

Ex-Nanny Gets Prison In Baby's Death

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A former nanny convicted of child abuse in the death of a 4-month-old baby in Omaha has been sentenced to 70 years to life in prison.

Douglas County District Judge Mark Ashford issued the sentence Monday for 25-year-old Sarah Cullen. She will be eligible for parole after she serves 35 years.

A jury in March convicted Cullen of intentional child abuse resulting in death. She was accused of causing injuries in late February 2013 that led to the death of Cash Bell.

Investigators say Cullen gave different accounts of how the baby was injured.

Bond Set For Man Charged With Rape

ABERDEEN (AP) — A judge has set a \$1 million bond for a northeast South Dakota man charged with rape and other related counts.

The *Aberdeen American News* reports that 55-year-old Thomas Kline faces 16 felony counts stemming from alleged incidents that date back to 2006.

Court records show the crimes involved a single victim.

The charges against the Columbia man include rape of a child, sexual contact of a child under the age of 16 and aggravated kidnapping. The latter charge carries a mandatory sentence of life in prison.

It is unclear whether Kline has legal representation. He is scheduled to appear in court Wednesday.

Student Accused Of Hacking Computers

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Police say a 17-year-old student hacked the computer system of Sioux Falls Catholic schools.

Sam Clemens with the Sioux Falls Police Department says the student is in custody and has been charged with felony intentional damage to property.

Officials with the Catholic schools have said that phone, email and Internet services were shut down Thursday at the O'Gorman junior and senior high schools and at the six Catholic elementary schools in Sioux Falls.

Clemens says the school had to pay about \$1,000 to get the system restored.

Trial Is Delayed For Pierre Teen

PIERRE (AP) — Trial has been delayed for a Pierre teenager charged in adult court with killing another teen.

Judge John Brown on Monday granted a continuance requested by the attorneys for 17-year-old Braiden McCahren. The teen has two new defense attorneys handling his case because his two former attorneys might be called to testify as witnesses.

McCahren has pleaded not guilty to first-degree murder in the December 2012 shooting death of 16-year-old Dalton Williams. McCahren was 16 at the time of the shooting that happened in his home.

His two-week trial was to begin June 2 in Winner. Brown didn't immediately set a new date but said a status hearing likely will be held in early June.

A motions hearing scheduled for Monday was postponed.

Well Continues Leaking Oil After Spill

WILLISTON, N.D. (AP) — An oil well near the town of Tioga continued to leak oil, gas and fracking fluid on Monday, days after authorities learned about the problem, a local official said.

Williams County emergency coordinator Mike Hallesy said he was notified Friday evening of the spill in the western North Dakota's oil patch and that the leak hadn't stopped.

The Department of Mineral Resources said the incident occurred at the Ron Burgundy 3-23-14H well, around eight miles northwest of Tioga. The well is owned by Denver-based Emerald Oil.

Hallesy said that the site's wellhead failed during hydraulic fracturing, the process of a pressurized mix of water, sand and chemicals into a well to fracture rocks and promote the flow of oil and gas.

Alison Ritter, a public information officer with the Department of Mineral Resources, said the well is protected by a confidentiality agreement. As a result, she said, her office could disclose only the name of the well, its general location, its owner and that a spill had occurred. Information about confidential wells is withheld from the public for up to six months.

Hallesy said that a reading taken 10 feet from the wellhead showed hydrogen sulfide levels of 20 parts per million. Hydrogen sulfide at levels of 100 parts per million can be life-threatening, he said.

Reptile Gardens Hits A World Record

RAPID CITY (AP) — The Reptile Gardens tourist attraction in Rapid City has slithered its way into the record books.

The facility, with more than 200 species of reptiles from around the world, is listed in the latest edition of the Guinness World Records book as home to the world's largest collection of reptiles.

"I was shocked but absolutely thrilled," Gardens spokesman Johnny Brockelsby, who sought the Guinness listing, told the *Rapid City Journal*. "We have always claimed we were the world's largest, but everybody claims they are the biggest this or the biggest that. But when the new book came out naming us the largest reptile collection in the world, it immediately gave us credibility."

