

FAIRBANKS

Daily News-Miner

THE VOICE OF INTERIOR ALASKA SINCE 1903

Inside Today

STUDENT FOUND SAFE AFTER GETTING ON WRONG BUS AT SCHOOL. » A4

GOOD MORNING



The weather.

It's expected to be mostly cloudy today, with areas of fog and potential snow showers.

High today -19
Low tonight -21

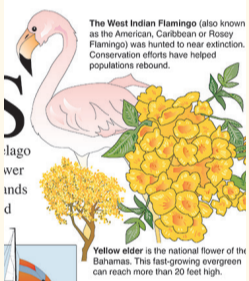
WEATHER » A9

Aurora forecast.

Auroral activity will be low. Weather permitting, low displays will be visible overhead from Barrow to Fairbanks.

This information is provided by aurora forecasters at the Geophysical Institute at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. For more information about the aurora, visit <http://www.gi.alaska.edu/AuroraForecast>

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WORLD OF WONDER

Learn about the Bahamas. Because this seems like a good day to dream.

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AWARDING NANOOKS

Women's volleyball team names end-of-year award winners.

SPORTS
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WINTER DANCE

Dance Theatre Fairbanks performs Winter Showcase.

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SOURDOUGH JACK: "Getting on the wrong bus gets even easier the older you get."



COMFORT & JOY



Lawson Nichols, 12, sits in the back of a Ram pickup with Teddy bears he is collecting Monday at Gene's Chrysler. For Nichols' Monroe Catholic seventh grade religion class community project, he is collecting the stuffed toys to give Alaska State Troopers. Troopers carry the plush toys to give to children when they encounter them during their work. SAM HARREL/NEWS-MINER

Student uses class service project as opportunity to help children in the community

By Weston Morrow
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Students in the seventh-grade religion class at Monroe Catholic school are supposed to find a community service project.

Just joining someone else's project or doing the same thing as everyone else wasn't good enough for one

student. Twelve-year-old Lawson Nichols wanted to blaze his own path and do something that could help his community.

"A lot of boys think, 'Oh, I'll just shovel snow or something,'" Julie Nichols, Lawson's mom said, "but he wanted to do something cool."

That cool idea came from a family friend, Sandy Weaver, soon after

getting the class assignment. The idea was to gather stuffed animals and donate them to Alaska State Troopers. The troopers can then keep those stuffed animals with them to give to children to calm their fears during emergencies.

"The troopers are giving the kids teddy bears so they're not afraid of them and know they are there to

keep you safe," Lawson said. Troopers occasionally respond to calls in which children are involved. In a traumatic situation like a car accident or house fire, a small stuffed animal can be a strong comfort to a young child.

To gather the stuffed animals,

TEDDY BEARS » A10

Commission approves racing strip

By Matt Buxton
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The Fairbanks Racing Lions got the green light from the borough Planning Commission last week to move forward with its plans to build a drag racing strip in North Pole.

Some neighbors had testified against the half-mile strip and the noise it would bring. The commission signed off on it because the Fairbanks Racing Lions agreed to 16 conditions, most of which would buffer the neighborhood from the sound of the high-powered engines.

The club will monitor sound levels, limit hours of operation and erect specialized

sound-dampening barriers along the property's perimeter.

"I think the plan you've got here is looking out for all the people who were here complaining the other night," said Commissioner Marna Sanford. "These folks put forward a good proposal."

The buildout of the drag strip will be lengthy. Fairbanks Racing Lions President Jamie Bodenstadt said at an earlier meeting that the first race will take place in about three years.

The facility will be the second drag-racing strip in Alaska. The other is in Palmer. Bodenstadt said the loudest drag racers would be very

DRAG STRIP » A10

Fort Yukon fires under investigation

By Sam Friedman
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Fires have destroyed a tribal education building, a shed and an unoccupied home in Fort Yukon, all in the last two weeks.

The cause of the fires in the Yukon River community of about 600 people is still under investigation, according to city police officer Michael Ivey.

Two of the fires broke out on the night of Dec. 3.

FIRES » A10

Cold temperatures won't stick around Interior for long this time

STAFF REPORT

Fairbanks had its coldest day of the winter on Monday — at least so far.

The low temperature at Fairbanks International Airport on Monday was 36 degrees below zero, topping the previous low for the winter of 33 below on Nov. 21.

The high temperature on Monday was officially 20 below but that occurred just after midnight and the temperature dropped steadily from there, according to meteorologist Joe Kryston at the National Weather Service in Fairbanks. The temperature was in the low 30s below for most of the day at the airport.

Another cold night was expected last night, with temperatures dropping down to around 40 below in valleys and low-lying areas, but things should gradually begin warming up today and

that trend should continue through the week, Kryston said.

The temperature plunged Sunday night when clouds moved out of the Tanana Valley and skies cleared, he said.

"The cold air was over us but we had some snow and clouds over the weekend," he said. "As the clouds evaporated the skies cleared."

More clouds will move into the Tanana Valley starting today, bringing temperatures to a more tolerable level. Today's high should be between 10 and 15 below and the low tonight will be 20 to 25 below, Kryston said.

The temperature will continue to climb through the week, with highs above zero possible by Friday.

"Toward the end of the week the upper level winds switch around and we'll have slightly warmer air coming in over the weekend," Kryston said.

Contact the newsroom at 459-7572.



A pedestrian waits in the cold to cross Airport Way at Cowles Street on Monday afternoon. SAM HARREL/NEWS-MINER

