

John Thune’s Mother Dies Wednesday

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — The mother of U.S. Sen. John Thune has died.

In a news release, Thune announced that his mother, Yvonne Patricia “Pat” Thune, died Wednesday morning. She was 90.

Pat Thune was born in 1921 in Ponteix, Saskatchewan, Canada. She met her husband, Harold Thune, while enrolled at the University of Minnesota. They married in 1943 and settled in Murdo, S.D.

After running a family hardware business, the couple began working in the Murdo school system.

Pat and Harold Thune have five children, including Sen. Thune. Thune recalled his mother as a devoted and loving woman who encouraged him and his siblings to work hard and do their best.

Rash Of Alarms, Water Main Breaks In S. Falls

SIOUX FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls officials responded to a rash of overnight emergency calls in South Dakota’s largest city that may have been tied to a spike in water pressure.

Crews responded to four water main breaks, and firefighters answered more than 20 calls as alarms went off in businesses, schools and other buildings late Tuesday, according to a story published Wednesday in the *Argus Leader* newspaper.

The water main breaks closed several roads and shut off water to some businesses. Alarms prompted the evacuation of a high school during a basketball game. Fire alarms started sounding throughout the city around 8 p.m., including at the University of Sioux Falls.

Steve Fessler, battalion chief with Sioux Falls Fire Rescue, said firefighters spent about an hour responding to the various sites. No real fires were reported.

“Alarm systems can be fairly sensitive, once in a while we do get pressure spikes, usually it’s not as dramatic (as Tuesday night),” he said.

R. City Crime Spree Suspects Appear In Court

RAPID CITY (AP) — Five Rapid City men arrested following a crime spree have made their initial appearance in court.

Authorities say the five men each face several felony charges, including first-degree robbery, after they allegedly led officers on a high-speed chase following an overnight crime spree Tuesday night that included armed robbery and burglary.

The five men are: 22-year-old Cassidy Grosz, 21-year-old Matt Wright, 21-year-old Hebrew Audiss, 19-year-old Schavoun “Joseph” Tobacco and 18-year-old Adam Poor Bear.

All five men are being held on bond at the Pennington County Jail.

A preliminary hearing for the men is scheduled to take place within two weeks.

Governor Picks New Child Services Director

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Gov. Dave Heineman has chosen a Virginia-based human services director to lead Nebraska’s division of child and family services.

Thomas Pristow of Mineral, Va., will begin his duties on March 21. He replaces Todd Reckling, who resigned in October for personal health reasons.

Pristow is the director of the Louisa County Department of Human Services in Louisa, Va. His 18-year human services career includes stints in human services agencies in Virginia and Vermont.

Nebraska Health and Human Services CEO Kerry Winterer says Pristow’s experience in urban and rural settings should help the state with its ongoing child welfare reforms.

The Division of Children and Family Services is the largest of six divisions within the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

Shop

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A location on the north side of Highway 50 also leaves the department more room to work, rather than being confined in the heart of Yankton.

Jensen noted that the building does a lot to advance employee safety.

“We’re happy about it,” he said. “I think it’s a very nice facility.”

Sorensen said Union County officials took a tour of the facility recently as they look to build a new shop. He said they were impressed with the building.

Yankton County citizens will also get a chance to take a look at where their tax dollars have been invested, Jensen said. An open house for the shop will be scheduled in the near future, probably in April.

The total cost of the project is expected to be approximately \$1.8 million. Jensen said only about \$500,000 remains to be paid on it.

“If we have a good (2012), maybe we’ll put \$250,000 on it, and then pay off the rest the next year,” he stated.

The county has a 10-year lease buy-back agreement with First Dakota National Bank for the building. That includes a five-year fixed-rate loan at 2.5 percent.

Event Mulls Income Needs Of S.D. Elderly

BY VERONICA ZARAGOVIA
Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — Older adults in South Dakota expressed their frustration over poor access to jobs at a public Sioux Falls meeting on Wednesday that highlighted the challenges the elderly face in getting enough money for basic needs.

At the event, Wider Opportunities for Women, a Washington, D.C.-based organization, presented its Elder Economic Security Standard Index for South Dakota, which measures the income older adults need in order to live independently and meet their daily living costs. It also ranks states and Washington, D.C., according to each one’s shortfalls between income and necessary expenses, like housing, food and transportation.

