



Weather

Snow today with a high of 32 and a low of 10. More snow on New Year's Day. Page A8

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GOOD MORNING



Russian winter

A man rides a sleigh carrying tourists in a park on a bank of the Moskva River at the outskirts of Moscow on Wednesday.

Russia may send spacecraft to knock away asteroid

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's space agency chief said Wednesday a spacecraft may be dispatched to knock a large asteroid off course and reduce the chances of earth impact, even though U.S. scientists say such a scenario is unlikely.

Anatoly Perminov told Golos Rossii radio the space agency would hold a meeting soon to assess a mission to Apophis. He said his agency might eventually invite NASA, the European Space Agency, the Chinese space agency and others to join the project.

When the 885-foot asteroid was first discovered in 2004, astronomers estimated its chances of smashing into Earth in its first flyby, in 2029, at 1-in-37.

Further studies have ruled out the possibility of an impact in 2029, when the asteroid is expected to come no closer than 18,300 miles from Earth's surface, but they indicated a small possibility of a hit on subsequent encounters.

In October, after researchers recalculated the asteroid's path, NASA estimated a 1-in-250,000 chance.

NASA said another close encounter in 2068 will involve a 1-in-330,000 chance of impact.

Tell us your ice fishing story

Are you an avid ice fisherman? Do you have ice fishing stories that would interest our readers? Contact News Sun reporter Dennis Nartker at 347-0400 Ext. 134 or e-mail at dennism@kpcnews.net.

Info

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Inside

Classified .....B7-B8 Deaths .....A4 Opinion .....A5 Sports .....B1-B3 Life .....A3 TV, Comics, Dear Abby .....B6

Vol. 100 No. 359



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CHAD KLINE

East Noble High School Career Pathways coordinator Mark Cockcroft was honored before the Indiana Pacers' game vs. Memphis

Wednesday night in Indianapolis. The Pacers honored Cockcroft as an "Indiana Hero" for his work with the Boomerang Backpack program.

Cockcroft honored by Pacers

BY JUSTIN PENLAND jpenland@kpcnews.net

INDIANAPOLIS — Mark Cockcroft took center court and turned to wave at an applauding crowd of nearly 15,000 in Conseco Fieldhouse on Wednesday. Cockcroft was honored as an Indiana Hero by the Indiana Pacers before their game against Memphis, one in a line of recognitions he has received on his Boomerang Backpack program.

"It was pretty amazing just being down there with the players and seeing all the people," he said. "To see them all applauding, it was pretty overwhelming."

Cockcroft is the Career Pathways Coordinator for East Noble High School.

While he doesn't like being singled out for attention, he has been honored on the NBC

Nightly News "Making a Difference" segment and has received an award from the Noble County Community Foundation.

Cockcroft selflessly passes the honor onto the volunteers who have helped him, giving them credit keeping the program alive.

"I wish we could be honoring everyone who helps out," he said. "It's very nice to know people know and appreciate it, but this much is not needed."

The Boomerang Backpack program, an initiative that gives students on free or reduced-price lunches a backpack of food to take home for the weekend, has grown from serving 55 kids at South Side Elementary School in Kendallville to assisting students in eight schools across DeKalb, Noble and Steuben counties.

All five East Noble School Corp. elementary schools participate in the program. Waterloo

Elementary, the Metropolitan School District of Steuben County and J.E. Ober Elementary in Garrett have joined recently, and Fremont and Prairie Heights will begin after winter break.

"It takes a great volunteer system to keep something like this going," Cockcroft said. "We have great support from the local community, the volunteers, students and adults."

The current numbers for the program show about 750 students receiving help with 100 being added in the coming week. Cockcroft estimates the number will soon escalate to approximately 1,000 per weekend.

"As long as we have the support, we will help out as many children as we can," he said. "No matter what city, county or state they are in, we'll try to give them some help."

Iran hardliners call for killing rivals at rallies

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — Tens of thousands of hard-liners poured into the streets in support of Iran's clerical rulers at state-sponsored rallies Wednesday, some chanting calls for the execution of opposition leaders as the country's internal strife turned more bitter.

Some wore white funeral shrouds to symbolize a willingness to die in defense of the ruling system. An ominous online threat in the name of a previously unknown group said

suicide squads were ready to assassinate the opposition leaders should the judiciary fail to punish them within a week.

The display of popular support for the government and the stirring, violent rhetoric from the crowd appeared to be a genuine outpouring, though some supporters were bused in by the government. The rallies showed Iran's rulers could forcefully take back control of the streets after opposition demonstrations Sunday

that triggered the worst bloodshed since the height of the unrest over the summer.

