

Monday felt like Christmas for Omaha family donating 40-foot tree to Durham Museum. Midlands, Page 3A



Teddy Allen was ‘terrific’ with 29 points in Husker hoops scrimmage, Hoiberg says. Sports

Omaha World-Herald

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MASKS IN NEBRASKA

Other cities eye mandates as legality is debated

Ricketts says Omaha and Lincoln have unique status in state law; Sen. Wayne points to other statutes

By MARTHA STODDARD AND REECE RISTAU
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITERS

LINCOLN — Local and state leaders disagreed Monday about whether Nebraska cities and towns can issue mask mandates to control the spread of COVID-19.

Several communities across Nebraska are discussing a possible mask mandate, including Scottsbluff, Kearney, Grand Island and Ralston.

State Sen. Justin Wayne of Omaha, an attorney and the chairman of the Legislature's Urban Affairs Committee, said Monday that state law gives cities of all sizes the authority to “make regulations to prevent the introduction and spread of contagious, infectious or malignant diseases into the city.”

He argued that the law would clearly allow for a city ordinance mandating the use of face masks or face coverings. If not, he said, cities and towns could issue a mandate under their authority to regulate nuisances.

Wayne noted that many Nebraskans are pleading for state and local leaders to take steps to slow the spread of COVID-19. Since Gov. Pete Ricketts has continued to resist calls for a statewide mask mandate, Wayne urged local lead-

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COVID-19 kills 74 Nebraskans in one week

With 7-week virus surge, the state has third highest U.S. hospitalization rate, behind only the Dakotas

By JULIE ANDERSON
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

For the seventh week in a row, Nebraska and Douglas County set records last week for COVID-19 cases. The state also recorded a new weekly high for deaths related to the novel coronavirus.

The deaths of 74 Nebraskans were reported during the sev-

en-day period that ended Saturday. That was up from 55 deaths reported in each of the previous two weeks.

The number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 in Nebraska peaked at 918 on Friday, then dipped to 889 Saturday before rising to 914 on Sunday.

That dip was enough, however, to leave the state with rough-

ly 15 days, based on the current growth in hospitalizations, before COVID-19 patients will occupy 25%, or 1,170, of the state's hospital beds. That figure is Gov. Pete Ricketts' trigger for the next round of restrictions on elective surgeries and other activities.

When Ricketts laid out his plan Friday, 20% of the state's hospital beds were occupied by patients with COVID-19.

Ricketts reiterated in a briefing Monday that maintaining hospital capacity, both for COVID-19

CORONAVIRUS CASES		
	Infections	Deaths
Nebraska	101,601	797
Iowa	188,398	1,991
U.S.	11,190,611	247,116

*As of 8 p.m. Monday

patients and those with other ailments, remains his guiding criteria.

“We want to make sure we keep those hospitalizations down so we

See Cases: Page 2



THE EXPLORATORIUM

A rendering of the interior of the Kiewit Luminarium. Heritage Services is partnering with San Francisco's Exploratorium to develop exhibits for the Luminarium. Kiewit is construction contractor for the project, and Kiewit executives are major donors, as are charitable foundations with Kiewit ties.

COVID-19

2nd vaccine has ‘striking’ success in U.S. tests

Moderna, Pfizer vaccines may be available in limited supplies by late December

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A second experimental COVID-19 vaccine — this one from Moderna Inc. — yielded strong early results Monday, another badly needed dose of hope as the pandemic enters a terrible new phase.

Moderna said its vaccine appears to be 94.5% effective, according to preliminary data from an ongoing study. A week ago, competitor Pfizer Inc. announced that its own vaccine looked 90% effective — news that puts both companies on track to seek permission within weeks for emergency use in the U.S.

The results are “truly striking,” said Dr. Anthony Fauci, the U.S. government's top infectious-diseases expert. “The vaccines that we're talking about, and vaccines to come, are really the light at the end of the tunnel.”

A vaccine can't come fast enough, as virus cases topped 11 million in the U.S. over the week-end — 1 million of them recorded in just the past week — and governors and mayors are ratcheting up restrictions ahead of Thanksgiving. The number of U.S. children diagnosed with COVID-19 has

See Vaccine: Page 2

ON OMAHA'S RIVERFRONT

CONSTRUCTION STARTS ON KIEWIT LUMINARIUM

Science center's name is unveiled, along with details of exhibits that'll wow visitors starting in '23

By HENRY J. CORDES
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Construction has begun on Omaha's new \$101 million riverfront science center, which now has a name: Kiewit Luminarium.

