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IN MIDLANDS, Page 3B

A roundup of community events.

News from area colleges and universities. **Campus Life****On Omaha.com**Watch the weather forecast and check current conditions, radar and satellite images 24/7. **Home Page**Omaha Bands: Click on Local Band Profiles to check out photos, personnel and bios and listen to songs. Got a band? Find out how to get an Omaha.com band page of your own. **Entertainment**Restaurant Reviews: Click on Restaurant Reviews under Dinner and a Movie to read what World-Herald food writers have to say about your next dinner spot. **Entertainment****Lotteries****POWERBALL****Wednesday, Dec. 24:** 2-17-22-32-41. **Powerball:** 8. **Power Play:** 5. No jackpot winner. **Estimated jackpot for Saturday, Dec. 27:** \$70 million.**NEBRASKA****Pick 5 — Thursday, Dec. 25:** 5-10-11-14-35. No jackpot winner. **Jackpot for Friday, Dec. 26:** \$86,000.**MyDaY — Thursday, Dec. 25:** 12-17-75.**2by2 — Thursday, Dec. 25:** red: 9-24; white: 7-22.**Pick 3 — Thursday, Dec. 25:** 9-6-2.**IOWA****Cash Game — Thursday, Dec. 25:** 3-12-23-25-34.**Hot Lotto — Wednesday, Dec. 24:** 13-16-19-28-39. **Hot Ball:** 9.**Pick 3 — Thursday, Dec. 25:** midday 3-5-4; evening 5-1-4.**Pick 4 — Thursday, Dec. 25:** midday 3-9-4-0; evening 2-2-3-3.

Lottery results from other states are on Omaha.com.

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444-1406, dave.winegarden@owh.com

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Zoo turns a corner after 2007 tiger attack

THE SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

SAN JOSE, Calif. — A year after a Christmas Day tiger attack devastated the San Francisco Zoo and two families, the institution is healing. The families are not.

The attack on three zoo visitors by an escaped tiger focused worldwide attention on the young men — two of whom had criminal histories, which led many people to suspect that they had taunted the tiger.

Tanya Peterson had been acting director of the zoo for a little more than a month when she stood in the Great Hall in August and addressed zoo employees, some of whom were still traumatized by the attack of eight months earlier.

Not only were some of them dealing with nightmares and feelings of fear and guilt over the death of one of the young men and the wounding of his two friends, Peterson said, many were questioning whether the zoo still had a purpose.

With attendance and donations plummeting, plus pressure from a county supervisor to convert the facility into an animal

In San Francisco, employees have mostly banished guilt and remorse, but the victims' families are still living a nightmare.

sanctuary, some worried that the zoo might not survive. Even the birth of three tiger cubs in the spring failed to perk up staff spirits.

“No one is going to rescue us,” Peterson remembers telling the 130 or so employees assembled in the Great Hall. “We have to defend our zoo.”

After Peterson's rallying cry that day and an animal keepers' showdown at City Hall a few weeks later, the zoo and its employees began to turn the corner on the most shocking and horrific event in its 78-year history.

But the plight of the tiger's victims and their families has only worsened. Their legal troubles since then — which were unrelated to the attack — did not win them any sympathy.

Paul Dhaliwal, 20, is serving a 16-month prison sentence at San Quentin after violating parole this summer by driving recklessly. He also received five years' probation last week for shoplifting at a Target store in March.

His 24-year-old brother, Kul-

bir, is serving an alternative work sentence after pleading no contest to misdemeanor charges of resisting arrest and public drunkenness.

The parents of Carlos Sousa Jr., who was killed, are in grief counseling. His mother, Marilza Sousa, said that since her son's 18th birthday in September, she has cried so hard at night that she can't work during the day.

She and her ex-husband, Carlos Sousa Sr., from whom she was separated at the time of their son's death, considered visiting the zoo for the first time this month but decided they couldn't.

“I don't want to go to where he was mutilated,” Carlos Sousa said. “I'd rather go to the cemetery where he's resting and say some prayers and put some flowers in a vase and sit there and talk to him in my mind.”

For the first time ever this Christmas Day, the zoo — at the urging of employees — was closed.

Blame and guilt are subjects that zoo officials and family

members don't talk about openly, because the Dhaliwals and the Sousas have filed lawsuits against the zoo. But there's no denying that the past year has been a tumultuous one.

The zoo was on lockdown through New Year's Day as investigators tried to figure out how and why the 250-pound Siberian tiger named Tatiana had managed to scale a concrete wall from the base of a dry moat, then leapt over bushes and a waist-high railing to attack the three men, killing Sousa.

As the Dhaliwal brothers ran down a paved pathway toward a concessions building, the tiger pursued and attacked again. Police arrived and shot and killed Tatiana, a female tiger intended to become an important breeder. Fourteen bullet casings were recovered from the asphalt.

Early investigations quickly concluded that the grotto wall didn't meet industry height standards.