Iran's official news agency reported that the top two opposition leaders fled Tehran. But the son of one of the men, Mahdi Karroubi, disputed that report and told The Associated Press that Karroubi and the other leader, Mir Hossein Mousavi, were both at their homes in Tehran.

"The people who must escape are

the ones whose hands are tainted with the blood of Iranian people," Taghi Karroubi said. "Unfortunately, the government news agency is spreading false news like the government itself."

Despite the pro-government outpouring, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei made a rare, candid acknowledgment that the country's Islamic rulers had lost some supporters since the disputed presidential election in June.

Swine flu less catchy than other pandemic strains

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS How contagious is swine flu? Less than the novel viruses that have caused big world outbreaks in the past, new research suggests.

If someone in your home has swine flu, your odds of catching it are about one in eight, although children are twice as susceptible as adults, the study found. It is one of the first big scientific attempts to find out how much the illness spreads in homes versus at work or school, and who is most at risk.

The study was done by outbreak specialists from Imperial College London and from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Results are in today's New England Journal of Medicine.

Swine flu has sickened an estimated one-sixth of Americans since the novel virus was first identified in April. The second

SEE SWINE, PAGE A8

Meth suspect arrested — again

BY DENNIS NARTKER dennism@kpcnews.net

KENDALLVILLE — An Avilla man who was arrested a week ago after police found 25 meth labs in his Dowling Street apartment was arrested again Tuesday night on drug charges after police found him and an 18-year-old girl in a vacant North Main Street apartment.

Kevin R. Slone, 25, was charged with residential entry, possession of methamphetamine and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Sierra Renkenberger, 18, of the 1100 block of South Main Street, Kendallville, was charged with residential entry, possession of a controlled substance, possession of marijuana and resisting law enforcement.

At about 10:39 p.m. police were called to a residence in the 300 block of North Main Street after a landlord advised his vacant rental property was occupied without his knowledge. Officers found

evidence of someone living at the residence.

Slone allegedly entered the residence while police were on the scene. He allegedly told police the items belonged to him and a female he identified as Renkenberger. Police took Slone into custody.

Renkenberger arrived a short time later. Police used a Taser gun to take her into custody.

Slone was out of jail on bond at the time facing charges of possession of precursors with intent to manufacture methamphetamine within 1,000 feet of a family housing complex, a Class C felony; and leaving the scene of a property damage accident, a Class A misdemeanor.

On Tuesday, Dec. 22, police found 25 meth labs in a Dowling Street apartment where Slone was



Slone

allegedly living at the time. Slone had allegedly crashed a Chevrolet C-10 pickup truck on East Dowling Street at about 8:22 p.m. Tuesday and officers investigating the accident followed his footprints in the snow to his apartment house in the 700 block of Dowling Street. He told police he was not the driver of the pickup truck but officers permission to enter his apartment to check for other people.

Officers observed items related to the manufacture of methamphetamine and notice a strong chemical odor. Police took Slone into custody and obtained a search warrant. An Indian State Police Clandestine Lab Team and a Kendallville officer trained in meth lab processing allegedly found 25 one-pot meth labs, 25 HCL generators, numerous precursors to manufacture meth and numerous drug paraphernalia products.

Slone and Renkenberger were booked into the Noble County Jail on \$4,500 bonds each.

Yemen raids al-Qaida hideout

SAN'A, Yemen (AP) — Yemeni forces raided an al-Qaida hideout and set off a gunbattle Wednesday as the government vowed to eliminate the group that claimed it was behind the Christmas bombing attempt on a U.S. airliner.

The fighting took place in an al-Qaida stronghold in western Yemen, haven for a group that attacked the U.S. Embassy here in 2008, killing 10 Yemeni guards and four civilians. A government statement said at least one suspected militant was arrested during the clashes.

"The (Interior) Ministry will continue tracking down al-Qaida terrorists and will continue its strikes against the group until it is totally eliminated," Deputy Interior Minister Brig. Gen. Saleh al-Zawari told senior military officials at a meeting in Mareb, another province believed to shelter al-Qaida fighters.

Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, an offshoot of Osama bin Laden's group, claimed it was behind the attempt to bomb a Detroit-bound airliner. Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a 23-year-old passenger, was arrested Friday after he allegedly tried to bring down the Northwest Airlines flight, carrying 289 people.

U.S. investigators said Abdulmutallab told them he received training and instructions from al-Qaida operatives in Yemen. Yemen's government has said Abdulmutallab spent two periods in the country, from 2004 to 2005 and from August to December of this year, just before the attempted attack.

Abdulmutallab's Yemen connection has drawn attention to al-Qaida's growing presence in the impoverished and lawless country, which is located on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula across the Gulf of Aden from Somalia.