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TOMORROW



Front Page

Winter snowfall near average in Chippewa Valley, but it was hard on roads.



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Real estate agent slaying similar to local case

By Brad Bryan
Leader-Telegram staff

Real estate agencies know all too well the potential dangers their agents face. James A. Hole, 34, of Brookfield, Ill., was charged in Jefferson County Court Thursday in the death of 71-year-old real estate agent Ann B. Nelson of Cambridge. Nelson was showing Hole a home when he became upset and strangled her, Hole told authorities.

The incident is eerily similar to an unsolved murder that occurred in Chippewa County in 1980 when real estate agent Richard Scott, 41, was found dead in a home he was showing.

Co-workers found his body two days later at the secluded home, 11 miles west of Chippewa Falls. Scott had been shot in the back of the head at close range. His body was in the kitchen. A purchase contract and a calculator were found on the table nearby.

“Each office has its own guidelines that it follows,” said David Dressel, president of the Realtors Association of Northwestern Wisconsin.

Dressel said classes agents take

while learning the trade have a significant portion dedicated to safety. There also are some common sense measures agents employ to stay out of harm’s way, and procedures in place for when things go wrong.

“If you are going out to show a vacant property you should let someone know where you’re going and when you’ll come back,” Dressel said. Agents also are advised to have clients lead the way throughout the home instead of the other way around.

“The cell phone itself is something that can be used,” Dressel said, adding that agents have a specific code word for “call the police.”

“We basically recommend that Realtors meet clients first before going to a showing,” said Eau Claire Realtor David Suchla. He said it’s better to get to know the client before agreeing to meet them somewhere. “Random acts of violence are going to happen; there isn’t anything you can do to protect against those,” Suchla said.

Realtor Shannon Crotty of Chippewa Falls said she’s occasionally gotten calls where “something just doesn’t feel right.” When that happens, she takes a few extra precautions.

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HIGHER COSTS OF BAKED GOODS



Staff photo by Andi Stempniak

Sue Ranney, owner of Sue’s Deluxe Bake Shop in Eau Claire, made Easter egg cakes with icing Thursday afternoon. Ranney and other area bakers say they have had to raise prices on most items in the last three weeks because of significant jumps in the cost of flour.

Bread on the rise

Reasons for skyrocketing bakery prices include poor harvests, gas spikes, push for ethanol

By Candy Czernicki
Chippewa Falls News Bureau

If you’ve noticed that your daily bread is costing you more dough these days, it’s not because bakeries are getting greedy.

“I wasn’t keeping up with prices the way they were,” said Sue Ranney, owner of Sue’s Deluxe Bake Shop on Birch Street in Eau Claire.

“I raised prices for customers quite a bit, basically just to keep up with (the cost of ingredients),” Ranney said. “It’s not like I’m going to make any more (profit); it’s just so I don’t lose so much. Flour, shortening, eggs are going up — it gets a little tough for a small retailer.”

A small loaf of homemade white bread at Ranney’s bakery now sells for \$2.15, a 65-cent increase in the

last three weeks. In the same time, the price of a glazed doughnut has gone up 5 cents and the price of a dozen cookies 25 cents.

White bread in the U.S. cost an average of 85 cents a pound in 1998 and \$1.03 in February 2007, according to federal data. It rose to \$1.32 a pound last month.

“Hopefully I raised (prices) enough to keep us going,” Ranney said. “People have been very understanding.”

The price of wheat has more than tripled in the past 10 months. Poor harvests abroad and shrinking domestic crops, as farmers turn from raising wheat to planting corn for ethanol, have helped send prices skyward.

See **BREAD**, Page 3A

Home lenders tighten credit

Even good risks may not get loan

By J.W. Elphinstone and Alan Zibel
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Just when consumers and the U.S. economy need banks to lend more freely, the mortgage industry is making it harder to borrow — even for those with good credit.

Mortgage insurers, whose backing is required for borrowers who can’t afford the traditional 20 percent down payment on a home, have already flagged nearly a quarter of the nation’s ZIP codes where they refuse to insure some home loans.

That encompasses a variety of neighborhoods: McMansions in Scottsdale, Ariz.; luxury Miami condos; 1960 ranch houses in Flint, Mich.; and early 20th century kit homes in Metuchen, N.J.

The entire states of California, Florida, Arizona, Michigan, Ohio and Nevada — which have seen the highest foreclosure rates and the worst price declines — are blackballed on some mortgage insurers’ lists.

Banks that have lost billions because of bad bets during the housing boom are now reverting to strict lending standards not seen in nearly 20 years, according to industry data and interviews with lenders.

For new home buyers and those seeking to refinance, it can mean higher down payments.

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Sacred Heart endowment honors longtime chaplain

By Christena T. O’Brien
Leader-Telegram staff

Sacred Heart Hospital is paying tribute to the ministry of its longtime senior chaplain — Monsignor Edmund Klimek — with the establishment of an endowment fund bearing his name.

The Friends of Sacred Heart Hospital, the hospital’s foundation arm, has raised nearly \$500,000 for the Monsignor Edmund Klimek Healing Presence Endowment Fund, and, with the help of the community, the organization expects to reach its goal of \$1 million.

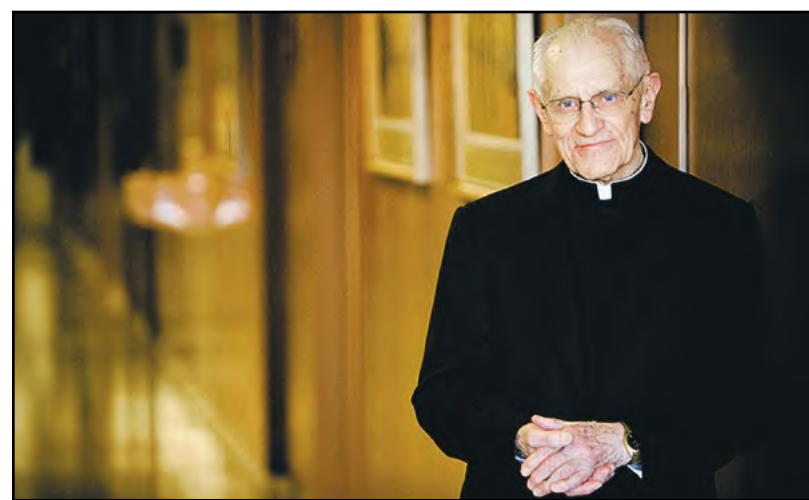
“The whole intent is to continue his ministry well into the future,” said Mike

Markin, Friends chairman, “and some wonderful people have stepped up to make this happen so far.”

Endowment fund proceeds will be used to support projects and programs representative of Klimek’s life-touching ministry, which began in 1953. Among the priorities for the endowment:

■ Education for the community, hospital staff and physicians to enable others to minister to the spiritual needs of the aged, the poor and the sick and to perpetuate the spiritual element of healing.

See **CHAPLAIN**, Page 2A



Contributed photo

In honor of Monsignor Edmund Klimek’s 40 years at Sacred Heart Hospital, an endowment fund bearing his name has been established. “With Father’s guidance and direction, the restricted endowment funds will be used for purposes near and dear to his heart,” said Mike Markin, Friends of Sacred Heart Hospital chairman.