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SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

50 Cents

TODAY'S BRIEFING

LIFE



TOP
10

FOOD TRENDS

► Diet crazes come and go. So what food and nutrition trends might be expected to prevail in '05? Leading a top-10 list of predictions is medifoods, products that pack medicinal value. You can expect the low-carb fad to fade and organic foods (above) to proliferate. **1D**

Romance of stone - for cooking

► Cooking by stone is as old as, well, cooking itself. So why are some people returning to the stone age in the kitchen? "Clay absorbs the moisture, and your food gets crispy, not soggy," a convert says. Learn more stone use. **1D**

LOCAL & REGION

Grab extra blankets, you might need them

► South Dakota and its ice-blue cold is about to move into a deeper state of freeze. It's called Siberia-cold. Temperatures might not rise above zero on Thursday, Friday or Saturday. Lows could reach the minus-20s. Let the shivering begin. **1B**

Assault victim sues over racial slurs

► A man is in serious condition after a conflict that last week spilled into a Wal-Mart parking lot in Sioux Falls. The victim, a Wal-Mart employee, also is suing the store, accusing Wal-Mart of failing to protect him amid a racially charged environment. **1B**

SPORTS



A drive to play with the big guys

► On Thursday, Michelle Wie will try to become the first woman in 60 years to make a PGA Tour cut. Last year, the 15-year-old golfer from Honolulu missed the cut by one stroke for the Sony Open in Hawaii. "If she hits it like she did last year, I think she's going to have a great chance to make the cut," says defending champion Ernie Els. **1C**

TODAY'S WEATHER

HIGH **28°**
 LOW **-6°**
 Snow
 Full report, 2A

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Rounds details growth plan



LLOYD B. CUNNINGHAM / ARGUS LEADER
Gov. Rounds delivers his state address Tuesday. Behind him is Lt. Gov. Dennis Daugaard. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH: 6A

Some GOP leaders suggest vision is too ambitious

BY TERRY WOSTER
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PIERRE - Gov. Mike Rounds used his State of the State message Tuesday to give legislators images of a South Dakota he says is doing well but is capable of doing better. Rounds sprinkled talk of wind-energy development, South Dakota brand beef and more university research with statistics showing personal income is up, unemployment is down and ongoing state revenue is growing faster than ongoing spending. "We are moving forward, and we are on the right track for the people

of South Dakota," he said. "We have problems to solve and new opportunities to create."

He also used the hourlong speech to defend budget growth that is being challenged by some legislators and to press his argument that a \$7.3 million state-aid increase each of the past two years was never a promise to K-12 schools. Those two issues could be among the more contentious policy debates of the 40-day session.

And although Rounds asked legislators to look at long-range goals, See **STATE ADDRESS**, page 6A

FOUR INITIATIVES

BUDGET: State Game, Fish and Parks will work to provide hunting access for state residents and training for game wardens, Rounds said. He and governors of other western states hope to rein in the use of the federal Endangered Species Act.

WIND: The governor's staff is working on incentives to lure two \$1 billion coal-fired power plants to the state, which could be used to market wind power.

RESEARCH: A full 146 of the proposed new state positions are for research graduate students. That and doctoral-level programs would work with the bid to have the Homestake gold mine become an underground lab.

EDUCATION: Rounds said he won't be able to give schools the \$7.3 million outside the state-aid formula that he provided each of the past two years.

ONLINE

Offer your opinion about the governor's initiatives in a forum and see more photos at www.argusleader.com.

WAKONDA MOURNS FOR FOUR CHILDREN



STUART VILLANUEVA / ARGUS LEADER
The caskets of the four Eckert children who died in a fire are transported from Wakonda's school following the funeral service.

Victims of fire are laid together

BY JENNIFER SANDERSON
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WAKONDA - Cole Eckert, 6, had a rare talent for playing grown-up to Austin, who earned medals as a Special Olympics athlete and would have turned 11 later this month. Family photos show the two playing on monkey bars and at the computer, rarely apart save for Austin's 4½ years of lead time.

Cole watches over his big brother still.

Tuesday afternoon, the rural Wakonda boys were buried in a shared casket in Pleasant Valley Cemetery. The brothers died Friday in a house fire that also claimed sis-

ters Carli, 4, and Allyson, 17. Parents Brian and Rhonda Eckert requested the girls be kept together, too, as the four were that morning.