Wider Opportunities for Women worked with the Gerontology Institute of the University of Massachusetts Boston to complete the index.

The advocacy group said these data help policymakers, caregivers, service providers and advocates learn about the challenges faced by this population group, many of whom said they face age discrimination at the discussion at the Sioux Falls Main Library.

Maggie Flowers, a director at Wider Opportunities for Women, said many elderly who don’t live below the \$10,890 poverty line, as set by the federal government, still have trouble meeting basic needs even without spending on “frills” like going out for coffee or taking a grandchild to the movies.

People at the meeting said Social Security doesn’t give them enough to live on.

Marie Beaver, 71, said because she doesn’t get a pension, she works for minimum wage in credentialing at Volunteers for America, Dakotas.

Darrel Grimm, 65, said he struggles stretching his disability dollars. “Gas and food are the

hardest for me,” Grimm said.

Beaver and Grimm get help from Experience Works, a partner of Wider Opportunities for Women that helps low-income people get job training and placement.

Experience Works also helps participants overcome barriers like poor dental health or bus pass needs.

“If it’s so bad that it’s prohibitive to employment, we’ve helped with that,” Jean Bennett, Experience Works regional director, said. On occasion the organization has provided eyeglasses, steel toed shoes, interview outfits or clothing to its participants. “We want to help those who really need it,” Bennett added.

Experience Works gets funding from the federal government because of the Older Americans Act of 1965. The legislation helps build up security for the elderly by helping with housing, transportation, food and employment. South Dakota administers the

dollars through its Department of Labor and Regulation, Bennett said, which then provides money for Experience Works.

Rundale Dobson, 61, said sometimes he gets turned away from jobs for being “overqualified” because he has a cosmetologist license. He said Experience Works helped him find work as a meat cutter.

The Elder Economic Security Standard Index shows that in South Dakota, Lawrence County is among the most expensive for older adults, who spend roughly \$18,960 per year there on costs including housing, food, transportation and health care. Several counties shared the lowest yearly expense in the state, as calculated in 2012, which averaged about \$17,856. These include Buffalo, Hughes and Sully counties.

Flowers said in an “ideal world,” people 65 and older are enjoying their lives, but she said the index gives a closer look at what their lives really look like.

Video Horse Racing Bill Debate Slows To A Trot

BY MICHAEL AVOK
Associated Press

LINCOLN, Neb. — Debate on a measure billed as an attempt to reinvigorate the horse racing industry in Nebraska slowed to a trot Wednesday in the state Legislature.

Lawmakers took turns stalling on a plan that would allow bettors to use new gambling machines to wager on horse races that have already happened.

Debate began on Tuesday, and both supporters and opponents dragged out the discussion past the four-hour mark Wednesday as they jockeyed for votes. The measure could be considered again on Thursday.

Sen. Scott Lautenbaugh, of Omaha, said that instant racing terminals should be allowed at licensed horse racing tracks as a way to boost revenue for the industry and the state.

“Horse racing is part of our tradition,” he said. “Time and technology have marched on and racing has been left, well, handicapped. We are talking about local jobs here.”

Lautenbaugh’s bill would allow betting at gambling machines that show races from a library of tens of thousands of old races chosen at random. No place or time would be listed on the screen, and horses would not be named.

Lautenbaugh said there are 2,146 jobs directly related to horse racing in Nebraska, and those jobs are in jeopardy.

“This is about keeping horse racing alive,” he said. “We are talking about existing jobs that we can save now. This is not an ‘if we build it they will come.’ These jobs exist now.”

Opponents of the bill lined up several possible amendments to the measure Wednesday, hoping to use a filibuster to derail it.

They said adding the new machines expands gambling in Nebraska. They said the horse racing industry is dying and is in the backstretch of its life.

Sen. Mark Christensen, of Imperial, said the sport does not appeal to youth and the fast pace of life today.

“We live in a microwave society, it’s about instant gratification,” Christensen said. “Horse racing is too slow. Are we really trying to save the industry or are we just increasing gambling.”

Sen. Jeremy Nordquist, of Omaha, said the games should be allowed so jobs are saved.

“If we do not move forward on this, we are turning our backs on thousands of Nebraskans who have jobs in this industry,” he said. “They are not asking for a handout. They are asking to grow and to sustain their industry.”

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