

River Search, Woman Missing 2 Years

HURON — County and state officials have searched the James River for traces of a Woonsocket woman who disappeared under suspicious circumstances nearly two years ago. Authorities say a tip led investigators to the river in the Huron area on Thursday. They did not provide details, nor did they say if they found any evidence in the case of Rachel Cyriacks. The 30-year-old Cyriacks was last seen Nov. 13, 2013, in Woonsocket. Her pickup truck was found the following January, with a lot of damage to its undercarriage. Authorities at the time said they suspected foul play in her disappearance.

Veterans Affairs Campus Advances

LINCOLN, Neb. — The Lincoln Historic Preservation Commission is backing a plan to redevelop the Department of Veterans Affairs hospital campus into a mix of apartments, town homes and medical offices. The Lincoln Journal Star reports that the commission's approval serves as a recommendation to the Lincoln City Council, which will consider a redevelopment agreement Monday. Plans include a new, three-story apartment building for low-income veterans who qualify for veteran housing vouchers, along with a private medical office building. The VA has been soliciting bids for a new VA clinic in Lincoln. When it's built, the VA will close its current clinic at the VA hospital and leave the campus.

State Approves \$8.5M Waste Projects

PIERRE, — The state Board of Water and Natural Resources has approved \$8.5 million for wastewater and solid waste projects. Gov. Dennis Daugaard says the Department of Environment and Natural Resources grant and loan awards will result in improved wastewater treatment and enhanced protection of the environment. The total includes about \$360,000 in grants and nearly \$8 million in low-interest loans. The largest chunk of the money goes to Sioux Falls for a \$6.6 million loan amendment for outfall line replacement. Yankton will receive \$750,000 in loan and grant money for transfer station entrance reconfiguration and scale replacement. Dimock will receive a \$50,000 grant and \$478,000 loan for wastewater treatment facilities, and the Lake Madison Sanitary District is getting a \$428,000 loan for lift station upgrades.

Reports Of Blow Dart Hits Increase

LINCOLN, Neb. — A third person has reported being struck by a blow dart in Lincoln. A 32-year-old woman told officers on Tuesday that the dart hit her left thigh a couple of weeks ago while she was standing downtown one night with some friends. She didn't see who shot it at her and didn't report the attack to police. Police say she decided to come forward after learning about attacks on two men Saturday afternoon. None of the three sought medical treatment. Officer Katie Flood says the investigations are continuing.

Officials Remind Hunters Of Bait Ban

PIERRE — South Dakota wildlife officials say hunters should remember that it is illegal to use bait stations and salt licks to attract game animals. The state Game, Fish and Parks Department says regulations prohibit the use of food or salt to entice big game. Wildlife officials say a bait station is defined as any location where grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts, hay, minerals or other food and by-products are placed specifically to attract big game animals for hunting purposes. The use of scents alone does not constitute a bait station. The bait station ban runs from Aug. 15 through Feb. 1, and from March 15 through May 1.

8-Year-Old Punched Omaha Teacher

OMAHA, Neb. — Authorities say an 8-year-old student has slapped, punched and kicked a teacher in a north-central Omaha school. The incident occurred Wednesday at Masters Elementary School. The teacher reported that the boy became upset and turned violent after he was reprimanded for running out of the school lunchroom. The teacher says the boy shouted expletives, insults and threats at her and assaulted her when she tried to calm him. A police report mentions bruises and redness on the teacher's body. The boy was taken to the school office, where he wrote a letter of apology to the teacher. The student's mother was informed about what happened.

Thousands Watch Buffalo Roundup

CUSTER — Thousands of people packed Custer State Park on Friday for the 50th annual Buffalo Roundup. The event features horseback riders joined by all-terrain vehicles and pickup trucks gathering about 1,300 bison into corrals. They're branded and given vaccinations, and then the herd is culled, or reduced, to about 900 that will be released back onto the park to roam free for another year. The rest are sold at auction. Last year's event drew about 14,000 spectators, and officials had seen larger crowds for the 2015 edition.

Tribe Gets \$519,033 Education Grant

WINNEBAGO, Neb. — The federal government has awarded \$519,033 to the Winnebago Tribe to help improve education on the reservation in northeast Nebraska. The federal grant is part of a larger program to better prepare students for college and careers. The U.S. Education Department recently awarded more than \$5.3 million nationwide. Education Secretary Arne Duncan says the government is working to create new opportunities for American Indian youth to succeed.

Federal Funding Stops Flowing To Platte Education Co-Op

BY JAMES NORD
Associated Press

SIoux FALLS — South Dakota is done routing millions of dollars in federal grant money for a Native American college-readiness program through a Platte educational cooperative thrust into the spotlight when an apparent murder-suicide claimed its two business managers. The state's \$4.3 million contract with Mid-Central Educational Cooperative ended Friday, Tony Venhuizen, Gov. Dennis Daugaard's chief of staff, said in an email, although state education officials had already decided to pull the funding.