Brockelsby's father, Earl, started Reptile Gardens 77 years ago with a sack of rattlesnakes. It now has a variety of reptiles from across the world, including a salt water crocodile from Australia and a Komodo dragon from Indonesia.

The attraction on U.S. Highway 16 south of Rapid City had to beat out zoos in Dallas, San Diego, St. Louis and Moscow to capture the Guinness title. Brockelsby told the *Capital Journal* that keeping the record will be a priority.

"We have to be vigilant to maintain the largest collection in the world," he said. "We plan to continue to strive to be not only the biggest but also the best reptile park anywhere in the world."

Free SD Parks, Fishing Weekend Slated

PIERRE (AP) — It's a sure sign that summer's getting close — free admission to South Dakota parks and fishing areas.

The Department of Game, Fish and Parks says its annual open house is next weekend, May 17-19.

Anglers can fish without a license anywhere in the state, and entrance fees are waived for all visitors to South Dakota's state parks and recreation areas. Camping fees and fishing regulations and limits still apply.

Winter Wheat Crop Forecast For 88% Jump

SIoux FALLS (AP) — South Dakota's 2014 winter wheat crop is forecast to be up 88 percent from last year.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is forecasting the crop based on May 1 conditions to be 49.1 million bushels. Average yield is forecast at 45 bushels per acre, up 6 bushels from last year.

Acres to be harvested for grain is estimated at 1.09 million acres, up 63 percent from last year. That would be 91 percent of planted acres.

May 1 hay stocks, at 1.48 million tons, are up 74 percent compared to one year ago.

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Storm Cleanup Begins

BY JOSH FUNK
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Residents were cleaning up debris and assessing damage Monday after severe thunderstorms and tornadoes swept through eastern Nebraska over the weekend, ripping roofs off homes and toppling buildings but causing no major injuries.

Sunday's hail, heavy rain and tornadoes caused damage across much of the region, roughly along a line from the Kansas border through Hastings and Omaha. The towns of Sutton, Cordova and Beaver Crossing were especially hard hit, with streets scattered with tree limbs and building debris and a number of homes severely damaged.

"Thank God we didn't have anybody seriously hurt," Sutton Fire Chief Chris Moore said. "It was a heck of a mess."

Most of Sutton's downtown buildings, including city hall, sustained damage, including several holes that debris punched in the back of several, but they were all still standing. Moore said structural experts were evaluating the buildings Monday to make sure they were safe to enter.

At least three Sutton homes lost their roofs and several others were damaged.

Outside of town, several grain bins, farm buildings and center-pivot irrigation systems were damaged by the strong winds.

Gov. Dave Heineman visited Sutton and several other communities Monday morning to assess the storm damage. Heineman said he expects to issue a state disaster declaration for the damaged areas later on Monday.

"Nebraska emergency management officials are actively coordinating needs assessments with local emergency workers," Heineman said. "Even when disaster strikes, I see friends and neighbors caring for and helping each other. This is Nebraska at its best."

Heineman said the damage was extensive in Cordova and Beaver Crossing, where the storms ripped the roofs off a couple homes and tore a wall off of another. Temporary shelters also have been set up in several hard-hit communities.

Utility officials estimate that Sutton will be without power for at least two days because of downed power lines.

Thousands of people across eastern Nebraska lost power Sunday after strong winds knocked down trees and power lines. Omaha Public Power District said about 6,000 of its customers in southeast Nebraska remained without power around 7 a.m. Monday.

The storms also dumped significant amounts of rain and large hail as they moved across the state. Parts of York County got 5 inches or more of rain on Sunday, while Lincoln Airport received nearly an inch and a half of rain in an hour, according to the National Weather Service. Meteorologist Mike Moritz said Omaha's Florence neighborhood also got an inch in an hour.

The weather service reported hail as large as 2-inches in diameter east and southeast of Hastings.