“What was going on prior to the animal getting out is irrelevant,” said Bob Jenkins, the

zoo's vice president of government affairs. The tiger's escape, he said, “should not have happened.”

The zoo quickly raised the grotto wall from the base of the moat to about knee height, then built a thick glass wall that reaches a shade trellis. Electrified fencing now circles the grotto. More security guards were added, as well as “red alert” buttons for animal keepers.

Staffers have been better trained to handle emergencies, and a new public warning system delivers instructions in English, Spanish and Mandarin.

Peterson, vice chairwoman of the board and the mother of 5-year-old twins, took a leave of absence from her job as a lawyer at Hewlett-Packard and began serving as interim director.

“I had to assure myself and other parents this is a safe place,” she said. “This has to be safe for any visitor, of any background, of any age.”

Because of the deaths, she said, it made the zoo staff “question our mission for a time. It made us second-guess ourselves.”

Protest: Assessor acknowledges that mistakes were made

Continued from Page 1

of the sales market. But in Hodge's case, Morrissey acknowledged that there were mistakes.

“It should have been resolved earlier,” Morrissey said.

He said it can be difficult to settle valuation disputes because of the lag time in the appeals process and a shortage of county staff available to inspect properties. Property owners can appeal to the county and, later, the state when seeking relief.

Over the years, the most high-profile valuation clash has been between Morrissey and businessman Thomas Hilt, owner of the former Witherpoon mansion at 9909 Fieldcrest Drive in Regency. But owners of a wide range of properties have faced valuation increases after successful challenges.

Many other valuations are left alone. Indeed, records show that several thousand homes with lowered property valuations were not raised the next year by the assessor.

Hodge's ordeal began after he bought a home near 132nd Street and West Dodge Road for \$180,000 in a foreclosure sale. At the time, the home's assessed value for 2004 was \$201,500.

The Assessor's Office does

not factor foreclosure sales into its figures because banks will sell property below market value in an effort to recoup some of their investment. The assessor raised the home's valuation to \$293,000 for 2005.

“I couldn't believe it,” Hodge said. “I was speechless at the time. I thought it must be a mistake.”

Hodge protested the hike to the County Board that summer and won a reduction to \$210,000.

He thought the matter was over.

So he was shocked when the Assessor's Office raised the valuation back up to \$293,000 in 2006.

Hodge appealed again and, this time, discovered that county records were wrong. The records listed his house as being larger and in better condition than it was. He brought up the errors at his county hearing, but no one was sent to inspect Hodge's house and county records weren't corrected.

The County Board lowered Hodge's valuation to \$252,400. Not satisfied, Hodge appealed to the state's Tax Equalization and Review Commission.

Because of the lag time in hearing appeals, however, the 2006 case didn't go before the state commission until spring

2007.

The state requested that a county appraiser inspect the home. The appraiser went through the house and agreed with Hodge about the size and condition. Based on that information, the county gave up on the day of the state hearing, agreeing to a value of \$210,000 for 2006.

Even though the county appraiser had inspected the property and agreed with Hodge, the appraiser didn't update county records or discuss the inspection with supervisors.

“Our biggest problem is when the owner let us in it, the appraiser did not take good notes and did not communicate,” said Chief Deputy Assessor Barry Couch.

The appraiser still works for the Assessor's Office. Morrissey said the appraiser was reassigned last year to inspect other areas of the county. That could also explain, Morrissey said, some of the confusion surrounding Hodge's valuations.

Morrissey and Couch said that even before this incident came to light, the county had done a better job this year of documenting home conditions that would warrant lower valuations.

Climate: 32 scientists weigh in

Continued from Page 1

the Southwest and Mexico. The Climate Change Science Program, established in 1990, coordinates the climate research of 13 federal agencies.

Tom Armstrong, senior adviser for global change programs at the U.S. Geological Survey, said the report “shows how quickly the information is advancing” on potential climate shifts. “It's unlikely to happen in our lifetimes,” he said, “but if it were to occur, it would be life-changing.”

In one worrisome finding, the agency estimated that in light of recent ice-sheet melting, the global sea level could rise as much as 4 feet by 2100.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had projected a sea level rise of no more than 1.5 feet by that time, but satellite data over the past two years show the world's major ice sheets are melting much more rapidly than previously thought. Antarctica and Greenland are now losing an average of 48 cubic miles of ice a year — equivalent to twice the amount in the Alps.

Konrad Steffen, who directs the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences at the University of Colorado at Boulder and was lead author of the report's chapter on ice sheets, said the models used did not factor in some of the dynamics that scientists now understand about ice sheet melting.

Still, Armstrong said, the report “does take a step forward from where the IPCC was.”

Scientists said it is impossible to determine yet whether human activity is responsible for the drought the U.S. Southwest has experienced over the past decade, but every indication suggests that the region will become consistently drier.

