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‘Lost’ In Yankton

Menno Play Performance Set For MMC Tonight

BY DEREK BARTOS
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When Betsy Knodel searched last summer for a one-act play for Menno High School to perform this school year, one in particular caught her eye.

The play — “Nora’s Lost” — tells the story of a woman and her battle with Alzheimer’s disease. While Knodel, the play’s director, thought the idea was intriguing, she wasn’t quite sure it was a subject that could be tackled by high school students.

“(Assistant director Kay Smidt) and I didn’t know if the kids could do this,” Knodel said.

“We thought we should do another one, but the kids kept saying they wanted to do it.”

After countless hours of practice, the Menno students showed not only their director that they could perform the play well, but also the entire state. At last month’s South Dakota One-Act Play Festival in Brandon, Menno received a superior rating and earned six individual acting awards.

“We didn’t know if they had what it takes, but they rose to the challenge and made it so incredibly believable,” Knodel said. “We had people at the state competition that came out

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PHOTO: SDPB.ORG
The elderly Nora (Christina Herrboldt, left) watches as a younger Nora (Shelby Huber) recites a poem for her husband Gene (Tyrell Bertsch) in a scene from Menno High School’s performance of the one-act play Nora’s Lost.” The play, which touches on the issue of Alzheimer’s disease, will be presented tonight (Tuesday) at Mount Marty College’s Marian Auditorium. Proceeds from a free-will donation will be presented to the Eden Fund at the Avera Sister James Care Center.

School Sentinel Bill OK’d By House

Measure Is Now Sent To Governor For Signature

BY CHET BROKAW
Associated Press

PIERRE — The South Dakota Legislature gave final approval Monday to a plan that would allow school districts to arm teachers and other personnel to prevent attacks like December’s shooting at a grade school in Connecticut.

The state House voted 40-19 to accept the Senate version of the bill, which will become law if signed by Gov. Dennis Daugaard. The governor has said he likes the concept of the measure but would decide whether to sign it after he sees details of the final version.

The measure’s main sponsor, Rep. Scott Craig, R-Rapid City, said the Senate changes improved the bill by requiring that a school district must decide in a public meeting whether to arm teachers and others. Another Senate amendment will allow school district residents to push a school board’s decision to a public vote. Craig and other supporters said that while law officers are stationed in schools in some larger cities, many rural schools are far from any law enforcement agency. Those rural schools might want to train and arm teachers, other school personnel or volunteers who are retired law officers, they said.

Opponents argued that the House should reject the Senate version of the bill. They said they would prefer the House and Senate negotiate a compromise to halt the arming of school personnel and instead conduct a broader legislative study that could deal with other aspects of school safety.

Rep. Scott Parsley, D-Madison, said organizations representing school boards, administrators and teachers oppose the bill. Educators argue that arming teachers could make schools more dangerous, lead to accidental shootings and put guns in the hands of people not adequately trained to shoot in emergency situations.

“They do want more time to talk about this,” Parsley said of educators. But Craig said he’s received messages from a growing number of school board members and administrators who support the bill. Rural districts do not have the money to hire full-time law officers, so they are interested in arming teachers or volunteers, he said.

Under the bill, local law enforcement agencies would have to approve a school’s program. Teachers and others taking part in such a program would undergo training devised by the same state commission that oversees the training of law enforcement officers. Teachers could not be forced to carry guns.

How They Voted

Here is how area representatives voted on the a bill in the South Dakota House Monday that allows school districts to arm personnel:

DISTRICT 16

Jim Bolin (R)Excused
Patty Miller (R)Yes

DISTRICT 17

Nancy Rasmussen (R)Yes
Ray Ring (D)No

DISTRICT 18

Bernie Hunhoff (D)No
Mike Stevens (R)Yes

DISTRICT 19

Stace Nelson (R)Yes
Kyle Schoenfish (R)Yes



RANDY DOCKENDORF/P&D
Mount Marty College graduate Chol Atem fled the Sudan civil war in 1988 as a “Lost Boy” and has built a life for himself in Yankton. Now a U.S. citizen, he has reconnected with his African family and has pledged to help them rise out of the village’s hunger and poverty.

