



Bucks Win Opener • 7

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## Yankton Fire Dept. Sees Call Numbers Increase

BY NATHAN JOHNSON  
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With dry conditions persisting, the Yankton Fire Department has had close to double the calls it normally has by this time of year.

According to the department, 109 calls have required a full fire department response so far this year. That figure includes fires and accidents.

Last year at this time, that number was 63. It was 66 in 2010.

Although the number of building fires is slightly higher than normal, most of the increase is due to vegetation fires.

"With the drought situation, that number is up quite a bit, and we've still got four months to go," Deputy Fire Chief Larry Nickles said. "The last high number we had was in the fall of 1999 and the spring of 2000 when we were so dry. I believe we ran up more than 180 calls in that time period."

Cigarettes thrown out of vehicles have been the main cause of the fires, according to Nickles.

"We actually had a woman witness someone throwing a cigarette out of a window on a highway," he stated. "She was going to stop to check it, and before she could the ditch was burning and she had to call us."

If a cigarette starts a fire and the owner can be identified, that individual can be held liable for any damages.

"We're asking people to use common sense," Nickles said.

The second leading cause is accidental sparks from farm machinery in fields.

"Since before the Fourth of July, we haven't had any controlled burns get out of control," Nickles added. "People have been pretty good at watching that. We do get some complaints about neighbors burning out in the county. In those cases, we send a deputy out."

A burn ban with a few exceptions was instituted by the county

CALLS | PAGE 2

## TAKING A STEP BACK IN TIME



It's literally a different era with this mosasaur fossil unearthed last week near Santee, Neb. Local students received the opportunity Thursday to view the dig site and hear a paleontologist tell about the fossil.

PHOTO COURTESY SANTEE SCHOOLS

## Fossil Found In Knox Co.

BY RANDY DOCKENDORF  
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SANTEE, Neb. — The latest lesson for Santee, Neb., students has been 75 million years in the making.

The historic — or actually, prehistoric — moment came Thursday, when the students viewed the mosasaur fossil unearthed last week. The fossil was accidentally found a half-mile south of town during a Knox County, Neb., highway project.

Shane Tucker, a University of Nebraska paleontologist, found the 2- to 3-foot jaw and head. The fossil was carefully prepared for transport to a building in Santee. But first, Tucker invited the local students to visit the site for a unique educational opportunity.

Santee history teacher

Sheri Plumbtree said the invitation was extended to grades K-12. The students took advantage of the find, which occurred on the Santee Sioux Nation.

"(Tucker) talked to us about how old the bones were and what type they had found," she said. "It was a really good opportunity for our students to get out to see it. Not very many students get a chance to see a dig site to begin with, let alone one that's in your backyard."

The students enjoyed the connection between natural history and their culture, Plumbtree said.

"They thought it was pretty cool. It was right here on tribal land, and they let us walk right up to (the fossil) and pet it," she said. "(The fossil) was 75 million years old. It was something

that it could be safe for that many years, but it was pretty much all encased in mud."

Tucker couldn't be reached for comment Friday. However, Knox County highway superintendent Kevin Barta said he wasn't surprised the paleontologist reached out to the students.

"Shane is really into outreach," he said. "All the school kids came up, and he gave a very good demonstration. He supported the kids' interest in this."

Barta said only the jaw and head were found at the site. However, the skull showed signs of where it entered the vertebrae.

"I would describe it more as a snake or swimming eel, maybe a crocodile," he said. "It's an aggressive animal. I would estimate it was 18 feet long. It's the same (kind

of fossil) that they found when they built Niobrara State Park (to the west)."

In 1986, the largest known mosasaur fossil in Nebraska, measuring 33 feet long, was discovered in Niobrara State Park. The 80-million-year-old marine reptiles are commonly found in Cretaceous deposits along the Missouri River.

Barta said the fossil find holds special meaning for him in two different ways.

"I'm originally from Niobrara, so I'm from this area. And I graduated from Chadron State (Neb.) with a degree in geology, so I have a big interest in this," he said. "It's really exciting to come across something like this on a road project. I really enjoy geology, and Knox County has a lot of Pierre

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## YSD Student Enrollment Increases

Beginning Of School Year Count Up More Than 20 Students From Last Year; Official Count Held In Late September

BY ANDREW ATWAL  
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As of the end of August, enrollment at the Yankton School District (YSD) was up from where it was at both the beginning and end of the 2011-12 school year.

On Aug. 31, enrollment at YSD was 2,691 students. This was up from 2,665 in September 2011, and 2,632 in May 2012.

The official student count for state aid funding will come on the fourth Friday of September, and enrollment typically changes from the beginning of the school year until that date.

"We take the number of students we have in the district on the 4th Friday in September for the official count," YSD business manager Jason Bietz said. "The first day of school count always fluctuates from where it is on the fourth Friday."

YSD has been experiencing a decreasing student enrollment since the 1997-98 school year, when enrollment was at 3,341 students. Enrollment has declined nearly every year since then.

School districts across the state are allotted \$4,490.92 per student, a number that is subtracted by the local tax effort in the community. The end result is the amount of state aid a school gets to operate.