Investigators suspect that Allyson awoke to smoke detectors and may have tried to save her younger siblings, but that toxic fumes overcame the children before they could make it out of the two-story farmhouse. Officials don't suspect foul play, though the fire's cause remains unknown. The blaze started on the ground floor, and damage was contained primarily to that level.

About 750 people crowded inside the Wakonda High School gymnasium to say goodbye. School dis-

missed at noon, and though few in town would need to be told why, a sign taped to the door at Steffen's Bar & Grill let guests know the reason the gathering place was closed for the afternoon.

Inside the gym, dozens of photographs - some framed, some taped together in poster collages - showed the children together and as individuals. The senior class put together its own poster to remember Ally, writing brief memories in the margins. "Her own person," they declared, and, though Ally wasn't old enough to vote, "Proud to be a Democrat."

See **FUNERAL**, page 5A

MORE ONLINE

For previous articles about the deadly fire in Wakonda and to see a gallery of photos from the fire and funeral, log on to www.argusleader.com.

New case of mad cow in Canada entrenches import foes

BY BEN SHOUSE
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South Dakota opposition to opening the Canadian border to cattle imports is stiffening in light of a new case of mad cow disease in Canada, in a cow born after that country banned the type of feed thought to transmit the disease.

"If what you say is true, this is a serious development. My concern level goes much higher; it's a whole different ball game," said Mike Stahly, a Cavour rancher and president of the South Dakota Cattle-

men's Association.

South Dakota's Congressional representatives also reiterated their opposition to opening the border.

Sen. John Thune said the Agriculture Department is not doing enough to protect U.S. ranchers and beef exports.

"I don't think it's enough until they decide to delay the opening," Thune said. "There are too many unanswered questions, and it is too soon to do this."

Sen. Tim Johnson emphasized the need for country-of-origin labeling, though he said it is no substitute for keeping the border closed. Thune and Rep. Stephanie Herseth both support labeling.

But Johnson said some Republicans in the House want to make COOL voluntary. "We've got an uphill battle ahead of us," he said.

Herseth, who serves on the House Agriculture Committee, advocated hearings on the priorities of the Agriculture Department.

"If there has ever been a case, in my opinion, for the need for stringent oversight, it is with this Agriculture Department. I feel that the USDA is no longer a true voice for family agriculture," she said.

The arrival of a new secretary, former Nebraska Gov. Mike Johanns, might bring a more open ear to producers, Herseth said.

Reach reporter Ben Shouse at 331-2318.

INSIDE

► **MORE ON CASE:** Read more about the latest development in Canada. **5A**

15 days at sea with hot sun, sharks, faith

Tsunami swept Indonesian out, coconuts sustained him

BY VIJAY JOSHI
 Associated Press

KLANG, Malaysia - Lying prone on the bobbing wooden plank, Ari Afrizal looked left and saw the fiery red sun dipping into the watery horizon. Weakly, he turned his face the other way and saw a pearly white full moon rising in the east.

All around him, the sea looked like it was sprinkled with chopped leaves of gold, shimmering in the sun's glow. Ari had never seen a more wondrous sight.

It was dusk on Dec. 26, and Ari was adrift in the Indian Ocean.

