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NU freshman gets chance to shine

P. J. Smith, inserted after Larry Asante's injury, says the three senior safeties have prepared him well. **SPORTS**

Tough choices for pet owners

When is euthanasia the right choice for a sick animal? When treatment is the best course, how do owners deal with steep vet bills? These tips can help. **LIVING**



Omaha World-Herald

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2009 **SUNRISE EDITION**

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MUST READ



Health ideas from an insurer

Change may not happen "in one swoop," says the CEO of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Nebraska. See what else he has to say.

Money

Feds shake up the menu

Starting Thursday, fruits, vegetables and whole grains will become part of the approved menu in the Women, Infants and Children nutrition program.

Midlands

No excuses

Omaha Christian's football team has no locker room, no gym, no field. What they do have is a 4-0 record and a chance to make the state playoffs for a third straight year.

Sports

COMING THURSDAY

Miley, not Hannah

Miley Cyrus, who performs Friday in Omaha, is ditching the Hannah Montana look and most of the songs.

Omaha weather



Today's forecast **High: 74 Low: 56**

Full weather report: Page 8B

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BRIGHT FUTURES PROGRESS CHECK

As goals meet reality, students start to benefit

TWO FUTURES GROUPS, TWO MISSIONS



BUILDING BRIGHT FUTURES focuses on children in poverty, from birth through high school graduation. Key initiatives over the next year to 18 months:

Early childhood: Provide training and funding to child care centers that serve the highest number of extremely low-income children. Centers must agree to outside review and to work toward meeting standards. Goal: Reach 1,000, or about 10 percent, of the children in Douglas and Sarpy Counties who are not being served with high-quality early childhood care.

Health care: Establish by the end of the school year health clinics in six OPS schools: Franklin, Indian Hill, Kellom and Kennedy Elementary Schools, Spring Lake Magnet Center and Blackburn Alternative High School. Goal: Serve more than 3,500 students, or about 4 percent of those without regular medical care.

Attendance: Start programs at 15 schools in three districts (OPS, Millard, Ralston) to reward students for near-perfect attendance. Goal: provide incentives for 5,700 students.

Mentoring: Formalize the Midlands Mentoring Partnership. An executive director and board will link students across the metro area to mentors in existing programs, recruit more mentors and establish standards for mentoring. Goal: find more diverse mentors and link as many as 3,000 more students to a mentor.

THE BRIGHT FUTURES FOUNDATION focuses on low-income children from high school through postsecondary education and into the workforce. The group started its Avenue Scholars program during the summer. So far:

Participants: 167 students who attend Metro Community College or Omaha Benson, Omaha Northwest or Ralston High Schools.

Programming: Each student is paired with a "talent adviser." The adviser teaches a daily class with the scholars on everything from securing scholarships to ACT test preparation. Students also receive personal counseling; post-secondary students each receive a laptop computer.

Next up: Students at three more high schools will be identified for the program this spring.

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Which schools will benefit most?



KENT SIEVERS/THE WORLD-HERALD

Omar Romero is learning the basics of what to expect on the ACT exam as part of the Avenue Scholars program at Northwest High School. The Bright Futures Foundation's college access program is going to provide "the tools they need to be successful," Northwest teacher Yano Jones said.

Lofty ideas become concrete solutions as groups learn what works, what doesn't

By MICHAELA SAUNDERS
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

More than three years after philanthropists decided to spend millions of their money to help low-income children graduate from high school and college, students are beginning to benefit.

The local benefactors expect to spend at least \$4.5 million to \$5 million over the next 12 to 18 months. The funding will bolster private day care programs, put health clinics in schools and provide incentives for kids to attend class.

An additional \$2.2 million will fund a program to prepare promising low-income students for college.

Altogether, the initiatives will target thousands of students in the Omaha, Millard and Ralston school districts.

The plan is to expand each year and eventually reach out to all low-income public and private school students in Douglas and Sarpy Counties.

The two groups behind the effort — Build-

ing Bright Futures and the Bright Futures Foundation — will spell out their progress today at a 4:30 p.m. meeting at the Joslyn Art Museum.

Last fall, Building Bright Futures outlined lofty and broad initial goals: Within five years, every poor child in Douglas and Sarpy Counties will have access to health care, tutors and mentors and the opportunity to go to college.

Today, there's more structure behind those goals, and the groups are mapping out what they can realistically tackle each year.

"Now we have a clearer picture of who's being served, we're finding those gaps and filling those gaps," John Cavanaugh, executive director of Building Bright Futures, said in an interview last week.

Not all youngsters who need help will receive it this year. The day care program, for example, may reach about 10 percent of the children it's aimed toward.

The programs will "never fully serve all kids in need," said the foundation's executive director, Ken Bird, who called the last year

See Bright Futures: Page 2



College flags and banners on the walls of Yano Jones' classroom at Northwest High School remind students to think about their next step.

Devastation left in wake of tsunami in U.S. territory

■ National Park workers are missing after an underwater quake spawns killer waves in American Samoa and Samoa.

PAGO PAGO, American Samoa (AP) — A powerful Pacific Ocean earthquake spawned towering tsunami waves that swept ashore on Samoa and American Samoa early Tuesday, flattening villages, killing at least 63 people and leaving dozens of workers missing at devastated National Park Service facilities.

Cars and people were swept out to sea by the fast-churning water as survivors fled to high ground less than a half-hour after the quake. Signs of devastation were everywhere, such as a large boat that was washed ashore and came to rest on the edge of a highway.

American Samoa Gov. Togiola Tulafono said at least 50 people were injured, in addition to the deaths.

Hampered by power and communications outages, officials struggled to assess the casualties and damage. But the death toll seemed sure to rise, with bodies already piling up at a hospital in Samoa.

The quake, with a magnitude between 8.0 and 8.3, struck around dawn about 20 miles below the ocean floor, 120 miles from American Samoa, a U.S. territory that is home to 65,000 people.

The territory is home to a U.S. National Park that appeared to be especially hard-hit.

Holly Bundock, spokeswoman for the Park Service's Pacific West Region in Oakland, Calif., said the superintendent of the park and other staffers had been able to locate only about 20 percent of the park's 13 to 15 employees and 30 to 50 volunteers.

Mike Reynolds, superintendent of the National Park of American Samoa, was quoted as saying that four tsunami waves 15 to 20

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WORLD-HERALD EXCLUSIVE

Ballet troupe loses its footing at Rose Theater; 14 to lose jobs

By JOHN PITCHER
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

The metro area is about to lose its only professional dance company. The Rose Theater announced Tuesday that it plans to discontinue its Omaha Theater Ballet and School at the end of the 2009-10 season.

The demise of the company, known for its annual production of "The Nutcracker," means neither Nebraska nor Iowa will have a full-time professional dance company. Missouri's Kansas City Ballet will be the closest professional ballet company.

The decision will result in 14 lost jobs — 10 full-time professional dancers and four staffers. The ballet's season ends after the final production of "The Rainforest" on Feb. 21.

Parents of local ballet students and dance company supporters were stunned.

"The Rose didn't give us a chance to hold a fundraiser or do anything to save the ballet," said Mary Theisen, whose daughter Laura, 11, attends the Rose ballet school.

Omahan Amy Trebbien, whose daughter, Emily, 12, studies at the school, said she was disappointed at how the ballet was treated.

"The loss of professional ballet will devalue our community," she said.

Toby Schropp, the board president of the

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