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Odd news

Ho Hos theft foils criminal

HAZLETON, Iowa (AP) — The string of charges involved meth, trespassing and fraud, but it was the snatching of Hostess Ho Hos and Crumb Cakes that nabbed the suspect.

Robert Lee McKiernan, 35, of Cedar Rapids was arrested Tuesday after an incident in which authorities say he stole a box of Hostess Ho Hos and a box of Cinnamon Crumb Cakes from a barn at an Amish farm near Hazleton, in northeast Iowa.

The local sheriff's office said deputies got a description of a car and stopped it about two miles from the home.

Deputies found the stolen snack cakes in the car along with materials used to make methamphetamine, the sheriff's office said.

McKiernan was charged with possession of meth ingredients, burglary, theft, criminal trespass, driving while barred, driving under suspension, driving without insurance and fraudulent vehicle registration.

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Quote

"It's unfortunate, but for three months, I think we're making a mountain out of a mole hill."
— Rapid City Alderman Alan Hanks, referring to Fifth Street businesses' concerns about lost parking during road construction. See story on Page B1.

Outside



High, 61 — low, 32
Sunny and mild.
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Peter Dejong/AP

Rescuers work around the destroyed intercity train at Atocha train station in Madrid, Spain, after a number of blasts rocked railway stations Thursday, three days before Spain's general elections.

The blasts killed more than 190 rush-hour commuters and wounded more than 1,400 in Spain's worst terrorist attack ever.

Madrid attack a whodunit

Although the attack appears to have al-Qaida trademarks, officials still suspect Basque terrorists.

By Dafna Linzer and Pamela Sampson
Associated Press Writers

Spanish leaders were quick to accuse Basque terrorists for setting off Thursday's devastating attacks in Madrid.

But hours later, they were less sure. A shadowy Muslim militant group claimed responsibility in the name of al-Qaida, and a van found near the attacks had detonators inside plus tapes of Quranic verses.

Getting at the truth could take time. Spanish officials accustomed to blaming terrorism on the Basque separatist group ETA said they were opening several lines of investiga-

'We're not ruling out the possibility there was outside responsibility (beyond ETA) in this.'
— U.S. counterterrorism official, speaking on the condition of anonymity

tion. As recent events have shown, it won't be easy. Other terrorist attacks in the past two years in places such as Morocco and Turkey remain unsolved.

In Washington, a U.S. counterterrorism official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it was too early to determine who was responsible for the attacks that killed more than 190 people and wounded more than 1,400.

"We're not ruling out the possi-

bility there was outside responsibility (beyond ETA) in this," the official said. "That's something being pursued, but at this point, it's too early to tell."

If ETA was behind the 10 bombs that tore through trains and stations around Madrid, it would mark a stunning turning point for the group.

For years, ETA relied on targeted killings, extortion and kidnappings to press for an independent homeland straddling parts of Spain and France. Now, experts believe a younger generation of ETA leaders is moving the group toward al-Qaida-style actions.

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Inside
More on the Madrid bombing
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IRS takes aim at high-income taxpayers

Federal agency auditing fewer and fewer businesses.

By Mary Dalrymple
AP Tax Writer

WASHINGTON — The IRS increased its audits of individuals and couples making more than \$100,000 last year, but even high-income taxpayers faced low odds of being called upon to document their expenses and deductions.

Audits of taxpayers who earned \$100,000 or more increased 24 percent between 2002 and 2003 as the IRS searched for unpaid taxes. Most

of the increased activity centered on individuals or couples earning \$250,000 or more.

Despite the increased effort, the IRS audited only one in 95 tax returns filed by high-income taxpayers.

"If you look at overall audit rates, they're still too low," IRS Commissioner Mark Everson said Thursday, adding that the statistics nevertheless show the agency arrested the decline that began in 1998, when Congress ordered the IRS to shift its focus from enforcement to taxpayer service.

Individuals at all income levels faced slightly higher chances of an

audit last year. Overall, the IRS examined one in 153 returns last year, compared with one in 174 the previous year. The audit rate still lags from the rates in the mid-1990s when the agency looked at about one in 60 individual returns.

The statistics come as millions of Americans hurry to prepare their tax returns before the April 15 filing deadline.

In an effort to best use its money and manpower, the IRS has focused its search for unpaid taxes on high-income individuals, corporations and income hidden in

See **IRS**, Page A2

Faith mourns loss of troubled teen

As Kristopher Long Elk's death is deemed a suicide, a community tries to cope.

By Jomay Steen
Journal Staff Writer

Residents of Faith are shocked and saddened by the death of 17-year-old Kristopher Long Elk, whose body was found hanging from a swing set March 5 in the Faith schoolyard, the rural town's mayor said.

