

TRACK SMACKDOWN

How do Iowa and Nebraska high school athletes' top performances this spring compare? **SPORTS**



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BREAKING NEWS

Omaha World-Herald

SUNRISE
EDITION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 26, 2010

Counties' valuation cuts don't match drop in market

Reductions are common, but many recently sold homes are assessed higher than their sales price.

By PAUL GOODSSELL
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

WORLD-HERALD EXCLUSIVE

Troubles in the housing market are showing up in property valuations, with record numbers of valuation cuts this year.

"No doubt about it," Douglas County Assessor Roger Morrissey said Tuesday. "All the assessor does is reflect what buyers are doing with their

checkbooks." But even though Morrissey and his Sarpy County counterpart are reducing valuations for about 70,000 homeowners in the two counties, a World-Herald analysis indicates that one-fourth of the homes that sold recently are assessed too high.

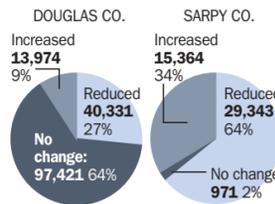
New valuations will be mailed later this week. Property owners will have a chance in June to appeal those valuations, which help determine the size of next year's property tax bills.

The World-Herald studied the new valuations and compared them with last year's assessments, as well as to house sales during 2009 and the first part of 2010.

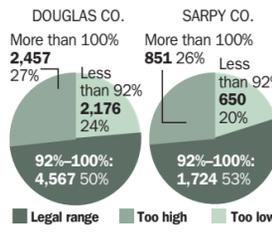
The analysis showed that Douglas and Sarpy officials cut more than twice as many valuations as they increased this year. But those changes didn't guarantee accurate valuations.

See Valuations: Page 2

HOME VALUATION CHANGES IN 2010



VALUATIONS COMPARED TO RECENT SALES*



SOURCE: World-Herald analysis of sales and valuations

*Sales from 2009 and early 2010

DAVE CROY/THE WORLD-HERALD

MUST READ



What the graduate wants

It's not personal or creative, but particularly in this economy, the favorite graduation gift is cold, hard cash.

Money

Heat is on inspectors

A report finds that some federal regulators responsible for oversight of drilling in the Gulf of Mexico did drugs or accepted meals and gifts from oil companies.

Page 3A

Omaha weather



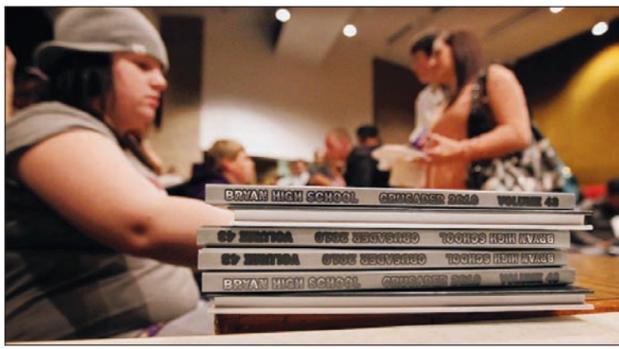
Today's forecast
High: 82 Low: 59

Full weather report: Page 8B

Index

- Advice4E
- Comics6E
- Marketplace2D
- Movies4E
- Obituaries5B
- Opinion6&7B
- TV8E

34 PAGES 75 CENTS



Bryan High School distributed yearbooks to seniors on their last day of school. This year's sales were less than one-third of the peak, reached in the 1990s.

MEMORIES GOING DIGITAL

Annual tradition fades with age

As technology becomes easier and cheaper to use, school districts as well as students take a hard look at yearbook costs.



JAMES R. BURNETT/THE WORLD-HERALD

By JOSEFINA LOZA
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

For nearly a century, the yearbook has been as much a part of high school as prom, stinky gym suits and Friday night football games.

That's changing. Several Omaha schools have scaled back, ordering only enough yearbooks to cover advance sales. Some books have fewer pages. And the traditional hardbound yearbook is history at some Midlands schools, including Omaha's Benson High and Madison (Neb.) High School.

Fewer students are buying yearbooks. Some observers say the Facebook and Twitter generation doesn't see value in a tangible record of their memories.

And yearbook advisers tend to talk soberly about the future.

"Conversations among journalism teachers three or four years ago used to be about how to get that last push from yearbook sales," said Jerred Zegelis, Benson's journalism teacher. "Now it's how to survive."

Sales declines in the region range from 5 percent to 50 percent. Sales have increased at a few schools.

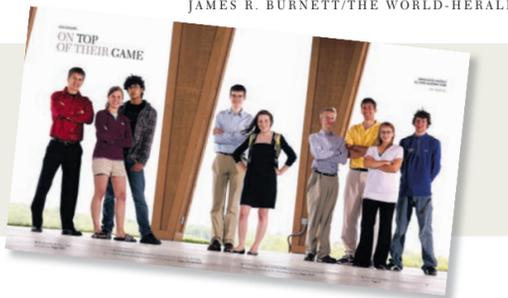
At Bryan High, 380 people bought yearbooks this year — about 22 percent of the school's 1,654 students. That's down from the peak of 1,200 in the '90s.

South filled 277 yearbook orders, See Yearbooks: Page 2

Bryan student Aurelia Roddy, 18, checks out her new yearbook. This year, the school ordered just 20 extras, and they're still available.

COMING SUNDAY

Meet some of the top academic achievers graduating from Midlands high schools this spring in The World-Herald's 2010 scholars section.



3 arrested in missing family case

Brazilian suspects allegedly used the Szczepanik's bank cards

By KEVIN COLE
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Three men who have been in custody since early this year were arrested in Omaha this week in the case of a missing Brazilian family.

Police said all three had worked for Vanderlei Szczepanik, who along with his wife, Jaqueline, and son, Christopher, have been missing for more than five months.

The men were booked on sus-

picion of the unauthorized use of the family's personal and business bank cards, running up charges totaling \$4,347. All three men are illegal immigrants from Brazil, police said.

Omaha Police Chief Alex Hayes said the first unauthorized use of the bank cards was Dec. 17, the last day the family was seen.

A total of four men have now been implicated in the case.

Hayes said the latest arrests

were made with help from Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials.

The three men were arrested Monday at the Douglas County Jail, where they have been held since federal authorities learned that they were in the country illegally. Hayes said it was his understanding that the men have been in custody since Feb. 1.

He said the men had been targets of the investigation since

See Szczepanik: Page 2

Obama will send 1,200 National Guard members and wants \$500 million to help stem illegal crossings and drug smuggling.

Troops to bolster border

THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama will send up to 1,200 additional National Guard troops — and request \$500 million in additional funds — to support law enforcement efforts along the nation's southwestern border, the White House said Tuesday.

The troops won't make arrests or otherwise intervene directly. But they will help with support

and surveillance targeted at illegal border crossing and drug smuggling, according to an administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The Guard will target trafficking in people, money, drugs and weapons, National Security Adviser James Jones and counterterrorism adviser John Brennan said in a letter to Sen. Carl Levin, D-Mich., noting that more than 300 troops were already on the ground.

The White House said the new money will allow the U.S. Border Patrol to target more smuggling routes and will fund more prosecutions in overstretched federal courts along the border.

"This is the latest step in an ongoing effort to ensure the federal government fulfills its responsibility to secure the Southwest border," the administration official said.

See Border: Page 2

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