

Severe Storms Likely Today

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Visiting With More To Spend

SD Drawing Visitors With More Disposable Income

BY DIRK LAMMERS
Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — The typical visitor to South Dakota is not as budget conscious and is looking for a more high-end experience than those in years past, the state's tourism director said Wednesday.

Jim Hagen said half of South Dakota's visitors in 2006 were from households making \$50,000 or less. The department's current research shows that 75 percent of those households are now making more than \$50,000, he said.

"They have more disposable income," Hagen told reporters before a speech to the Sioux Falls Visitors

and Convention Bureau. "They're actually looking for a wide variety of experiences and (are) not really as budget conscious as they used to be."

Tourism pumps about \$2.65 billion into South Dakota's economy.

Although much of the state's tourism base is in western South Dakota, which includes Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse and Custer State Park, Sioux Falls fits in well with the demographic shift, Hagen said.

Attractions such as Falls Park and the Great Plains Zoo, and annual events such as Jazz Fest, Lifelight and Sculpture Walk, are filling visitors' need for arts and culture.

"I really feel like Sioux Falls is just on the cusp of

really just breaking out and being one of the more dynamic visitor attractions in the state," he said.

Tourism officials in their marketing are currently targeting people in Minnesota, North Dakota, the front range in Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, who can easily reach South Dakota by car.

Hagen said families are still taking vacations despite the slower economy and high gas prices, but they're choosing to stay closer to home.

The average price of a gallon of regular gas in South Dakota on Wednesday just over \$3.92, up more than 20 cents from a month ago and more than a dollar from the same time last year, according to AAA's



KELLY HERTZ/P&D
Signs in Yankton have prompted the question, 'Has the 63-3 Foundation chosen to oppose the opt-out?'

Signage Raising Opt-Out Questions

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Press & Dakotan series "Fact or Fiction," is our attempt to clarify the issues surrounding the Yankton School District opt-out. By checking with state and local authorities, as well as other resources, we hope to give you the best answers from as independent sources as possible.

If you have a question or concern about the opt-out that you want clarified, send the question to: Fact or Fiction, c/o Shauna Marlette, PO Box 56, Yankton, SD 57078; or e-mail the question to news@yankton.net. We will do our best to provide as much information as possible ahead of the May 24 vote.

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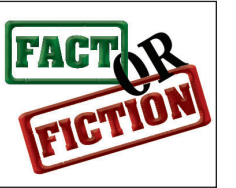
Question: Has the 63-3 Foundation placed signs around the community asking people to vote no on the opt-out?

Answer: According to Roger Smith, president of the 63-3 Foundation, the group has taken no formal action on the opt-out and has not placed any signs in the community.

"We have not met as a group in the two months since the opt-out has been raised," he said. "Traditionally, foundations are for the school, but I can't state for the group how we stand because we have not met. I can say, we have not spent one dime for anything as of today. Nor have we met as a group to even address the issue. We have not met since the first part of March. We haven't met, we haven't printed posters or signs or anything at this time."

Question: Will all the school personnel that were told they will lose their jobs at the end of this school year get their jobs back if the opt-out passes? Will all the sports programs at the middle school stay if the opt-out passes?

Answer: According to Yankton School District Superintendent Dr. Joseph Gertsema, even if the opt-out passes, not all staff positions eliminated will be restaffed.



Mississippi Flooding Fuels Big Gas Hikes

Prices Jump More Than A Quarter Overnight In Places

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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Rising gas prices — which soared past \$4 per gallon at some Yankton locations Wednesday — may be tied to fears that Mississippi River flooding will disrupt refineries, an industry observer said Wednesday.

Some Yankton gas stations hiked prices more than 25 cents a gallon overnight, according to reports. Other stations remain hovering just below the \$4 mark.

AAA spokesman Mark Madeja said crude oil has fallen below \$100 a barrel, which is more in line with the market. However, concerns about United States refineries may create an upward pressure on prices, he said.

