

Majority In State Give Daugaard High Marks

RAPID CITY (AP) — A new poll finds that the majority of South Dakotans approve of Gov. Dennis Daugaard's performance.

The *Rapid City Journal* reports that 60 percent of South Dakota voters approve of the Republican governor's job performance. Two-thirds of all Republicans said they supported the job Daugaard was doing as governor while 53 percent of independents and 54 percent of Democrats approved of his performance.

This support for the first-term governor comes in spite of worries about the future. Thirty-one percent of voters say the state is headed in the wrong direction while 27 percent believe the state is going in the right direction.

Sioux Falls-based Nielson Brothers Polling interviewed 1,031 South Dakota voters on Aug. 31, Sept. 1 and Sept. 2 for the study.

Police: Calif. Gang Members Sport Neb. Gear

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Authorities say gang members in northern California are sporting Nebraska football jerseys and other apparel to signify their involvement in the group.

Detective Steve Sanchez, a gang unit task force member in Tulare County, Calif., told the *Lincoln Journal Star* that members of the Nortenos street gang don't know anything about Cornhuskers football but that hasn't stopped them from wearing the gear. One of the symbols of the gang known for drugs and violence is the letter N.

As a result, some high schools have banned students from wearing Nebraska apparel.

Michael Stephens in Nebraska's athletic office says he's aware of the trend of gang members wearing sportswear but he didn't know Nebraska apparel was part of that.

Stephens says the university will monitor what's going on.

NU Regents Approve New Graduation Criteria

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Students at the University of Nebraska will soon be able to graduate with 120 credit hours.

Nebraska regents approved a change in the university's graduation requirements at their Friday meeting. It goes into effect next school year.

President J.B. Milliken says the new policy will help students graduate in four years and limit their education expenses.

Currently, some departments require 125 credit hours or more. Administrator Linda Pratt says departments will have to re-examine their requirements to accommodate the change.

There will be some exceptions to the new graduation requirement. The university says programs that require more credit hours for state certification or professional accreditation and those defined as five-year programs will be exempt.

Construction Of Hospital Ahead Of Schedule

BEATRICE, Neb. (AP) — Construction of a new hospital in Beatrice is running ahead of schedule and officials say the facility could open early.

Project manager Jim Young told the *Daily Sun* that the move into the new hospital is now set for Feb. 15 instead of in the spring. Patients will be moved that day and services will be offered.

Construction of the 136,000-square-foot hospital began in October 2009. Young says the hospital is now 70 percent complete and "substantial completion" should be achieved on Jan. 12.

Young credited the speed of the project, in part, to the construction companies.

The facility is expected to cost more than \$45 million. It will replace the existing hospital.

Lawyers Want S.D. Teen Tried As A Juvenile

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Defense lawyers for a 17-year-old boy charged with first-degree murder are trying to get the case transferred to juvenile court.

Dwight Dauson Ree is charged as an adult in the June 20 beating death of 20-year-old Geu Ayuel in Sioux Falls.

Ree and 21-year-old Jerome Douglas Ewing face alternate counts of first- and second-degree murder and first- and second-degree manslaughter.

A conviction for murder or first-degree manslaughter could bring a sentence of life in prison.

The *Argus Leader* reports that Ree's defense lawyers say the juvenile system's rehabilitation program would better serve public safety.

But prosecutors say the likelihood of rehabilitation is dim. They also noted his juvenile history includes violent offenses.

The court date for arguments about Ree's possible transfer back to juvenile court has not been set.

Sioux Falls Police Investigate More Fires

SIoux FALLS (AP) — Sioux Falls police are investigating another string of fires.

KELO-TV reports firefighters were called to a vehicle fire around 11:30 p.m. Saturday.

Firefighters were then called to two dumpster fires in the same area around 4:15 a.m. Sunday.

Police say all three fires are suspicious. No one was hurt.

These latest cases follow a series of fires earlier this month involving garages and dumpsters. Police have no suspects in any of the fires.

Aberdeen Man Faces Attempted Murder Charge

ABERDEEN (AP) — An Aberdeen man who authorities say used a cleaver during a fight faces an attempted murder charge.

The *Aberdeen American News* reports that 18-year-old Konacin B. Blackelk did not enter a plea during a hearing on Wednesday. Blackelk also faces charges of aggravated assault stemming from the altercation with another man at an Aberdeen home on Sept. 2. Authorities say the victim was taken to the hospital for a cut on his forehead and other injuries.

The next court day for Blackelk, who is in the Brown County Jail, is Monday.

Volunteers, Forest Service Open Closed Black Hills Trails

BY MARK VANGERPEN
 Black Hills Press

SPEARFISH — A cooperative project between volunteers and the Forest Service to assess and prepare closed single-track trails in the Black Hills has been a success, officials said.

Bill Hearne, who headed the project, along with a group of off-road enthusiasts, were given the green light from the Forest Service in May to ride a 13-mile section of closed single-track trails to assess what kind of work needed to be done in order to open them.

The group videoed the ride and marked it with GPS coordinates so the Forest Service could see exactly what work needed to be done, and where. Once the video was analyzed, volunteers and Forest Service officials hit the trails again to repair and sign them so they could be opened to the public.

"It was kind of a fun thing," Hearne said. "There was quite a bit of work to it. Most of it was marking work. We need to go back; there are some areas where the jackpines are pretty thick on about 600 yards of trails where we'll need to thin them out, but the trail is open."