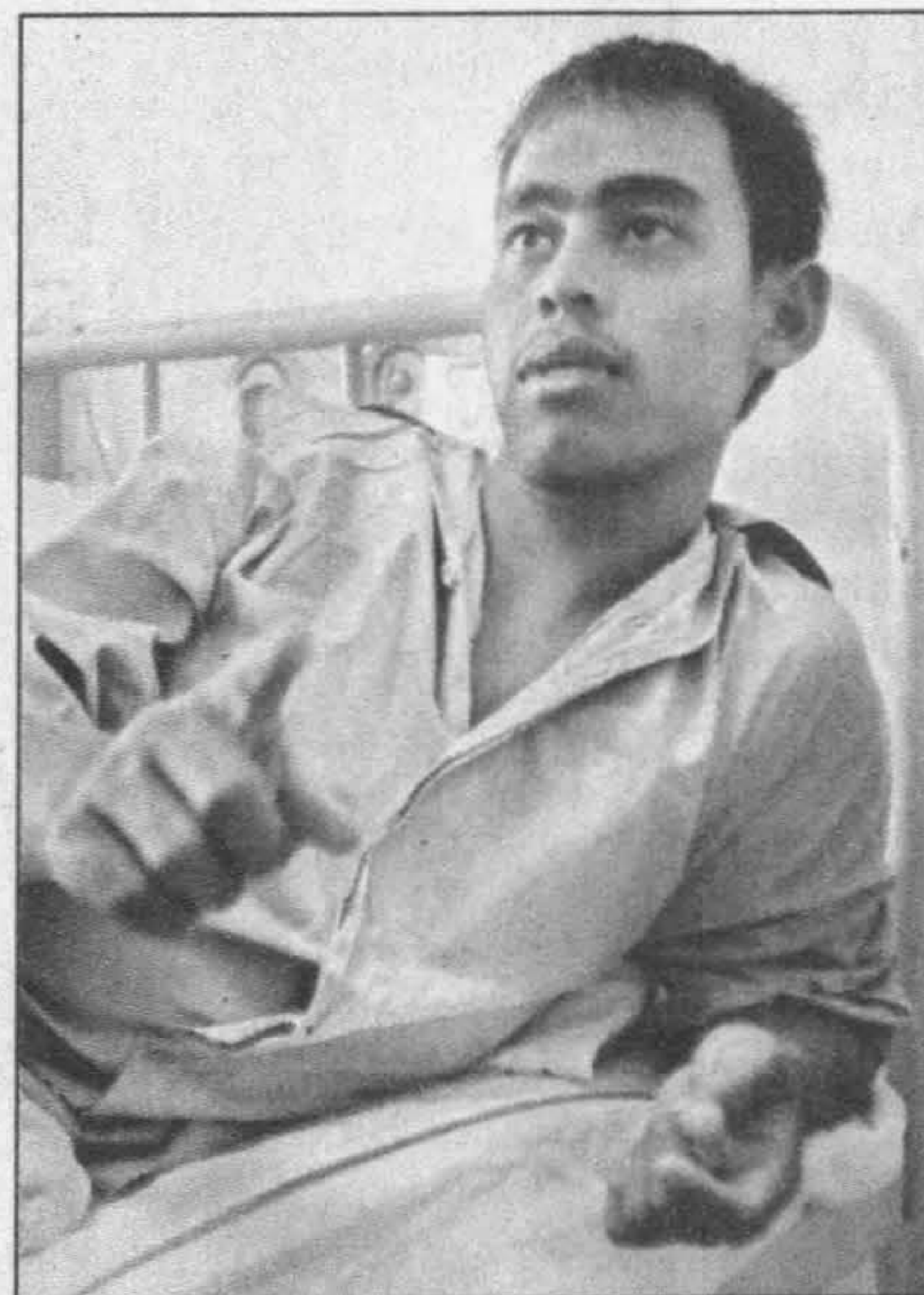
"I was not prepared to die," the 21-year-old carpenter said.

And against all odds, he didn't.

That morning, when the ground began to shake, Ari was on a scaffolding, hammering nails into a plank, part of a crew building a beach home 150 miles from the Indonesian provincial capital Banda Aceh. Frightened, the crew moved away from the house and squatted in the sand.

"Then the waves started coming," Ari said.

The first one, 3 feet high, ripped the



ANDY WONG / AP

Indonesian Ari Afrizal, a tsunami survivor, was rescued by a container ship Sunday. Afrizal, 21, says he drifted on the Indian Ocean for two weeks, living on coconuts.

► **Marine help, yes; guns, no 2A**

scaffolding down. A minute later came the big one, a bluish-white wall 30 feet high.

"It produced a deep sound like whoooooo," Ari said this week from his hospital bed.

Ari felt as if he were caught in a giant

See **SURVIVOR**, page 6A

10 drug firms offer their own discount cards

Adds coverage for uninsured

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

WASHINGTON - Millions of uninsured Americans could save money on prescriptions under a discount program that 10 major drug makers unveiled Tuesday.

The Together Rx Access Card program allows those who meet income and age requirements to save 25 percent to 40 percent - and sometimes more - on more than 275 brand-name prescription drugs and a host of generic drugs.

The program is the latest in a trend by drug manufacturers to offer their own discount cards to those without health care coverage who struggle to pay skyrocketing drug prices.