The strongest part of the storms missed Lincoln, though the capital city still experienced some wind damage. Several Omaha neighborhoods were damaged Sunday evening as the storm was still generating winds of more than 70 mph.

The extent of the damage across Nebraska should become clearer by Monday afternoon once officials are able to visit damaged areas, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency spokeswoman Jodie Fawl said.

Numerous tornadoes were reported but most were concealed by rain, making them hard to see. The National Weather Service was following up on the reports Monday.

SD Agency: Jackley Acted Properly With Benda Records

PIERRE (AP) — South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley was correct in withholding investigative records into the death of a former state economic development director, a state administrative board has ruled.

Richard Benda was found dead in October in a grove of trees near Lake Andes with a fatal shotgun wound. His death was ruled a suicide.

Jackley in November released the forensic pathologist's findings and a summary of his office's investigation.

He agreed to allow Aberdeen American News reporter Bob Mercer, whose work appears in several other South Dakota newspapers, and one other journalist to review a partially redacted version of the file, but only if a member of Benda's immediate family granted written permission. None of Benda's immediate family members gave permission.

Mercer appealed Jackley's decision to the Office of Hearing Examiners, which ruled that state statutes preclude disclosure of the death investigation as developed or received by law enforcement agencies. The decision was released Monday.

"I have worked to inform the public of the cause and manner of the tragic death of Richard Benda, as well as our uncovering of



Jackley

financial misconduct," Jackley said in a statement. "I am pleased that the Hearing Examiner has recognized both the protections provided by our laws and a family's privacy."

Mercer could not immediately be reached for comment.

The office says its decisions can be appealed to the circuit court within 30 days.

After leaving his state job, Benda became a loan monitor for SDR Inc., which recruited foreign investors for the failed Northern Beef Packers plant in Aberdeen and other projects in the state.

A state investigation found that \$550,000 of a \$1 million state grant given to Northern Beef for construction and equipment costs was improperly diverted to SDR Inc. to pay EB-5 immigration loan monitoring fees.

Northern Beef opened on a limited basis in 2012 after years of delays, but the company filed for bankruptcy protection in July because it lacked money to buy cattle for slaughter. White Oak Global Advisors bought the plant at auction with a winning \$44.3 million credit-and-cash bid.

ACLU Protests Distribution Of Bibles At South Dakota School

MILLER (AP) — The American Civil Liberties Union is urging a central South Dakota school district to reverse its decision to allow the distribution of Bibles to fifth-graders.

The South Dakota chapter of the organization said Monday it wrote to the Miller School District detailing how U.S. courts have prohibited Bible distributions in public schools under a variety of circumstances.

"Under the Constitution schools cannot intentionally, or unintentionally, advance religion or become too en-

tangled with religious groups," said a copy of the letter provided to the media. "The courts have repeatedly said that schools must also avoid favoring or appearing to favor a religious view, and they may not create any situation in which students feel coerced to participate in religion."

Board president David Fremark told The Associated Press Monday that he hadn't received the letter. He declined to comment.

The board recently voted to allow the group Gideons International to distribute

pocket-size New Testaments to fifth-graders. The ACLU has previously protested similar efforts across the country.

The organization said in its letter that schools that allow the distributions venture "onto shaky constitutional ground" and open themselves up to legal challenges.

Aside from reversing the Bible distribution decision, the ACLU is also asking the board to craft policies on the distribution of non-school materials that meet legal standards.

Nebraska Voting To Be Monitored

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — The U.S. Justice Department says it will monitor Nebraska's primary election at sites in Colfax and Douglas counties.

The department announced Monday it would monitor voting in the eastern Nebraska counties to ensure compliance with the Voting Rights Act and other federal

voting rights statutes. The Voting Rights Act prohibits discrimination in voting based on race, color or membership in a minority language group.

Nebraska voters will go to the polls Tuesday to nominate candidates for offices including U.S. Senate, House and governor.

The Justice Department sends federal observers to monitor election across the country every year.

To report harassment of voters, people can call the Voting Section of the Civil Rights Division at 1-800-253-3931.

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