

THE LAND

A photographer captures the sunset at Oahe Dam **A2**

CRASH SURVIVOR

Man pulled from Mont. rollover was trapped 3 days **A5**

Some districts pursue school performance score appeals

By BOB MERCER
STATE CAPITOL BUREAU

Not everybody is satisfied with South Dakota's new system for rating performances of public schools. The scores released last week quickly drew some protests. Three school districts quickly filed formal appeals. As of Tuesday, at least one other district is contemplating an appeal. That's according to Mary Stadick Smith, a spokeswoman for the state Department of Education. She didn't identify the districts or the specific schools. There are rating systems, with different criteria, for elementary and middle schools and for high schools. Schools in the bottom 5 to 10 percent receive focus and priority designations. That means they are to get targeted assistance and interventions from state Department of Education officials. The window for appeals opened July 30, the day that scores became available to the public. It closes Aug. 14. Schools privately received their scores and underlying data no later than July 26. The school performance index replaces the No Child Left Behind system that was used for the past decade. South Dakota received a federal waiver to put the alternate into place. High schools are rated on student achievement in reading and math, graduation rate and student readiness for college and careers. Elementary and middle schools are rated on student achievement in reading and math and on attendance. Additional criteria such as teacher and principal evaluations and school climate will be rolled into the ratings in the coming years.

THE ROBIN HOOD SHOT

Young archer makes rare shots

By ALLISON JARRELL
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In English folklore, the legendary archer Robin Hood once won a match by splitting his opponent's arrow with his own.

It's been said the odds of splitting a modern arrow with another arrow are 1-in-3,000. That is, unless you're 11-year-old Mike Merriman.

And the young archer didn't just split an arrow once – he's done it three times.

Merriman is a fairly new archer with only a couple years of experience, but that hasn't stopped him from achieving the rare feat of "telescoping" – hitting an arrow in the rear end with another arrow.

"It's pretty uncommon; that doesn't happen a lot," said Tim Withers, Merriman's 4-H archery coach. "As they progressively get better, it's more apt to happen. But for him to have that many now shows that he's doing a lot of practicing and getting so much better."

Withers and his wife Tammy have been coaching the 4-H archery program for about 18 years, and it was last winter during a practice that Withers witnessed Merriman split an arrow. Merriman said it was an exciting experience that he was able to celebrate with his coaches.



Since taking up archery two years ago, 11-year-old Mike Merriman of Pierre has split an arrow on the bullseye, not once, but three times. It's been said that archers have a 1 in 3,000 chance of making the rare 'Robin Hood' shot. At left is one of the arrows he struck smack-dab in the center. (Allison Jarrell/Capital Journal)

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CDC survey shows SD high in school immunization rates

By DAVID ROOKHUYZEN
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It seems the diseases spread in the state's school yards have been effectively limited to the flu and cold.

A recent survey by the Centers for Disease Control of vaccination records for the state's 12,468 kindergarten students during the 2012-2013 school year showed South Dakota ranks above average in the country for immunization rates.

The survey reported 97.9 percent of the state's kindergarten students were fully immunized with the MMR vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella, 97.7 percent had received the DTaP vaccine for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis, and 96 percent had received the varicella vaccine for chicken pox.

Of those not immunized, 1.5 percent had a religious exemption and .3 percent had a medical exemption.

Because of differing mandatory vaccinations and survey methods, a direct comparison between states is not possible.

However, among the 48 continental states and the District of Columbia, the average MMR vaccine coverage was 94.5 percent, and the average DTaP coverage was 95.1 percent. Among the 36 states and District of Columbia that require two-dose varicella immunizations, the average coverage was 93.8 percent.

Lon Kightlinger, state epidemiologist, said the state Department of Health was "frankly pleased" to find South Dakota's rates are above the national average. However, the state has always had high rates because it has deemed the vaccines mandatory to enter school, he said.

The survey also reflects well on the state's schools, Kightlinger said, as it is their responsibility to check vaccination records and ensure children have the necessary immunizations to prevent the spread of disease.

While the survey shows good results for South Dakota kindergartners, Kightlinger said preliminary numbers are not so encouraging for pre-school toddlers and teenagers. Exact survey results will be available later, but he can say they are lower

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CDC: First national sign of childhood obesity drop

ATLANTA (AP) — For many years, doctors have been wringing their hands as more and more U.S. children grew fat. Now, that may be changing, with the first evidence of a national decline in childhood obesity.

In 18 states, there were at least slight drops in obesity for low-income preschoolers, health officials said Tuesday.

After decades on the rise, childhood obesity rates recently have essentially been flat. A few places – Philadelphia, New York City and Mississippi – reported improvements in the last couple of years. But the report from the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention shows signs of wider-ranging progress.

"Now, for the first time, we're seeing a significant decrease in childhood obesity" nationally, said Dr. Thomas Frieden, CDC director.

But rates are still too high, he added. One in 8 preschoolers is obese in the United States, and it's even more com-



In this Tuesday, Nov. 1, 2011, file photo, first lady Michelle Obama sings and dances to exercise with staff, parents and children as she visits the Royal Castle Child Development Center, as part of the "Lets Move!" initiative in New Orleans, La. In 18 states, there were at least slight drops in obesity for low-income preschoolers, health officials said Tuesday. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

mon in black and Hispanic kids.

"It's not like we're out of the woods," he said during a conference call with reporters Tuesday.

Obesity continues to be one of the nation's leading pub-

lic health problems – health officials call it a longstanding epidemic. A third of U.S. children and teens and more than two-thirds of adults are obese or overweight.

Some hope the report marks a turning point.

"These signs of progress tell a clear story: we can reverse the childhood obesity epidemic. It isn't some kind of unstoppable force,"

statement from Dr. James S. Marks, senior vice president at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

"I really do think this is a pivotal moment," said Sam Kass, executive director of a White House initiative to reduce childhood obesity.

Preschoolers who are overweight or obese are five times more likely than other children to be heavy as adults, which means greater risks of high cholesterol, high blood sugar, asthma and even mental health problems.

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