Luminarium appears to be rooted in the word illuminate, and that's just what community leaders hope the new science center will do: shine light on subjects like science, technology, engineering and math, and perhaps inspire the next generation of STEM workers in Omaha.

“The wonder that comes from a name like that is the kind of wonder we're trying to inspire in this place,” said Trent Demulling, an executive at Omaha's Kiewit construction company who is chairing the board of the new nonprofit that will build and operate the center.

The ground-breaking ceremony for Omaha's privately funded science museum — set to open at Lewis & Clark Landing in 2023 — was scheduled to be held on Monday.

But concerns over the state's fast-rising coronavirus numbers led



HDR

What the \$101 million Luminarium will look like at night. Construction should be done by late 2022, with exhibits then installed for a planned April 2023 grand opening.

organizers to call off the ceremony. Instead, they provided new information on the project, including its name and details on some of its signature exhibits.

Among the attractions of the new center will be a “geometric climber,” in which visitors will be able to learn

about the art and symmetry of geometry by walking and climbing through a two-story exhibit.

There will be another two-story exhibit space devoted to the science of materials, where visitors will explore the weight, strength and other

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Creighton makes the cut

Millard North's Hunter Sallis trims recruiting list to eight, including the Jays. Sports

Takeout Tuesday is back

Our list features five Omaha area options that require little contact. Living, Page 8B

Weather

High: 54 Low: 40
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TEACHERS AT ‘BREAKING POINT’

Union urges Ricketts to ‘make hard decisions,’ require masks

Leaders say indoor dining must end and bars must close to keep schools open

By JOE DEJKA
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Leaders of the Nebraska state teachers union on Monday called on Gov. Pete Ricketts to impose stiff new COVID-19 restrictions, including mandating masks statewide, temporarily closing bars and suspending indoor dining.

The board of directors of the Nebraska State Education Association adopted a wide-ranging resolution aimed at pushing the governor and various state and local leaders to take a more aggressive approach to the pandemic. The move, the board says, would head off a school shutdown, ease the stress teachers are feeling and show them some empathy.

The directors called on Ricketts to impose directed health measures that would mandate masks, limit indoor and outdoor gatherings to 10 people and temporarily close bars. The union wants the governor to temporarily suspend indoor dining and launch a Takeout Nebraska

campaign encouraging people to buy takeout meals.

Regarding schools, the union wants the governor to direct school districts to reduce the density of students in classrooms through the use of alternative staffing and attendance patterns, especially when students are eating. Some Nebraska districts, such as the Omaha Public Schools, already are operating under hybrid models in which students attend on alternate days, while other schools have a majority of students attending daily in person.

In an emotional appeal, NSEA President Jenni Benson said the union holds Ricketts “100% percent accountable for what is happening.”

“If the leadership in this state won’t make hard decisions and put mandates in place,” Benson said, “our schools will close, whether or not they stand up and say schools need to remain open.”

And more Nebraskans will die, she said.

When asked Monday about the NSEA’s resolution, Ricketts said he’s asking people to use masks when appropriate, such as when they are closer than 6 feet to another person for more than 15 minutes. Ricketts said the state won’t impose

a statewide mask mandate.

If COVID-19 patients fill 25% or more of hospital beds in the state, Ricketts said, he will issue new and tighter health restrictions, a plan he outlined last week.

The NSEA board also is calling for a moratorium, until January, on all in-person youth and high school sports and extracurricular activities.

Union leaders surveyed 18,600 members at the end of October. Of the 6,500 educators who responded, 86% reported feeling overwhelmed, stressed, frustrated or worried about teaching during the pandemic.

Some of those surveyed indicated that they plan to leave teaching.

“The responses left little doubt that educators are at the breaking point,” Benson said. “They are concerned that the needs of their students are not being met. They are worried about their health and safety and that of their students and families.”

Union leaders, through the resolution, also are appealing to the Nebraska State Board of Education for action.

They want state board members to declare that schools should adopt the interventions and protocols recommended by the fed-

eral Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the University of Nebraska Medical Center until the risk of transmission is abated.

The union board directed Benson to file a petition with the state board making that request.

The petition also will request that the state board initiate studies of the virus’s transmission in schools and “take remedial action as is necessary to enforce safety accreditation standards.”

On Friday, the president and vice president of the State Board of Education signed a resolution on behalf of the board strongly recommending a statewide mask mandate. The full board has yet to vote on it.

