



Partly Cloudy

9 a.m.: **58** | 3 p.m.: **73** | DETAILS: PAGE 2



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# Robert Executed

Convicted Murderer Is First Execution In 5 Years

By The Associated Press

SIOUX FALLS — Convicted murderer Eric Robert was put to death in Sioux Falls Monday night, becoming the state's first execution in five years and only the second in more than half a century.

Rober, 50, pleaded guilty in the April 12, 2011, slaying of a prison guard during a failed escape attempt and asked to be put to death, saying he would kill again.

He died by lethal injection at 10 p.m. at the State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

South Dakota's last execution took place in 2007, and that was the first in the state for 60 years.

Only four inmates are now on death row, including Donald Moeller, 60, who is expected to be executed later this month after he asked for appeals on his behalf to be dropped.



Robert

"You have few people on death row, few executions, and then you have this coincidence of cases coming all at once," Richard Dieter, executive director of the nonprofit Death Penalty Information Center, said. "When people waive appeals, their cases start to move more quickly."

Robert was serving an 80-year sentence for a kidnapping conviction when he and Rodney Berget, 50, tried to escape from a Sioux Falls prison. Authorities say the two hit Ronald Johnson with a pipe and covered his mouth with plastic wrap.



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Sister Eileen O'Connor of Sacred Heart Monastery listens prayerfully to a speaker during a vigil held on the grounds of the Yankton County Government Center Monday night to note South Dakota's execution of convicted murderer Eric Robert.

## Prayers Said For Robert At Vigil

BY NATHAN JOHNSON AND RANDY DOCKENDORF

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In the final hour of condemned inmate Eric Robert's life, about two dozen people held a vigil Monday night at the Yankton County Government Center.

The event — along with similar ones in Rapid City, Pierre, Sioux Falls and Vermillion — drew attention to the moral implications of South Dakota's death penalty.

Robert's execution took place at the state penitentiary in Sioux Falls. Robert was convicted of the April 12, 2011, killing of prison guard Ronald Johnson.

"Gov. Mike Rounds wouldn't commute the sentence (of Elijah Page in 2007), and now Gov. Dennis Daugaard is doing the same thing," said event organizer Father Leonard Kayser, a retired priest and member of the South Dakota Peace and Justice Center. "They say it's South Dakota law, and they will follow it. They take no responsibility for their privilege of commuting these sentences. They speak for many people in the state, certainly."

Along with the South Dakota Peace and Justice Center, the vigil was organized by Pax Christi and South Dakotans for Alternatives to the Death Penalty.

Kayser said the three organizations hope to get a bill introduced in the Legislature next year that would abolish South Dakota's

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## County Issues Aired In Forums



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

During a forum at Mount Marty College Monday night, Yankton County Commission candidates, from left, James Van Osdel, Donna Freng and Mark Johnson responded to questions from the audience. They are vying for two four-year terms on the commission in the Nov. 6 election.

Decision 2012

### Coroner Candidates Discuss Training Needs

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

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The two candidates for the county coroner position believe more training is needed for deputy coroners.

Melisa Smith, a Democrat who has been the coroner for one four-year term, is seeking re-election against Arica Nickles, a Republican who currently serves as a deputy coroner under Smith.

When asked during Monday's forum what changes should be made in the coroner's office, Nickles said more training is needed.

"Of the four deputy coroners, two of them don't feel

they have been adequately trained (in certain areas)," she stated. "I think it's very important that all deputy coroners are on the same page, so that when a call does come in they can take that call."

Nickles, who is a registered nurse studying to be a nurse practitioner, also said there are no guidelines or standards to follow.

"When we go out on a call, we each work it however we want," she stated. "There is no flow sheet or guidelines that we go through to make sure we hit on everything with every death. I think there needs to be some standardiza-

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### County Commission Candidates Discuss Sale Of Highway Shop

BY NATHAN JOHNSON

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When it comes to the former Yankton County Highway Department maintenance shop, all three candidates for the County Commission agree an attempt should be made to sell the structure.

Those vying for the two open four-year seats on the Yankton County Commission made their remarks Monday night during a candidate forum held at Mount Marty College. Also featured during the event were the two candidates for the county coroner position, as well as a discussion of the pros and cons of various ballot issues.

The general election is Nov. 6.

The forum was sponsored by the Press & Dakotan, KYNT, KVTX, WNAX, The Yankton County Observer and the Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce.

The three candidates for the commission include Donna Freng, an independent who has served on the commission for six years; Mark Johnson, a Republican who has eight years of experience on the commission; and James Van



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## Health Forum Assists Area Women

BY ANDREW ATWAL

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For many area women, Monday's annual Women's Health Forum in Yankton was a chance to reflect and grow from listening to other people share their stories and getting valuable health tips as well.

The forum was aimed at cancer issues and helped raise money for the All Women Count program, which helps women in South Dakota cover the cost of breast and cervical cancer screenings. Women



it has paid for more than 80,000 Pap tests, clinical breast exams and mammograms and diagnosing more than 200 women with breast cancer

who meet the age (30-64) and income guidelines (200 percent federal poverty guidelines) are eligible under the All Women Count program.

Since the program started screenings in 1997, who meet the age (30-64) and income guidelines (200 percent federal poverty guidelines) are eligible under the All Women Count program.

and 27 with cervical cancer.

This year the featured speakers were Amy Miner, a YHS teacher and breast cancer survivor and Dr. Jill Sternquist, who works at Yankton Medical Clinic as an OBGYN.

"Many of you in the room today have been my go-to girls for things," Miner said. "I just passed my eight-year mark of breast cancer survivorship, which is pretty exciting."

Miner, who now works as a



Amy Miner speaks at Monday's Women's Health Forum in Yankton. Miner, who is a breast cancer survivor, spoke about the obstacles that she had to overcome since being diagnosed and how having breast cancer changed her life. (Kelly Hertz/P&D)

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF

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PARKER — The weekend death of a deer hunter southwest of Hurley shows the need for taking greater safety measures, according to Turner County Sheriff Byron Nogelmeier.

Hurley native Lorin Larsen died Saturday from injuries sustained when he fell out of a tree stand while bow hunting, Nogelmeier said. The sheriff said his office responded to the accident, which occurred during the morning in the Turkey Ridge area.

The 49-year-old Larsen was transported by helicopter from the scene and died en route to a Sioux Falls hospital, Nogelmeier said. The incident is considered an accident, and no autopsy was conducted, the sheriff added.

"It's unfortunate, but there is always the danger aspect (of outdoors activities)," Nogelmeier said of the hunter's death. "Things like ice fishing can also be dangerous. People just don't realize it."

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