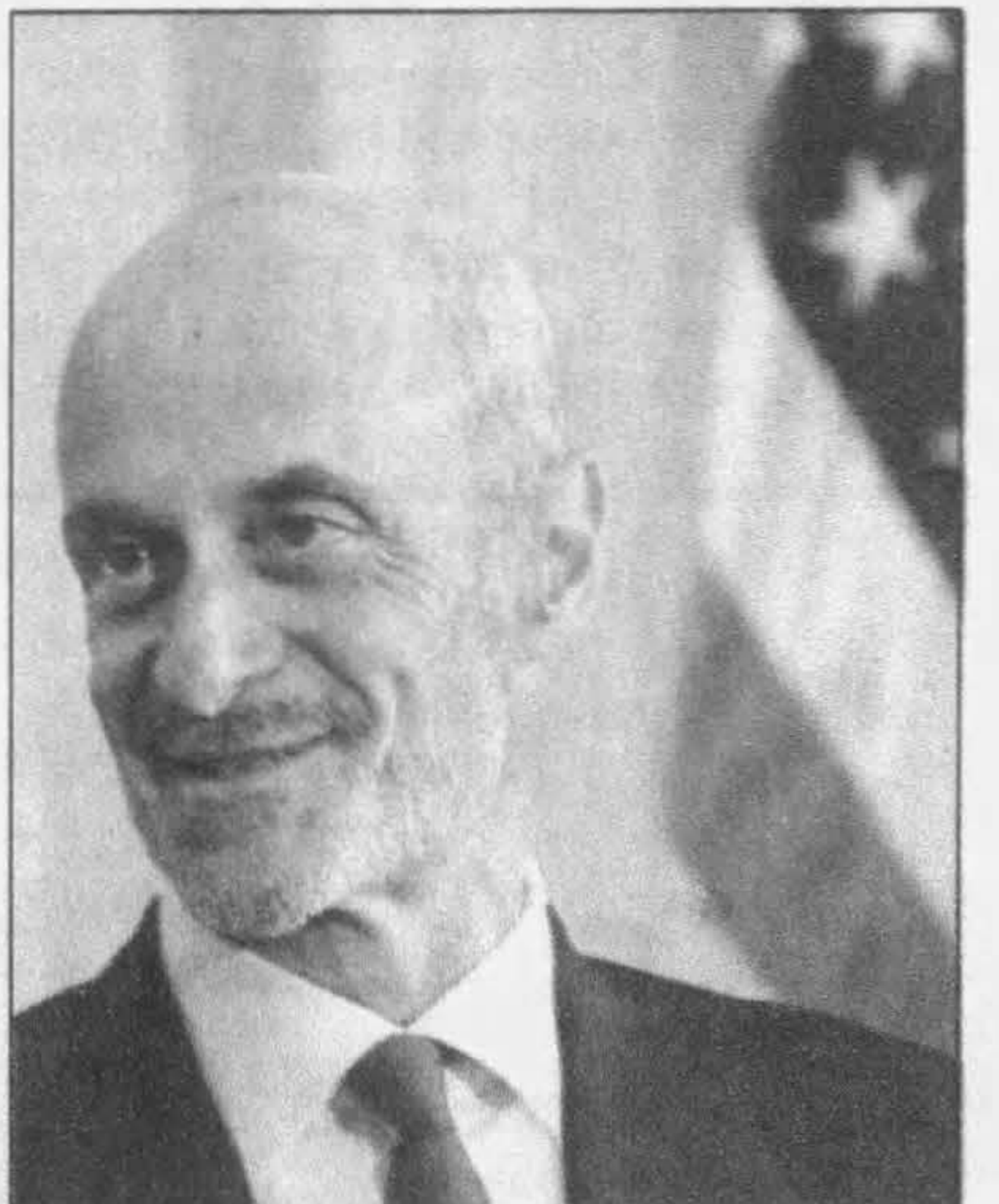
"It's free to get, it's free to use and the savings are real," said Roba Whitely, executive director of Together Rx Access.

Mark Griffin, president of Sioux Falls-based Lewis Drug, said the card is the result of cooperation between the drug manufacturers and the National Association of Chain Drug Stores.

