

Plunge

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“I think it helps with public awareness,” Clayton said. “I believe it helps make people realize that anyone can be involved. It says something that someone with the recognition she has in the state would care enough about these athletes to come help us at this fundraiser.”

Kalani Jorgensen, Miss South Dakota Teen USA, will also be taking the plunge and making appearances to promote the event, according to Clayton.

Neisen, 20, vied in the Miss South Dakota Teen USA competition for three years and came in the top five but was never crowned. She took a year off from competition and then came back to win Miss South Dakota USA.

During those early years, Neisen said she just competed for fun.

“As I got older, I realized what it really meant to be able to put the sash and crown on,” she stated. “It’s not always about you, and it’s so important to give back.

Policy

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sences, the school will notify the Yankton County State’s Attorney’s Office regarding additional truancy concerns. After 20 absences, the school will request prosecution of the parents due to truancy.

Middle school principal Todd Dvoracek says having the strict written policy in place has strengthened the cooperation of the school and the parents.

“Our attendance numbers at the middle school have ... dramatically gone up,” he said. “We are seeing everyone work together. Having no questions about what is expected is a good thing, and we explained to parents and students what those expectations were the first week of school.”

In addition, Dvoracek said the tardiness issues in the school have reduced drastically.

“I can’t say enough for how much the tardies have gone down,” he said. “We will give a student two free passes, so to speak, and then they are penalized. We are not going to penalize a student if they are late because of slippery roads, for example. But they do need to be here on time, ready to go, when the bell rings.”

Saying kids can’t learn if they aren’t in school, the high numbers being seen last year — in some cases, up to 30 missed days of classes — were troubling district officials.

“The people involved in the entire process have done a fabulous job of writing this policy,” Dvoracek said. “It is improving and helping the kids. The thing is, if kids are sick, we don’t want them in school, but to pull them out to go shopping or because they overslept is just not acceptable. The kids need to be here to learn.”

Johnke said that the involvement from the community has been vital to the success of the policy, as well.

“With the commitment of local law enforcement, the state’s attorney and the judges of the area, we know that, if a situation arises where there is a need to pursue legal action, they will support us,” she added.

Plea

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idence before it veered into an apartment building. The vehicle’s engine was running when police arrived, and Knoll was found inside the vehicle.

The plea deal announced Thursday came after a psychiatric evaluation conducted by Dr. David Bean found that Hines was capable of understanding the wrongfulness of his actions April 9 and the subsequent charge filed against him.

The case had been on hold for months as the parties involved awaited the conclusive findings of the evaluation, which was conducted Dec. 7.

Hines waived his right to a preliminary hearing Thursday.

Defense attorney Dan Fox requested that the sentencing hearing be scheduled at least 90 days away to allow him time to prepare. Acknowledging that the family would like to get the process complete as soon as possible, Yankton County deputy state’s attorney Erich Johnke ultimately conceded that the request was reasonable and did not object.

Eng scheduled the sentencing for 9 a.m. June 7.

He said the psychiatric evaluation would not be made a part of the public court file and also ordered a pre-sentencing investigation.

Hines remains in jail on bond.

That’s when I really decided I was going to push myself to fulfill that dream of becoming Miss South Dakota USA. For me, I think the game changer was a higher confidence level and believing in myself. I didn’t really do anything different. I just believed I could do it.”

Neisen will now compete in the Miss USA 2012 pageant June 3 at the Planet Hollywood Theater in Las Vegas. It will air live on NBC.

In preparation, she has been working on her confidence level.

“I’m competing against 50 other beautiful, strong and talented women,” Neisen said. “I need to make sure that I can be a contender. That involves eating right, exercising, working on my communication skills and making

sure that I’m prepared mentally to have a good time and compete for the title.”

She hopes to rank in the top 15, something a Miss South Dakota USA has not done since 1974.

“We’re really working against the odds, so we need South Dakota to rally and support our state,” Neisen said, pointing out that can be done by voting for her as the People’s Choice winner.

In the meantime, Neisen is enjoying the opportunity to support causes like FocusDriven, which advocates for cell phone-free driving, and the Special Olympics.

“I think the best way to show people is to practice what you preach,” she stated. “Be a good example. That’s one of my fa-

vorite things about getting to wear the sash and crown. I get to be an example.”

Anywhere from 60-85 athletes participate in each of Yankton’s Special Olympics offerings, which includes basketball, softball and bowling.

In fact, the Special Olympics state basketball tournament will take place in Yankton this weekend.

Clayton said she hopes this year’s polar plunge is the biggest yet.

“This is the sole fundraiser we do locally, and the proceeds from that go to purchase sports equipment, uniforms, transportation, lodging and food for athletes as we travel to competitions,” she said.

The Rhineland, featuring Danny Luebke and Yankton native Rebecca Culhane, will provide entertainment at this year’s polar plunge.

A new feature of the event this year will be “Toss Your Boss.” For the five open slots available in the category, employees must raise a minimum of \$500 to get their (willing) boss take the plunge. The boss can get out of it by matching the funds raised by the employees.

For more information on the rules, prizes and plans for the Yankton polar plunge, visit <http://www.sosdyankton.org>. Information can also be obtained by calling Clayton at (605) 661-0524, or Duke at (605) 660-0574.

Man Gets 3-5 Years For Beating Boy, 2

COLUMBUS, Neb. (AP) — A judge has rejected a probation recommendation and sentenced a Columbus man to three to five years in prison for beating a 2-year-old boy.

Adam Reynoldson had pleaded no contest to a lesser child abuse charge after making a deal with prosecutors. That deal included Reynoldson’s testimony against a jail cellmate accused of child molestation. The cellmate confessed before trial.

The *Columbus Telegram* reports the judge told the 26-year-old Reynoldson at sentencing last week that he wasn’t a “fit and proper” candidate for probation.

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