"It hits our kids so hard," Glen Haines said in a phone interview Wednesday. "We're definitely at a loss."

State Attorney General Larry Long issued a statement Thursday saying an autopsy and a note found on Long Elk's body indicate his death was a suicide. Investigators are still waiting for results of

toxicology tests. Community members remembered Long Elk as a quiet, likeable young man with a ready smile and a dedication to basketball.

Milly Heidlebaugh, who lives a few blocks from Long Elk's home, said her son, Chad, and Long Elk spent untold hours at the basketball courts in downtown Faith and in the school yard. They forged a bond over the art of shooting the ball through the hoop. That bond brought the American Indian youth into the Heidlebaugh home. He found a place in their family, Heidlebaugh said.

He had a sense of humor that bubbled below the surface, she said. "He seemed to

be a carefree-type kid."

She said Chad has questioned his parents about why his friend didn't reach out to the Heidlebaugh family before taking his life. As her son fought through tears, she said, he asked his parents: "We live three blocks away. Why couldn't Kris come down and talk to me?"

It's a question his family has struggled to answer. "He was really a good kid. He was decent," Heidlebaugh said of Long Elk.

While at Faith school, Long Elk sang in the choir and played on the school's seventh- and eighth-grade basketball teams, she said.

Heidlebaugh said Long Elk's

entire class from Faith plans to attend his funeral on Saturday. "They're all trying to figure out how this happened."

A student found Long Elk's body on the east side of the Faith school an hour before school began on Friday, March 5. The swing set is shielded from view by the school library and isn't visible from the road.

Long Elk had last attended the school in 2001-02, according to Jason Reed, a Meade County rancher and parent. He said Long Elk had been attending Takini School in rural Sioux Reservation but that he had been acquainted with Long Elk while he was at Faith school.

"I believe he did fairly well here," Reed said.

What hit Reed hard about the tragedy was that most of the town of Faith was celebrating the high school's basketball victory and advancement to district playoffs on March 4. "This poor kid was wandering around on the verge of doing this," he said.

Larry Mendoza, superintendent of Takini School, described Long Elk, a freshman, as a likeable kid, always with a smile ready to surface.

"He was a pleasant, quiet student," he said. "He expressed an interest in basketball and cross country, but living in Faith, you have to have a big commitment to be in those sports."

Long Elk's twin sister, Kristin, and older brother, Bronson Spotted Horse, both

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Brian Maliske

Nice for ice? Civic center seeks expansion

By Scott Aust
Journal Staff Writer

In the next few years, Rushmore Plaza Civic Center could host semi-professional hockey games, ice skating events and even bigger concerts if a \$5 million to \$8 million improvement plan proceeds.

The civic center's board of directors wants to hire a consultant to help focus planned improvements that would increase the capacity of Don Barnett Arena, improve accessibility for people with disabilities, add a National Hockey League-sized sheet of ice as well as five skyboxes on the north and south ends.

Brian Maliske, general manager of the civic center, said the board wants a consultant's help to make the civic center an even more useful facility that will allow new events to come to the center and Rapid City.

"We need to go out and actively seek every event, and it's important that we can house more people in the facility in order to bring bigger events to Rushmore Plaza Civic Center," he said.

The civic center board is seeking authorization from the Rapid City Council to solicit proposals to provide professional services for improvements to the civic center.

About nine months ago, the board heard ideas that Maliske had but wanted to see something on paper, a concept they could visualize, Maliske said. The board had an architectural firm draw up some preliminary plans.

"This is very conceptual. There's no hard dollar figures to it. There's a whole lot of things that need to be answered. That's where we are right now," Maliske said. "It's extraordinarily preliminary."

Early cost estimates predict the project could cost between \$5 million and \$8 million. But Maliske cautions those dollar amounts are basically a guess right now.

"That's what we want the consultant for," he said.

Essentially, improvements are being considered in three areas: accessibility, seating capacity and adding an ice component.

Completed in 1977, the civic center predated the Americans with Disabilities Act by about seven years, Maliske said.

"We have very limited ADA ability within the arena to take care of our folks," he said. "We also have some real questions as to the capacity we can offer on major events."

Currently, the stage for concerts extends about 60 feet into the arena, which limits seating. By building an addition to the north end, the stage can be moved back, and seating can be added.

The early architect's drawing indicates a 40-foot-by-150-foot addition to the north side of the civic center.

"The more seats we have, the bigger the concerts that we can land," Maliske said. "I don't anticipate we're going to double the size of the

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