"It's an alternative to having the government come along later and dictate a plan,"

See **BENEFITS**, page 5A

Terror czar nominated



SUSAN A. WALSH / AP

Michael Chertoff, nominated as secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, headed the Justice Department's criminal division 2001-03. He helped shape the legal response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. He was then named to the 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia. STORY: 3A

3rd mad cow case found in Canada

BY MARC KAUFMAN
The Washington Post
WASHINGTON — Canadian officials have found a third animal infected with mad cow disease — an almost 7-year-old beef cow with no known connection to the other infected cattle. The cow was born after Canada banned the use of cattle feed that includes animal parts in order to try to keep the potentially deadly

U.S. ag department says beef imports from north will continue

infection from spreading. But officials of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency said use of contaminated feed was the likely source of infection. It was the second discovery of an infected cow in Canada in two weeks, and both came just after the U.S. Department of Agriculture

announced a controversial plan to reopen the border to imports of live Canadian cattle. The United States halted trade in live cattle from Canada after the first infected animal was discovered there in 2003. Despite the two new cases, the USDA said it will resume cross-border trade.

"We remain confident that the animal and public health measures that Canada has in place to prevent (mad cow disease), combined with existing U.S. domestic safeguards, provide the utmost protection to U.S. consumers and livestock," said W. Ron DeHaven, administrator of the Animal

Plant Health Inspection Service. "The result of our investigation and analysis will be used to evaluate appropriate next steps." Because the newly discovered animal was born after Canada imposed its feed ban, however, the agency will send a technical team to Canada "to evaluate

the circumstances surrounding these recent finds," DeHaven said. Mad cow disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy is a rare but always fatal disease that can be transmitted to humans who eat infected meat. In addition to the three infected cows in Canada, an infected animal born in Canada was found in late 2003 on a farm in Washington state.

Benefits: 80 percent of uninsured who lack cards could be covered

Continued from 1A
said Griffin, a former chairman of the organization. "There is a large number of people who don't have coverage, and this provides some assistance to them. It's a good deal for everyone involved."

Consumer groups have called similar discount cards a way for drug companies, rather than the government, to control who saves money and how much is saved. The cards offer some savings from already high prices while attracting new customers for the companies' products.

"What these drug companies are doing is very commendable and it will be of benefit to people who are uninsured," said Ron Pollock, executive director of the health care reform group FamiliesUSA. "Of course, it's nowhere near being an adequate substitute for our nation making a real commitment to expanding coverage for the 45 million who don't have coverage today."

Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson praised the program as "a commonsense, pragmatic way to give the uninsured access to prescription medicines," and said it may stem the tide of those looking to Canada for affordable prescriptions.

"I'm sure there are some cynics out there who will say 'It's not enough,' but it's a wonderful program," Thompson said.

Whitely said the benefits could cover 80 percent of the 45 million Americans who are uninsured and don't carry prescription drug coverage. That number has grown from 40 million only four years ago.

Many of the most popular drugs are included in the program. Pharmaceutical giant Pfizer, for example, is discounting some of its best-selling drugs, including Lipitor, Zolofit and Celebrex. But card holders won't know the exact discount they get until they check at their local pharmacies.

Discounts will vary based on the pharmacy a cardholder uses, said Patrick Kelly, president of Pfizer's U.S. pharmaceutical business. Pharmacies that cooperate with the program are also offering their own discounts for each drug and will add both reductions to reach a final savings amount.

ELIGIBILITY

To get the new Together Rx Access Card, a person must be:

- ▶ Younger than 65.
- ▶ Ineligible for Medicare.
- ▶ Have no other private or public drug coverage.
- ▶ Meet income requirements: Make no more than \$30,000 for a single person, \$40,000 for couples or \$60,000 for a family of four.

To enroll:

- ▶ Log on to www.TogetherRxAccess.com.
- ▶ Call 800-444-4106.

Kelly also downplayed any effect the program might have on his company's earnings. "To us, I think, this is a net wash," he said. The new cards join an ever-growing muddle of drug discount programs for the poor and seniors.

Seven of the 10 companies also joined in 2003 to offer a discount card for low-income seniors, the Together Rx card, which has enrolled almost 1.5 million cardholders. Since last year, Pfizer has offered its own Pfizer Friends discount card.

Some pharmacists say they are overburdened running price checks for customers to see which card offers the best discount, said Ernest Boyd, executive director of the Ohio Pharmacists Association in Dublin, Ohio.

