the county have been flooded with marijuana since Colorado legalized the drug for recreational use. Thom and other officials expect that decriminalization would do the same.

"I think all that does is it turns it into

an alcohol-like, easily available drug, and we've got plenty of evidence that it has some addictive qualities, that it's injurious to intellectual development to initiate," said Gov. Dennis Daugaard. "I just don't see it as being good for us and I don't see any need to make it even more available and less difficult to have."

Gaddy rejected the idea decriminalizing marijuana would increase usage, adding that plenty of South Dakotans already indulge in the illegal drug.

"Just because a law changes doesn't mean more people use," he said. "Laws don't dictate use, laws dictate incarceration."

South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley said there are public safety and health concerns he has with the measure, but also noted that even if it passes, it would require legislative and judicial interpretation before it could be implemented.

He said there are issues with how the measure would interact with state laws already on the books that govern marijuana possession.

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