The union resolution further calls on school administrators to provide their teaching staffs with relief, including adjusting curriculum and relaxing the pace at which new material is introduced to students.

“Teachers know their students and will advance them academically,” the resolution says.

They want more administrators to pitch in and help cover classrooms when a teacher is out. And teachers want more planning time instead of training.

The resolution says school

administrators should provide factual COVID-19 numbers to the public and staff and “listen to educator input, show empathy and leadership.”

In the association survey, educators were asked to choose the word that best described how they felt about teaching under COVID-19.

Choices on the survey included focused, happy, inspired, angry, worried, stressed and frustrated.

The top answer: overwhelmed.

Other popular answers: stressed, frustrated and worried.

Educators were asked, “How has the COVID pandemic affected your long-term professional planning?”

Of the 5,850 who answered, 213, or 3.6%, said they would quit teaching at the end of the school year.

Fifteen percent said they were looking for another job and would leave teaching as soon as they found one. Five percent of responding teachers said they would retire at the end of the school year. Three out of four said they had no plans to leave the classroom in the next five years.

The statewide survey provides a glimpse of what educators were feeling and

thinking on a variety of COVID-19-related topics 2½ months into the school year.

Six of 10 respondents said they lack enough time to prepare for their teaching workload.

More than nine out of 10 respondents supported requiring masks for school staff and students.

Fifty-two percent said their district leaders were not listening to educator input relating to COVID-19 issues.

Benson said people need to stop blaming teachers for the rising COVID-19 cases because teachers had a baby shower or ate lunch together.

“I look on Facebook, I look on social media, and bars and restaurants are posting great big Husker parties,” Benson said. “Hundreds and hundreds of people without masks. And yet we’re pointing fingers at teenagers who had a slumber party with five friends or we’re pointing fingers at educators. The blame needs to stop, and actions need to start taking place.”

World-Herald staff writer Emily Nitcher contributed to this report.

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Museum: It’ll ‘push the boundaries of joyful, experiential science learning’

Continued from Page 1

qualities of materials used for construction and other purposes.

David G. Brown, president and CEO of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce, said the new center “solidifies Greater Omaha as a world-class region.”

Renderings from Omaha architecture firm HDR show a sizable glassy structure on city parkland at Lewis & Clark Landing, with views of downtown, the Missouri River and the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge.

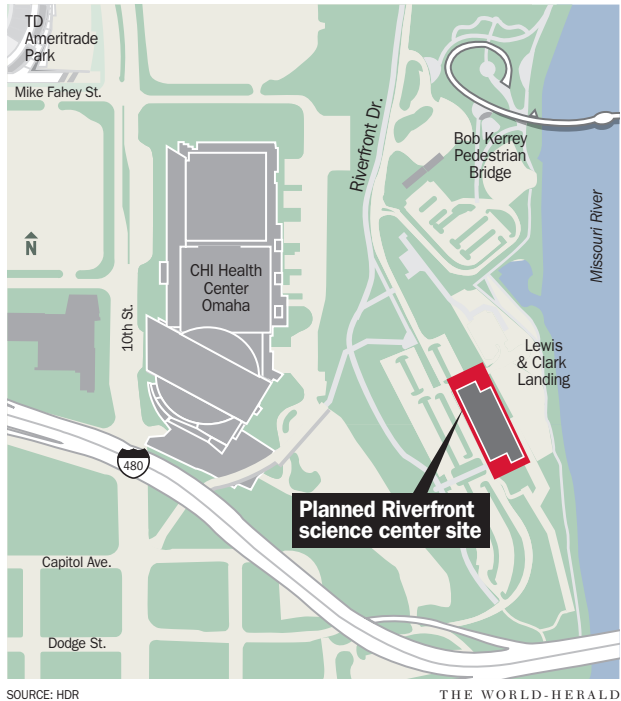
The museum will be in the area of the long-defunct Rick’s Cafe Boatyard restaurant. It’s north of Interstate 480, east of the CHI Health Center arena and south of the National Park Service’s Midwest region headquarters and the Kerrey bridge.

The center is an addition to the ongoing \$300 million revitalization of the city’s downtown and riverfront parks, \$250 million of which is being funded by private donors. The museum brings the total value of the riverfront facelift to over \$400 million, with nearly 90% of those dollars from the private sector.

All money for the center is being raised by Heritage Services, the influential philanthropy organization that has been behind numerous major civic projects in Omaha over the past three decades.

