

S.D. Woman Pleads Guilty To Manslaughter

PIERRE (AP) — A South Dakota woman has pleaded guilty to first degree manslaughter in the May 2010 shooting death of her husband.

Connie Hirsch, of Blunt, entered the plea Friday afternoon in Hughes County Circuit Court. A charge of first degree murder was dropped in exchange for the plea.

The 49-year-old Hirsch is accused of killing 65-year-old Jerold Hirsch at a home east of Pierre where Connie Hirsch was working.

Defense attorney Brad Schreiber told a judge Friday that Connie Hirsch felt threatened by her husband and took out a handgun in an effort to get him to leave. The attorney said she became startled when Jerold Hirsch made a sudden move and the gun went off.

KCCR radio reports that the plea deal calls for a maximum 20-year sentence.

Man Acquitted In Deadly Shooting In Omaha

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A Douglas County jury has found an Omaha man not guilty of first-degree murder and use of a weapon to commit a felony in the death of his daughter's abusive ex-boyfriend.

A jury on Friday acquitted 41-year-old Sidney Andersen in the death of 25-year-old Randall Grimm. He was shot to death outside a grocery store in February 2011.

Defense attorneys say Andersen's daughter had been beaten up by Grimm prior to the shooting and Andersen was protecting his family and acted in self-defense.

Prosecutors say Andersen took matters into his own hands and crossed the line from protective father to killer.

5 Students Hurt In School Bus-Semi Accident

BOWDLE (AP) — Five South Dakota children suffered what authorities say were minor injuries when the school bus they were in collided with a semitrailer at a rural Edmunds County intersection.

The students were treated at hospitals in Bowdle and Aberdeen after the crash Thursday afternoon 12 miles north of Bowdle. Highway Patrol spokesman Terry Woster says all but one were treated and released. The fifth was kept overnight but was doing fine. The nature of their injuries wasn't clear.

The students all are from Hosmer. They range in age from 7-16.

Woster says the Eureka School District bus had a stop sign and the semi did not. The bus came to rest on the roadway but the semi rolled in the ditch. Neither driver was hurt. No citations were immediately issued.

S.D. Biologist Fired After Mountain Lion Kill

RAPID CITY (AP) — The South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks Department has fired a biologist who waited almost a day to report a mountain lion kill that would have ended the hunting season.

The lion shot by Lowell Schmitz of Rapid City on Feb. 29 would have been the 70th of the season had he checked it in that day, prompting an automatic season closure. Schmitz waited until the next day to report the kill, and three more lions were killed March 1.

Agency Secretary Jeff Vonk confirmed Schmitz's firing to the *Rapid City Journal* but declined to elaborate.

Schmitz was criticized by lion advocates but did not violate regulations: hunters have a one-day reporting grace period. Schmitz has said he was delayed in reporting by parental duties and a migraine headache.

Natural Gas Caused Blast In Vacant House

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Authorities say a buildup of natural gas caused an explosion that blew out walls and knocked a vacant house off its foundation in an Omaha neighborhood.

The explosion happened about 6 a.m. Friday. No injuries were reported.

Officials say firefighters found a small fire near a broken gas line and put it out once the gas was shut off at the meter.

The damage left the house unstable and investigators haven't been able to determine the origin of the gas leak or what sparked the explosion.

Crews Battle Grass Fire In Rapid City Area

RAPID CITY (AP) — Authorities say crews are battling a grass fire in the Rapid City area and some residents should be prepared to leave if conditions worsen.

Law enforcement officials say firefighters are having difficulty containing the blaze at Hanson-Larsen Memorial Park because of the steep terrain, high winds, unseasonable heat and low humidity.

A helicopter was making water drops Friday afternoon.

Evacuations are not mandatory, but officials say residents on Harmony Heights Lane, Tranquil Trail, Silver Street and Morningside are welcome to leave if they want.

Man Indicted On 7 Sexual Contact Charges

BRANDON (AP) — A 66-year-old South Dakota man has been indicted on seven counts of sexual contact, following a four-month investigation.

Authorities say Ruben Padilla, of Brandon, was arrested last week after police received a Department of Social Services report.

Court documents show there were three male victims. The sexual contact allegedly started with one boy in 2005 when the victim was 12 years old, and continued until 2011.

KELO-TV reports that Padilla is expected in court next week.

Trial Slated In Nebraska-Kearney Pet Case

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A federal judge has scheduled a trial date for a housing discrimination lawsuit filed against the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Cheryl Zwart filed an order this week scheduling the trial for Jan. 22, 2013.

The lawsuit by the U.S. Justice Department alleges that the university unlawfully denied a student the chance to keep a therapy dog in her university-owned apartment to cope with depression and anxiety.