‘Lost Boy’ Works To Help Family And Village

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is the second of a two-part series on the local “Lost Boys” population.

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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As a “Lost Boy,” Chol Atem nearly died trying to escape the Sudan civil war in the 1980s.

“You had to cross rivers and worry about alligators or being drowned,” he said. “I was rescued from being drowned, and I finally met the man who saved my life.”

Atem, who believes he was 6 or 7 years old at the time, joined other Lost Boys who spent years wandering thousands of miles across Africa on foot.

“We had no supplies or other clothes,” he said. “Our main target was just to survive and stay alive.”

Now living in Yankton, Atem thought he would never again see his homeland. But after a quarter-century absence, he returned to the country last year and met the family he last saw as a young boy.

It was a profound experience that connected him to his lost childhood. “When I went back, I walked in the footprints of where I came,” he said.

However, he was disturbed to find his family’s re-

mote village lacking the basic necessities. He intends to return this year for an extended visit and to provide assistance to the village.

“As far as the water, they share a pond with the animals who urinate in it,” he said. “In America, we have a hot shower, but in my village they would drink the water with animal waste. What can I do? I would give anything for them to have running, clear water.”

The visit to the former war-torn nation — his home region has gained independence as South Sudan — reminded Atem of his good fortune in remaining alive as a Lost Boy. He was also hit by the vast changes in his life since immigrating to the United States.

After spending his childhood on the run and living in refugee camps, Atem relocated to Sioux Falls through Lutheran Social Services. He graduated from Mount Marty College in Yankton in 2009 and has remained in the community. He holds down two jobs and seeks to attend law school or graduate school.

Yankton has become home for Atem. It’s where he has made friends, created a new life and even become a U.S. citizen.

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SD Fight Commission Bill Headed To The Governor

PIERRE (AP) — A bill creating a state athletic commission to regulate boxing, kickboxing and mixed martial arts will be sent to South Dakota Gov. Dennis Daugaard.

The state Senate passed a House-amended version of the bill by a 27-5 margin on Monday.

Supporters say a commission is needed to oversee the sports because unregulated professional matches are often conducted without proper rules, referees, testing and

medical personnel.

The Legislature passed a similar law in 2009, but it expired last year because former Gov. Mike Rounds and Daugaard never appointed commissioners. Daugaard has said the previous measure was flawed because commissioners could have been personally liable if the body was sued.

Daugaard agreed to support the bill once it was changed to allow his office to appoint the commission’s five members.



A CHORUS, OF COURSE!

This Greek chorus gets into the musical magic of the program “Bebop with Aesop,” presented by fourth- and fifth-grade students from Yankton’s Stewart Elementary School Monday night at the YHS/Summit Activities Center theatre. The spring program presented several skits and musical numbers based on Aesop’s fables, which offered life lessons through fairy tales. To see or purchase images from this event, visit spotted.yankton.net. (Kelly Hertz/P&D)

Center Benefit Aims To Raise Funds And Awareness

BY ANDREW ATWAL
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The Center of Yankton is set to host its annual Wine and Dine event this weekend, which is their biggest fundraiser of the year and helps them provide many of its free community services.

The event will take place at 5:30 p.m. Saturday March 9, and will feature a social hour with wine tasting, a silent auction, hors d’oeuvres, live entertainment featuring the group Sweetwater, dessert and a live auction.

Tickets can be purchased at The Center, located at 900 Whiting Drive or by calling 665-4685.

“The event will feature some heavy hors d’oeuvres that will be sit down, service type, along with about 45 silent auction prizes to bid on,” said Christy Hauer, executive director of The Center. “All of the prizes we have were all generously donated. The really big items that are up for bid will be part of the live auction.”

Some of the prizes for the auction include a stay in the Black Hills for up to 12 people, artwork, Twins and Royals tickets, golf packages and gift certificates.

“This is our major fundraising event for the year, and all the money we raise will go to pay for the programs we offer and to help our Meals on Wheels program,” Hauer said. “This event is very important to the success of our facility.”

Volunteers for The Center deliver 70-90 meals each day to people who are shut in and can’t leave their homes. In addition, nearly 100 meals are provided at The Center daily for people that need the nutrition but wouldn’t normally get a wholesome

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