"It's a very complicated formula," Bietz said. "Every year, the per-student allocation number is at the center of discussion for the legislature when they discuss school funding."

The per student allotment increases annually by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), or 3 percent, whichever number is less. This year, the per student allocation amount was increased for FY 2013 by 2.3 percent.

In the mid-1990s, the formula for school aid was different from what it is today.

"The old system in the 1990s never had a per student allocation," Bietz said.

However, when Gov. Janklow sought office, he ran on the platform of reducing taxes across the



Bietz

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## Police Seek Information On Yankton Flag Burning

BY DEREK BARTOS  
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The Yankton Police Department is seeking information about the burning of a U.S. flag that occurred last week at 220 West Third Street.

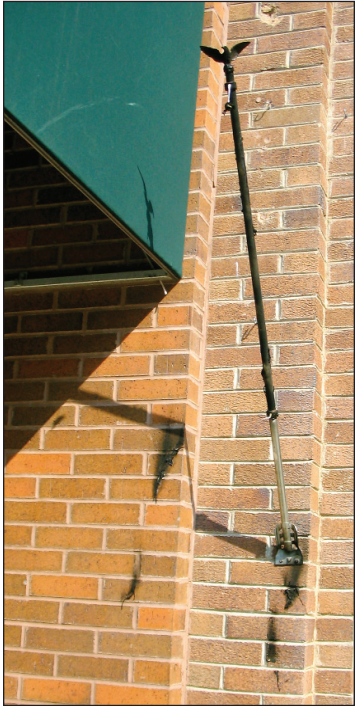
Police responded to a report at 9:18 a.m. on Aug. 31 that the flag hanging in front of the Edward Jones office had been completely burned during the previous night with accompanying damage to the flagpole.

"I was just shocked," said Edward Jones financial advisor Wayne Ibarolle, who called in the report. "I had no idea anybody would ever do that."

Ibarolle said he doesn't know the reason the flag was burned, but doesn't believe it was a sign of protest.

"I just can't figure out why someone would burn the American Flag, for a hoax, a prank or whatever," he said. "I just can't understand it."

Yankton Police Chief Brian Paulsen said the individual or individuals responsible could face a misdemeanor charge of vandalism or destruction of property, but there are currently no sus-



CATHY SUDBECK/P&D

Yankton police are seeking information on the burning of an American flag on its pole in the 200 block of W. Third St. last week. Some of the charred scars of the fire can still be seen on the wall in this photo.

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## KYB Names New Executive Director

BY DEREK BARTOS  
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You can see it driving by the Spirit of Dakota Fountain at Fourth and Broadway, or the trees planted along East Highway 50.

Strolling through Tripp Park? It's there, too.

The work of Keep Yankton Beautiful (KYB) brightens various sections of the city, and Amanda Johnson wants more people to know about it.

Johnson was recently named the new KYB executive director, and she said one of her primary goals with her new position is to get the word out about the organization, as many Yankton residents are unaware of the work KYB does.

"I think the people that don't know about us would be willing to support us if they knew what we stood for," said Johnson, who started the position last month.

In fact, Johnson herself was one of those people in the dark until recently.

"I'd see things like the fountain by Burger King and say, 'Oh wow, that looks really nice. Who did that?' I just thought there was a group doing things like that, but I didn't know who until I saw a 'Keep Yankton Beautiful' sign by one of their projects,"



KELLY HERTZ/P&D

Amanda Johnson was recently named the new director of Keep Yankton Beautiful, the local affiliate of Keep America Beautiful. Johnson said one of her main goals will be to gain more publicity for the efforts of the organization, which include annual cleanups, litter reduction and recycling events, educational programming, and beautification and community enhancement projects.

she said. "So a huge part of what I'm going to be doing is raising awareness about the organization."

An affiliate of Keep America Beautiful, KYB is a non-profit organization with the mission of motivating citizens to take responsibility for improving their community environment through litter prevention, recycling, waste

reduction and beautification projects, according to the KYB website. It sponsors numerous annual cleanups, litter reduction and recycling events, educational programming, and beautification and community enhancement projects. Past projects include the Liberty Garden at Fourth and Walnut, the perennial flower planting on Fourth Street, the

21st and Broadway Trailhead beautification and the graffiti cleanup at 19th and Broadway.

To make the public more aware about these efforts, Johnson plans to increase KYB's marketing through printed publications, radio and social media. As executive director, her duties will also include fundraising, grant writing, administrative work and participating in the group's numerous projects.

"It's going to be fun to work on these projects and all the ways we can make our community better," Johnson said.

Johnson replaces Julie Perakslis, who resigned as executive director earlier this year to spend more time with her family. Perakslis is currently training Johnson and will remain working for KYB as a volunteer.

"I think she's going to be great," Perakslis said about Johnson. "It's a lot of work and a lot of effort, and if you don't feel the passion for what you're doing, it's not going to work. And she really feels it. She really believes in having a beautiful community."

Johnson said KYB's involvement in beautification projects is what first drew her to the position, as it has always been a hobby of hers.

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