Richard Seager, a senior research scientist at Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, said nearly all of the 24 computer models the group surveyed project the same climatic conditions for

the Southwest and Mexico.

“That transition is already under way,” Seager said, adding that such conditions would probably include prolonged droughts lasting more than a decade. Seager said scientists need to work on developing versions that can make projections on a much smaller scale.

Armstrong said there is a need for better coordination among agencies on the issue of climate change. “There are really no policies in place to deal with abrupt climate change.”

Richard Moss, who directed the Climate Change Science Program's coordination office between 2000 and 2006 and now is vice president and managing director for climate change at the World Wildlife Fund-U.S., welcomed the “greater flow of climate science from the administration.”

Moss noted that the report was originally scheduled to come out in the summer of 2007. “It really is showing the potential for abrupt climate change is real.”

The report was reassuring, however, on the prospects for a huge release of methane, a potent heat-trapping gas, locked deep in the seabed and underneath the Arctic permafrost. That appeared unlikely to occur in the near future, the scientists said.

By the end the century, said Ed Brook, the lead author of the methane chapter and a geosciences professor at Oregon State University, the amount of methane escaping from natural sources such as the Arctic tundra and waterlogged soils in warmer regions “could possibly double,” but that would still be less than the current level of human-generated methane emissions.

But over thousands of years, he said, methane hydrates stored deep in the seabed could be released: “Once you start melting there, you can't really take it back.”

“If you take (hormones) away from them, they have a pretty miserable life.”

Dr. J. Christopher Gallagher, professor at Creighton University School of Medicine

Hormones: Cautious use advised

Continued from Page 1

combined hormones. They had been on them for about five years.

Researchers studied those women in the new analysis. After about two years of being off the hormones, the women's risk for breast cancer returned to normal, said Chlebowski of the Los Angeles Bio-Medical Research Institute.

He said there is a slight increased risk of breast cancer for women taking the hormones for less than five years. The risks increase after that period, he said.

For example, a 60-year-old woman who is not taking hormones and has no other risk factors has about a 1.7 percent chance of getting breast cancer within five years, said Dr. Ken Cowan, director of the Eppley Cancer Center at the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

If she is on the combined hormones, her risk rises to about 3 or 4 percent, he said.

Still, he said, a woman must be careful about doing anything that boosts her chances of getting the disease.

Women with a family history of breast cancer must be particularly careful about using the hormones, he said. Their chances of getting the disease are higher to begin with.

Dr. Thomas Besse, an obstetrician and gynecologist with Alegent Health, said that in the past five or six years the combined use of estrogen and progesterin among patients has dropped.

Dr. Suzanne Cornwall of UNMC Physicians in Bellevue agreed.

Both doctors said the decline coincided with 2002 news reports about the federal study.

About menopause**Starts:** About age 50; defined by absence of a menstrual period for a year.**Symptoms:** About 50 percent of women get hot flashes and night sweats of some magnitude, from one to 50 a day; sleeplessness; vaginal dryness.**Hormone risks vs. benefits**

Women should weigh whether their personal and family health histories make hormones too risky. Such factors include breast cancer, blood clots and heart disease. They also should consider whether menopause symptoms are disrupting their lives. Sleeplessness, for example, may make it difficult to function at home and at work.

If you take hormone therapy**Take the lowest** dose for the shortest time.**Never take estrogen** without progesterin if you still have a uterus because it increases your risk of uterine cancer.**Alternatives to hormone therapy****The herbal treatment black cohosh** can reduce symptoms for some.**Effexor**, an antidepressant, has reduced symptoms for some women.**Exercise** and eating fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods.**Source:** Dr. Thomas Besse, Alegent Health; U.S. Food and Drug Administration

Chlebowski said hormone use has declined nationally, as well. Breast cancer cases also dropped starting in 2003, probably because of decreased hormone use, he said.

Besse said some patients stopped taking the hormones on their own, and he would find out about it during a patient's next appointment. He would explain that the increased risk was low and that if they limited the use to less than five years, it would be reasonable to consider taking hormones.

Hogan, 74, said she has no family history of breast cancer. She stayed on the hormones for more than 15 years. She has not had breast cancer and makes sure to get a mammogram every year.

For Sharon D'Ercole, the risk wasn't worth it.

She started taking estrogen

and progesterin around 1994, when she was in her early 50s and just starting menopause. She stopped taking the hormones about eight years later after reading about the federal study.

Hot flashes and insomnia returned.

The hot flashes, sometimes as many as 10 per day, sometimes woke her at night.

Even in the winter, she would set the thermostat low and run two fans in her bedroom — and still get hot. Her husband joked that they could hang meat in their bedroom.

D'Ercole, who is 64 and no longer has symptoms, said it was “hell.” But she's glad she dropped the hormones.

“I just didn't want to take any chances,” she said.

Contact the writer:

444-1122, michael.coconnor@owh.com