

Teacher Takes Middle- And High-School Students To Adult Shop

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — A sex education teacher has drawn the ire of parents after taking middle- and high-school students on a field trip to an adult novelty store in Minneapolis.

Gaia Democratic School director Starri Hedges took about a dozen students to the Smitten Kitten last week. Hedges told the *Star Tribune* that she wanted to provide a safe environment for students to learn about human sexual behavior.

Besides offering adult books, videos, toys and other products, the store also has educational workshops, which the students attended.

"What I saw happening on our trip, I thought it was beautiful because kids could talk to these sex educators without any shame, without any fear," Hedges said. Some of her students bought condoms, she said.

The small K-12 school has a motto that promises academic freedom, youth empowerment and democratic education. Parents say it has about 25 students. Tax records show the school, housed in a Unitarian church, has an annual budget of about \$100,000.

Parent Lynn Floyd's 11- and 13-year-old daughters were on the field trip. Floyd says the trip was "a major

breach of trust" and has withdrawn his children from the school. Floyd said he is most troubled that parents were never notified before the trip.

"I just struggled to think that I wasn't involved in that," he said.

Hedges said that she "unfortunately didn't communicate well enough with parents ahead of time" about the trip. Pornographic items were off limits to the children, Hedges said, but sex toys and other products were visible.

Smitten Kitten owner Jennifer Pritchett said the store is an educational resource about sex and sexuality. "We

leave it up to the discretion of parents and guardians as to when, if, and in what capacity they seek resources from our educators," she said.

Minnesota Department of Education spokesman Josh Collins said the state has no authority over the school because it is private. "I don't think anybody would think that going to the Smitten Kitten is a great idea," he said.

It is not clear whether the field trip broke any laws. A city ordinance said those younger than 18 should not be exposed to "sexually provocative written, photographic, printed, sound, or published materials deemed harmful to minors."

County

From Page 1

"The next step is to continue to move forward with the process legally," he said. "At our next meeting, we're going to talk about the by-laws. We're getting all the I's dotted and the T's crossed on it right now."

As for inclusion in the Napa Platte Rail Authority, Woods said some issues still need to be ironed out.

"I got an email today from the state's attorney that there's still some things that need to be done if we want to stay a part of the Napa Rail Authority," he said. "We can't find any minutes of a public hearing that was done, so if we want to stay a part of that, we're going to have to follow the procedures in law to stay part of that."

Woods added that he's open to having dual authorities encompassing Yankton County.

"I think it's always a good thing having more tools for us to grow our economy," he said.

A major change for the Yankton County Commission was also announced during Tuesday's meeting — starting with their meeting on June 16, the commission

will begin meetings at 4 p.m. instead of 3:30 p.m.

"The biggest thing we want to do with that is be more accessible to the public," Woods said. "It's tough for people to get off of work to come sit and listen to us talk, so (we wanted to) get a more favorable time for them."

In other business Tuesday, the commission:

* announced a special meeting for Thursday, June 4, at 11:30 a.m. regarding a special resolution on the bond refinance for the Yankton County Safety Center.

* held two executive sessions.

* approved a number of variances.

* approved the advertisement of open positions on the Drainage Commission and the Highway 52 Committee.

* announced an open house regarding work planned for the Highway 52 corridor. A date will be set later in the month.

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Vermillion

From Page 1

Assistance has been provided at the scene by the Attorney General's Office, the DCI, the Vermillion Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, South Dakota Game Fish and Parks, Clay County Emergency Management, as well as Codrington and Yankton County Search and Rescue.

He added that it is premature to talk about the nature of Hummel's death at this time, but he hopes to be able to release more information soon.

"The autopsy was done (Tuesday)," he said. "I don't have that report yet, but I hope to be able to get it

soon. The indications to us at the scene are that we are going to treat it as a homicide investigation until we find out otherwise. ... We are following up on a lot of leads, but we do not have a suspect at this time."

The sheriff's office has asked for information about a dark-colored sedan with tinted windows and a loud exhaust system seen at the scene near the time of Hummel's death. Howe noted that, to his understanding, loud meant in disrepair.

"Witnesses reported seeing the car in that location," Howe said. "As to its involvement, we don't know. We just want to talk to everyone who was in the area whether or not they were involved."

Officials are asking that anyone who saw anything suspicious in the area

Monday afternoon from 1-3 p.m. to contact law enforcement. They would also like to speak to anyone who had any contact with Alicia Hummel on Sunday or Monday.

"Additionally, we would like to speak to anyone who may simply have been at the Highlines Boat Landing on Monday, even if they didn't notice anything out of the ordinary," Howe said.

He noted that Hummel's car has been located, but her cell phone has not.

"She was last seen on Monday," Howe said. "Her

car was located at the scene. At this time, we have released the scene."

Howe said anyone with information about Hummel's death should contact the Clay County Sheriff's Office at 605-677-7100.

"At this time we will be following up on leads," he said. "We are looking for any and all information we can from the public. At this time, we have received some and we will continue to follow up on that. As far as back at the scene, we will certainly go back, if needed."

Wind

From Page 1

first again in 2014, followed by Massachusetts, Oregon, Colorado and New York.

South Dakota's position in the index might be symbolized through a state law approved in 2008.

The Legislature directed that 10 percent of South Dakota's electricity sold at retail should come from renewable, recycled and conserved energy sources by 2015 — but compliance was voluntary and there wasn't a penalty for falling short.

Electricity providers are required to submit annual reports to the state Public Utilities Commission. The agency in turn provides its own report each Dec. 31 to the Legislature.

In the PUC's latest report, covering 2013 submissions from the providers, the commission said all utilities operating in South Dakota were procuring renewables and pursuing energy efficiency.

However, the commission noted:

"As a result, most South Dakota utilities will have the ability to source 10 percent of their energy needs from renewables or energy efficiency in 2015.

"However, most are currently choosing not to report compliance with South Dakota's voluntary RRCEO (renewable, recycled and conserved energy objective) since either holding or selling their RECs (renewable energy certificates) is more of a benefit for their ratepayers than compliance with the RRCEO."

The report covering 2013 data from the 13 providers serving South Dakota covered 220 pages. It is at <http://www.puc.sd.gov/commission/Energy/REO/20141231rrceoreport.pdf>.

The 2008 legislation also reflected ambivalence among South Dakota's lawmakers. The House of Representatives voted 66-3 for the measure, whose prime sponsor was then-Rep. Joel Dykstra, R-Canton. The Senate tally was 29-6.

The House opponents were Democrats who argued the bill didn't accomplish much. The Senate opponents were Republicans who didn't want a goal at all.

In 2009 legislators added "conservation and energy efficiency" to the law. No one voted against that measure in either chamber.

PUC chairman Chris Nelson said Tuesday that South Dakota is about 13 months away from knowing whether its voluntary 10 percent target is reached.

"The reports from the utilities for 2015 compliance are due July 1, 2016, so we don't have a firm answer to the question yet.

"That said, having observed past reports and knowledge of what the various companies have done and are doing, it appears that most if not all of the utility companies will be positioned to meet or exceed the goal."

Nelson noted: "I usually don't comment on ranking reports done by out-of-state folks who create their own criteria which may or may not be relevant to the needs of South Dakota."



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