Hearne said most of the Southern Hills portion of the ride is complete, with some work still being required in the Northern Hills. Tom Willems, of the Forest Service, said about 10 miles of trails have been opened so far, with another 10 or so projected to be open in about a month.

Hearne hopes the results of the ride and assessment are more far-reaching than just opening a few stretches of trails.

"The overall goal wasn't just to open those trails, but to create a process that any responsible group could follow to get that done," he said.

With the signage and markers posted, the trails are now clearly marked and should be easy to follow, Hearne said.

"It should make it very difficult to people to inadvertently get off the trail," he said. "If you're paying attention at all, it should be very obvious to people where they're supposed to be and where they're not supposed to be. We put a lot of work into it to make sure of that."

Hearne and Willems agreed that working through the process was a learning experience that will become more efficient in the future, as hopefully other groups step forward to help open more trails.

"We learned quite a bit in doing this," Hearne said. "There are some things that we could do that would provide (the Forest Service) with some information that's easier to use. It certainly wasn't as fast as I would have hoped, but we got it done."

"The good stuff was the willingness and the ability of some highly enthusiastic volunteers," Willems said. "Even though they're bikers, they're walking up a slope (to sign the trails)."

Willems said that one of the learning experiences for the Forest Service came in talking to the trail users and better identifying the recreational experience the average rider is looking for. Those riders include more than just motorists, but also include groups like horseback riders as well.

Though the ride accomplished the trail openings, there still is no official, formal process for opening trails. The ride, being the first of its kind, was largely experimental, intended to start organizing the process that will hopefully be solidified in the future. Willems said the Forest Service is already discussing options about establishing that process.

Hearne said a core group of volunteers and a lot of peripheral volunteers, combined with the efforts of Willems and the Forest Service, made the trail opening possible. He said some of the volunteers who were instrumental in opening the trails included Gary Schmidt, Bob King, Ted Erlewine and Ryan McFarland.

On their side, they've kind of learned how to do this a little faster and better too.

Now that the trail has been blazed, the process should be easier and efficient for volunteers who would like to open trails in the future.

The open trails aren't on the current Motor Vehicle Use Map issued by the Forest Service earlier in the year. They will be included on the new paper map when that is issued around the beginning of 2012. Willems said, though the newly-opened trails will be posted on the Forest Service's website as soon as work is complete.

74 Students Enroll In Neb. Pilot For Online High School

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Some 74 high school students have enrolled in the state's pilot program for online education through the University of Nebraska.

University President J.B. Milliken said Friday that students from 25 Nebraska high schools have signed up for math, science, language and other courses through the university's virtual school.

The Nebraska Virtual Scholars pilot program announced last month was to have space for 50 students, with the university footing the bill for the first year. Milliken said the university will accept all 74 applicants.

"I'm delighted that our offer to provide free online course enrollments drew such a strong response," Milliken said. "This demonstrates that our instincts were right — that there is a broad need across Nebraska, particularly in the rural areas of our state, for increased access to core, Advanced Placement and elective courses that position our young people to graduate from high school, earn a college degree and contribute to the knowledge economy."

In announcing the program last month, Education Commissioner Roger Breed said it will be especially beneficial for students in rural schools that have just one math teacher or can't find someone to teach Spanish, making for limited course offerings. It also will help students in urban areas who face barriers to education because online courses mean they can learn at their own pace and at a time convenient for them.

Most of the schools whose students will be participating in the pilot program are small and in rural parts of Nebraska.

Neb. Residents Gather On 10th Anniversary Of 9/11

NORFOLK, Neb. (AP) — Norfolk police and firefighters were among the many Nebraskans who gathered Sunday to remember the lives lost in the Sept. 11 attacks.

Gathered around their flagpole in Norfolk, firefighters rang one of the city's original fire bells in honor of the emergency responders who died in the attacks. It tolled in four sets of five rings, a pattern traditionally used by firefighters across the United States to honor their fallen comrades.

The bell rang at 8:59 a.m. CT, coinciding with the time the World Trade Center began to collapse 10 years ago.

Interim Fire Chief Scott Cordes told the *Norfolk Daily News* that the attacks continue to remind Americans how fragile life is.

Meanwhile, a service was held in Omaha to reflect on attacks. A 50-foot-by-30-foot U.S. flag was hoisted by the two fire trucks for the ceremony, which featured local firefighters and police officers as special guests. Donations were collected for military families.

"The women and the men who made the choice to work at ground zero live with the emotional and physical scars of that

choice each day," Omaha Mayor Jim Suttle told WOW-TV. "They offer us hope for future generations."

Anniversary events were planned elsewhere in Nebraska. An aircraft from Offutt Air Force Base was to fly over Omaha Sunday evening. In Buffalo County, officials sounded outdoor warning sirens at noon, part of a memorial effort by communities across the country.

In South Sioux City, residents gathered Saturday to honor those who died in the attacks and the military lives lost since then, including local resident Petty Officer 1st Class John Douangdara. The 26-year-old was killed Aug. 6 when a rocket-propelled grenade disabled a military transport helicopter in Afghanistan, killing 30 Americans and eight Afghans. Douangdara was a Naval Special Warfare member who handled a dog for Navy SEAL Team Six.

About 40 residents planted 50 trees at the site of a dog park in the works for the city. Douangdara's sister Chan Follen called it a fitting tribute to her brother.

"The dogs were so much a part of his life ... we will bring our dogs out here and we'll remember him," she told KTIV-TV.

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