"The refineries are located along areas where flooding has occurred in the Mississippi River Valley," he said. "About 20 percent of our refining capacity is represented by seven different refineries that could be in trouble."

The refineries themselves have not suffered any extensive damage,

Madeja said.

"I haven't heard of any refineries that are in danger," he said. "There are more infrastructure problems with getting in to the refineries and getting back out."

The lower crude oil prices, if sustained, will hopefully result in a dime drop in gas prices, Madeja said. However, the refinery concerns are creating a disconnect in the market, he said.

"That might be one of those cases where crude oil in retreat doesn't mirror what gasoline prices do at the pump," he said. "That would probably be a legitimate and understandable reason for a bump in prices."

According to Bloomberg News, gasoline futures rose 3.1 percent to \$3.3797 a gallon, adding to a 6.1 percent gain Tuesday, the biggest since July 2009.

Bloomberg News also reported that Valero Energy Company was forced to reduce its Memphis refinery operations to between 80 percent and 85 percent of capacity

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KELLY HERTZ/P&D
It's a sign of the times, as recent falling gas prices abruptly give way to soaring prices at the pump. Some Yankton locations raised prices 25 cents overnight, sending prices sailing past \$4 a gallon.

Most City-Wide Clean-up Categories Down In 2011

BY NATHAN JOHNSON
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Judging from the results of the Yankton city-wide clean-up last month, local residents were some busy beavers this year.

The amount of wood picked up by city crews during the April event jumped 223 percent from 2010 to 398 tons.

"The campaign to have trees properly trimmed in the city this year could have resulted in an increase in that category," Public Services Director Kevin Kuhl said. "We appreciate people who have taken the time to trim their trees. Personnel from other cities really compliment us on how nicely trimmed our trees are here. For people who have to deal with such things, it is noticeable." However, in every other category,

the annual clean-up showed decreases.

"(It was) a little bit down from last year in terms of total tonnage," City Manager Doug Russell said. "There just wasn't as much stuff out."

The volume of garbage collected for the landfill was 225 tons, down 5 percent from 2010. To give some perspective, however, the 2010 figure of 237 tons was up 38 percent over 2009. Concrete dropped from 14 tons to

six tons, and the amount of metal collected fell from 10 tons in 2010 to none this year.

"I think the price of scrap metal came into play," Kuhl said. "Quite a bit of metal was taken directly to scrap metal businesses."

The total cost of the clean-up was down from \$95,500 in 2010 to \$78,800

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RANDY DOCKENDORF/P&D
Drew Lawrence, one of the Yankton teachers released because of budget cuts, considers himself fortunate to find another job quickly with the Bon Homme school district. He is shown at Riverside Park coaching the Yankton club baseball team.

Laid-Off Yankton Teacher Finds A New Home

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF
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TYNDALL — Drew Lawrence could have gotten bitter or discouraged after losing his job with the Yankton School District because of budget cuts.

Instead, he got an offer for a new position — within two school days.

Lawrence has been hired by the neighboring Bon Homme school district for the 2011-12 school term. He will teach special education for grades K-5 at the Tyndall attendance center.

The Bon Homme school board officially approved Lawrence's contract at Monday night's meeting, according to board president Ben Hellmann.

Lawrence currently teaches special education at Yankton Middle School. The second-year instructor re-

ceived a notice of non-renewal of his contract, one of about two dozen Yankton teachers laid off as a budget-cutting move.

"I'm fortunate to get another job. I'm blessed," he said. "I want to emphasize that I'm the exception. I'm very lucky that I got a job so quickly. None of my colleagues in the same situation have found anything yet."

While not happy about receiving his notice of non-renewal, Lawrence said he doesn't harbor ill feelings toward the Yankton district.

"I'm not bitter toward the administration. It wasn't easy for them to tell people (who lost their jobs)," he said. "I wasn't feeling sorry for myself or asking why this happened to me."

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DREW LAWRENCE

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