"The hope had been for an orderly and seamless transition from Mid-Central to a new administrator, but the sad events in Platte have made that more difficult," Venhuizen said.

Investigators believe Scott Westerhuis shot his wife and four children last week, then set the family home near Platte ablaze before shooting himself. Authorities are investigating the contract as part of an ongoing inquiry into the deaths.

Attorney General Marty Jackley has said investigators will review a state audit of the cooperative and look over additional financial information. Shortly before the fire,

Westerhuis learned the state was not renewing the contract with Mid-Central.

The cooperative provides speech, language and hearing services to several area school districts. Westerhuis was business manager for 15 or 16 years, and his wife, Nicole Westerhuis, served as assistant business manager for about eight years.

Mid-Central has received about \$10.7 million in federal GEAR UP funding over the last four years, Venhuizen said.

Before Friday, Mid-Central had a contract with the state to administer that grant funding. Venhuizen said officials are discussing with the Board of Regents potentially turning over administration of the grant to Black Hills State University and the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology.

The state Education Department decided not to renew the contract after a state audit last year took issue with Mid-Central's documenting of some expenses.

The audit found the co-op owed \$214,000 to the state, which it paid. But the audit did not look at organizations that received GEAR UP funding from Mid-Central through the agreement. Scott and Nicole Westerhuis had ties to two of those nonprofit organizations — the American Indian Institute for Innovation and

the Oceti Sakowin Education Consortium — which have received at least \$2 million in GEAR UP funding since 2012, according to Internal Revenue Service records.

Mid-Central referred questions to its attorney, Scott Swier.

Swier in an email said the cooperative was aware of Scott Westerhuis' ties to both nonprofits but wasn't "aware of the extent" of the affiliation. IRS documents list Westerhuis as chief financial officer of the institute and his wife as business manager of the consortium.

Records back to 2012 list no compensation for Scott Westerhuis in his role as CFO. Nicole Westerhuis was paid about \$38,500 as business manager and an officer of the education consortium, according to a 2013 report.

Carlos Rodriguez, secretary and treasurer of the American Indian Institute for Innovation's governing board, said no questions were raised at a board meeting a few weeks ago after a report on the budget and financial position of the institute.

Rodriguez, who lives in Washington, said the loss of GEAR UP funding would be "devastating." He said the organization does valuable work with Native American children.

3 Accused In Robbery Death Of Bluffs Man

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa (AP) — Authorities say three men have been arrested and will face murder charges for the death of a Council Bluffs man who'd been robbed of marijuana.

The three being held are 18-year-old Caine Petersen, of Council Bluffs; 23-year-old Christopher King, of Lincoln, Nebraska; and 22-year-old Sarael Duncan, of Omaha, Nebraska. Online court records don't list the names of attorneys who could be contacted to comment on their behalf.

Police say 20-year-old Jacob Combs died in a hospital Aug. 15 after being found in a Council Bluffs street. Officers say Combs jumped onto Petersen's vehicle as the three men fled the scene but then fell or was thrown, suffering head injuries.

Pottawattamie County Attorney Matthew Wilber says all three will be charged with murder for killing a person during a forcible felony.

VOTE YES

On TUESDAY, September 29

Last November Yankton County elected new commissioners to lead us forward. After years of insufficient road funding and maintenance in Yankton County, they have acted to use a new tool recently provided by Governor Daugaard and the state legislature to meet severe shortfalls in road maintenance funding. Other SD counties and townships have taken similar action to help themselves. We should support our commission's sound efforts and responsible action.

- These are our roads that our children, grandchildren, and neighbors travel. We need to raise adequate funds to ensure they are safe. We need to act responsibly and maintain them rather than continue to defer maintenance.
- Maintenance and replacement costs increase every year. The problem isn't going away. The longer we wait to catch up on all the deferred maintenance, the more expensive it will be.
- Our state and federal governments provide funding to assist with road and bridge repair and replacement, on a matched funding basis. Having more of our own funds will help us maximize those additional funding sources.
- Our area's economy is dependent on the agricultural community. We need a good transportation infrastructure to support commerce into our communities. More commerce means more investment, development, real estate taxes and sales taxes. We need to grow our base of revenue sources to support all of our public assets and services.
- The commission is not using this new funding to build new roads. The funds will be used simply to maintain and repair the roads and bridges we already have.

Our commissioners have studied our needs and our funding problem and taken action to solve it. They created a 20-page handout detailing the situation and provided it at the public hearing prior to taking this action. In the past month, they have attended a community forum and hosted six "town halls" around the county to provide information, answer questions, and obtain feedback from those they represent. They realize nobody wants higher taxes, but they have acted as leaders and made a tough decision to act responsibly and move Yankton County forward.

The easy thing to do is to ignore this issue and not bother to vote. But without your vote on September 29th, this problem will only worsen, as the solution our commission has provided will fail. We need to invest in Yankton County's future and take care of our roads and bridges. Please do your part to help!

PLEASE VOTE YES ON SEPTEMBER 29

Visit your county website at www.co.yankton.sd.us for more information.

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