From the time the project was announced last summer, it was known that Kiewit would be part of the new science center’s name. The Omaha-based construction company, which builds major projects all over the world, is making a “very significant” donation for the Kiewit Luminarium, said Rachel Jacobson, president of Heritage Services.

In addition, numerous Kiewit executives and several charitable foundations with Kiewit ties are making sizable donations for the



project, including Omaha’s Peter Kiewit Foundation, the family foundation of former Kiewit Chairman Walter Scott Jr. and the family foundation of current Kiewit Chairman Bruce Grewcock.

Grewcock called the center one of the best investments the community can make to ensure a diverse and inclusive workforce for the city’s future.

“We hope that Kiewit Luminarium opens the door to STEM learning for those who may not think science or engineering is for them,” he said.

Kiewit is also serving as the construction contractor for the project, and that work has already begun.

The site has been cleared, and Monday marked the start of driving test pilings for the building’s foundation. Depending on the weather, Demulling said, it’s hoped all the pilings for the 82,000-square-foot center — about the total area of 1½ football fields — can be driven by the spring.

Plans call for construc-

tion to be completed by late 2022, with exhibits then installed for a planned April 2023 grand opening.

To help ensure that the Omaha center ranks with the nation’s best science museums, Heritage has partnered with San Francisco’s Exploratorium, one of the nation’s premier science museums, to develop the exhibits and programming.

Demulling said in planning the new center, he’s visited the Exploratorium half a dozen times. And each time he’s been on a guided tour, he said, by the end, some tour participants would be missing because they became fascinated by an exhibit and stayed behind to explore it.

“It’s just very engaging,” he said.

Tom Rockwell, creative director for the Exploratorium, said work on the Omaha exhibits is well underway. When completed, he said, visitors will explore the museum through four hands-on theme areas dedicated to:

- » **Building self and community.** Exhibits on the body

and its cells, as well as social science and human behavior.

- » **Building the world.** Structures, infrastructures, landscapes, design, construction and engineering.
- » **Building knowledge.** Physical phenomena such as light, motion, energy, sound and electricity.
- » **Making it count.** Math, numbers and geometry.

Rockwell said the latter theme area will be home to the geometric climber. That hands-on exhibit will include “geometric manipulables” and puzzles for visitors to solve.

The math section will also include a nationally unique exhibit on money, monetary systems and financial literacy.

The signature exhibit on materials, called “The Grid,” will be in the “building the world” theme area.

It will explore everything from brick and concrete to modern composite materials engineered to be lightweight and strong. Visitors will have opportunities to test the weight, strength, hardness and other qualities of materials.

“It’s kind of like a tower of material science,” Rockwell

said of the two-story exhibit.

Rockwell said the Exploratorium is thrilled to be part of the Omaha project, which is among the largest around the world that the San Francisco center has ever consulted on.

“We are deeply inspired by the city, the region, and its history,” he said. “We believe this innovative new center will push the boundaries of joyful, experiential science learning as well as inclusive community engagement.”

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BRIEFLY

METRO AREA

Spanish-speaking doctors plan online virus forum

Five Spanish-speaking doctors will take part in an online forum Wednesday with the goal of reaching the Hispanic population with vital coronavirus information.

The session, sponsored by the Douglas County Health Department and nonprofit La Casa del Pueblo, will be held online at noon Wednesday. Viewers also will be able to watch the presentation later.

People can watch the forum, “Súmate: Doctores Unidos Contra COVID,” on the Douglas County Health or Douglas County Facebook pages.

Speaking will be University of Nebraska Medical Center Drs. Armando De Alba



Armando De Alba

Dr. Alhelí Gastelum; and CHI Health Clinic Dr. Eduardo Herrera Lirio. — **Alia Conley**

Felon who had gun at protest is sent to prison

A 20-year-old convicted felon has been sentenced to federal prison for having a loaded handgun at a June protest that went past curfew.

Omahan Travis S. Walker will serve 2½ years in federal prison after he was

convicted of being a felon in possession of a firearm. After he’s released, he must serve three years of probation.

Authorities said that on June 1, the fourth day of the city’s racial justice protests, Walker was in downtown Omaha in a group that had violated the 8 p.m. curfew in effect that night.

That group was throwing rocks and bottles at Omaha police officers, federal officials said.

Officers searched Walker’s backpack and found a loaded Beretta .22-caliber handgun with one round in the chamber.

In 2019, Walker pleaded no contest to attempted robbery. He served one year in jail and prison for that charge.

— **Alia Conley**

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