"Sometimes patients will walk into the pharmacy, it's like they have a deck of cards," Boyd said. "They'll say they just want prices on each of the drugs and ask which card is cheapest for each." Busy pharmacies are beginning to limit customers to two requests for the best price per drug, he said.

The card will be effective by mid-February.

Companies participating in the program are Abbott; AstraZeneca; Bristol-Myers Squibb; Glaxo-SmithKline; Janssen Pharmaceutica and Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical Inc., part of the Johnson & Johnson family of companies; Novartis; Pfizer; sanofi-aventis Group; Takeda Pharmaceuticals North America Inc.; and TAP Pharmaceutical Products Inc.

Funeral: Few in Wakonda miss farewell

Continued from 1A

Other images were projected onto a screen at the front of the gymnasium during the service. Those gathered saw honor student Ally in a formal gown and tap and ballet dancer Carli playing dress-up. Olympian Austin and Cub Scout Cole — both already young outdoorsmen — grinned in shot after shot. The slides played first to the song "Friends," a Michael W. Smith tune often chosen for high school graduation ceremonies.

"Though it's hard to let you go," the chorus ends, "In the father's hands we know / That a lifetime's not too long to live as friends."

Later, Ally's classmates, all honorary pallbearers, waited in the lobby. The five young women in front held tightly to one another's hands, then collapsed in a tight circle to embrace as others wheeled the caskets out the doorway.

"We know you are a God of love, and we know it's sometimes hard to know where that love is," the Rev. Leon Shulz prayed in closing.

Another pastor, the Rev. Larry Parvin of Bethel Baptist Church, emphasized the message that faith would heal the Eckert family. He read from the Christmas story and from the tale of Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. That's the same God, Parvin said, who can lift up those mourning the Eckert children.

God promised he'd never forsake his people, Parvin said, and the pastor called for both divine intervention and earthly support from neighbors.

"Father," he said, "I'm going to

HOW TO HELP

Two area groups have set up funds to benefit the Eckert family of rural Wakonda, who lost four children in a fire Friday. The siblings, ages 4-17, were remembered Tuesday at a funeral service.

FIRST PREMIER BANK: Donations may be made at any First Premier location. The Eckerts' home branch is at 115 Ohio St., Wakonda, SD, 57073.

SIOUX VALLEY FOUNDATION: To donate through this fund-raising arm of the health system for which mother Rhonda Eckert works, call 328-5700.

claim that promise today for this community."

Among the few townspeople unable to attend were Allyson's co-workers at the local nursing home and assisted-care facility, the Avera-run Wakonda Heritage Manor. They flew their flag at half-staff for Ally and her siblings.

"If you asked her to stay after or come on extra shifts, she would," said cook David Bryant, who oversaw Allyson in her role as a dietary aide in the center's kitchen. "There was nothing she wouldn't do for somebody. ... I could see her being a nurse, being a teacher. She really cared for people."

Bryant said the rare times Allyson asked to leave a few minutes ahead of schedule, it was so she could be there for opening tipoff of girls basketball games. She was a statistician for the team and wanted to catch every play,

he said, but she wouldn't head out the door until everything was squared away.

A part of him was glad to have something to do the day of the funeral, truth be told. He knows what it's like to lose a child, and services bring back his own pain. Years ago, a bus accident took a daughter about Cole's age.

The Eckert children were home alone when the fire started. Their mother had left early for work on the Sioux Valley Hospital campus in Sioux Falls. With their father in Pennsylvania, it was Allyson's job to get the three others ready for the day.

Rhonda Eckert got a call from worried school officials about 8:30 that morning, saying her three oldest children had not shown up for classes. She phoned a relative, who drove to the farm and discovered the fire shortly after 9 a.m. Brian Eckert drove from Pennsylvania to return to the area Saturday and attend services.

The family seems to have done everything right, Clay County Sheriff Andy Howe said earlier this week.

The home had a smoke detector on each level, and the alarms were sounding even as law enforcement and rescue workers arrived.

"I know a little about what the family is going through, and it's going to be a long afternoon here," Bryant said. "I had three older boys, now in their 20s, and I just focused all I had on them."

"This poor woman lost her whole family. It's not so much the day of the funeral. It's the weeks afterward when everyone else goes home."

Reach Jennifer Sanderson at 575-3629.

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