Federal authorities say university administrators violated the U.S. Fair Housing Act when they refused Brittany Hamilton's requests to keep a 4-pound miniature pinscher named Butch in the housing complex.

University policy bans pets other than fish from its housing, unless the student has a disability requiring a service animal or works on staff as a hall director.

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Sioux Falls

Suspended Student Back In School

BY KRISTI EATON
Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — Sioux Falls middle school student Nic Sutton's dream of one day earning a scholarship to play for a Division I college sports team seemed to be in jeopardy — all because of a nutritional supplement.

Sutton, a 15-year-old eighth-grader at Memorial Middle School, was punished last week after he gave another student an over-the-counter fish oil pill. Under the school's zero-tolerance policy on drugs, Sutton was suspended for 10 days and — more alarmingly, said his mother Brandi Lantgen-Sutton — cited for a drug infraction.

Lantgen-Sutton and her husband, Glendon Sutton, worried the drug classification would follow their son into high school and have lasting repercussions. Nic Sutton plays rugby, basketball and football.

"Our way of looking at it was, OK, here's a child whose dream of his is to go to a Division I school ... and he may have that chance to go to a D1 school. If he were up for a scholarship and

“Even if it is an over-the-counter drug, it may be a threat to another student. We certainly have our eyes out and want to protect every student while they are in the school building. Our policies are designed to do that.”

DEEANN KONRAD

say a board opens up a file from a child who did not have a (drug offense) versus my child who did have one, they're going to close mine," Lantgen-Sutton said. "That was our big deal."

The Sioux Falls School District apparently came to the same conclusion, reducing Nic Sutton's infraction to an insubordination offense on Tuesday, according to Lantgen-Sutton. Nic was allowed to return to school Thursday and agreed to undergo a drug prevention program

tailored to his situation.

Lantgen-Sutton said she supports the school's zero-tolerance policy and knows school administrators are just trying to do their job. Her issue, she said, was that her son never broke a law and the punishment didn't fit the crime.

"I'm with the zero-tolerance policy, so long as it's a drug. If my child goes to school and gives a cough drop to a friend, he can also get in trouble," Lantgen-Sutton said. "That was our big fuss with it all — this following our 15-year-old up through college over a vitamin."

DeeAnn Konrad, spokeswoman for the school district, said she could not comment about a specific case, but she did say that students are often offered a reduction in punishment if they meet guidelines and agree to conditions. Konrad said the zero-tolerance policy is meant to protect all students.

"Even if it is an over-the-counter drug, it may be a threat to another student. We certainly have our eyes out and want to protect every student while they are in the school building. Our policies are designed to do that," she said.

Neb. Settles Suit Over Snowplow Accident

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — A woman injured in a 2009 snowplow crash in Platte County would receive \$227,500 from the state of Nebraska under a settlement that would require legislative approval.

Jenny Ternus sued the state in July over injuries she suffered when a state-owned snowplow pulled into a highway intersection near Humphrey, where she lives, and struck her driver's-side door. The Department of Roads driver, Paul Hilmer, said later that he didn't see Ternus' car until the crash, records show.

Humphrey said in her lawsuit that her spine, arm and shoulder were injured, and sought reimbursement for nearly \$19,000 in lost wages, \$62,000 in medical bills, pain and suffering and the loss of her \$3,000 car, which was totaled.

Humphrey filed a claim with the Nebraska State Claims Board in October 2010, and filed a lawsuit in July because her case had not been resolved.

The claims board approved a \$227,500 settlement in January and forwarded it to the Legislature for final approval. Debate on the bill is expected to start next week.

Ternus' attorney, Eugene Schumacher, declined to comment.

Omaha Teen Whose Car Was Fired At Gets Probation

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A 17-year-old who was driving a vehicle that Omaha police officers shot at more than two dozen times has been given probation and ordered to undergo substance-abuse treatment.

The *Omaha World-Herald* reports the girl was sentenced earlier this week in Douglas County Juvenile Court.

The girl admitted to the judge that she possessed drugs on Dec. 20 when she was driving with two other girls.

N.D. High Court Urged To Reject Fighting Sioux Case

BISMARCK, N.D. (AP) — Attorneys for the North Dakota Legislature say the Supreme Court should allow a vote on whether the University of North Dakota keeps its Fighting Sioux nickname.

The Board of Higher Education

wants the Supreme Court to stop a public vote on the issue. The board says a law requiring UND to keep the nickname is unconstitutional.

Legislative lawyers filed arguments in the case Friday. They say the Supreme Court should not

agree to "short-circuit" an election.

The attorneys say the Fighting Sioux law is valid, and the board's power over North Dakota's colleges is limited.

The Supreme Court is hearing arguments in the case Thursday.

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