



Big wheels

Tribland boy enjoys high-powered hobby. Page C6

# Hastings Tribune



Into the semis

Lady Broncos rout Minot State to advance in NAIA tournament. Page B1

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# Gaining 'Independence'

HUNDREDS TURN OUT FOR AUDITIONS FOR MOVIE TO BE SHOT IN HASTINGS

NICHOLE JELINEK  
Hastings Tribune

About 300 people came from around Nebraska and other states to Hastings Saturday to audition for "Independence," a movie being shot in Hastings in July.

Colleen Schukei, location coordinator, said she and others holding the auditions couldn't have possibly seen any more people in the eight-hour timeframe.

"We were really, really impressed," she said. "Everyone just had the right attitude."

Before 10 a.m., a line had formed outside the Barrett Alumni Center at Hastings College with people waiting in anticipation to take part in something that rarely happens in this part of the country.

"Everyone was such troopers," said Schukei. "They waited two-and-a-half hours for a two-minute interview."

Those inside took a number and filled out the application while waiting for their turn to show their talent.

The application asked all of the standard questions, including hair and eye color, experience and how often the applicants would be available for shooting.

The application also asked for height and weight information. Schukei said it helps to have this information when it comes time for wardrobe fittings.

Jessi Sheets of Hastings came out to audition for the part of Amy, a privileged college student in her 20s.

Sheets looked at Amy's lines on the Web site to help her prepare for her audition.

"They know what they're looking for," she said. "If you've got it, you've got it."

Around a large table, hopeful cast members gathered to review lines. Binders filled with pages of lines were provided to give the actors one last chance to prepare.

Alison Wit of Omaha was yet another of many who auditioned for the part of Amy.

Wit said she is involved in high school theater. As she reviewed the lines, she said she was having fun but was nervous.

"But I'll get over it," she said. Schukei said everyone who



Jessi Sheets of Hastings shows on the monitor after she reads for a part in the movie being filmed in the Hastings area. Watching is Colleen Schukei, location coordinator for the film.

auditioned would like a chance for a speaking part, but many also just wanted a chance to be

in a movie.

After entering the room in which Schukei had set up lights

and a video camera, everyone had their picture taken.

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# Spanish troops will leave Iraq

SOCIALIST LEADER WILL WITHDRAW NATION'S SUPPORT FOR U.S.-LED OCCUPATION

ED MCCULLOUGH  
The Associated Press

MADRID, Spain — The leader of Spain's victorious Socialists said Monday he will withdraw his nation's support for the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq, restating a campaign promise a day after his party won elections overshadowed by terrorist bombings.

Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, calling the war that ousted Saddam Hussein an "error," said he would recall Spanish troops from Iraq by June 30 unless the United Nations assumes control of multinational military operations there.

In a surprise defeat, Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar's conservatives on Sunday became the first government that backed Washington in Iraq to be voted from office. The election came amid charges that Aznar made Spain a target for terrorists by supporting the war, and that his government concealed possible connections between the attack and Islamic terrorists for political gain.

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# Study: More bankruptcies in counties with casinos

The Associated Press

OMAHA — A Creighton University study on possible casino links to bankruptcies revealed differing results for individuals and businesses.

The recently released study showed personal bankruptcy filings in counties with casinos were higher than in non-casino counties in the United States during the 1990s.

However, the study showed business bankruptcies in casino counties were lower on average than in non-casino counties.

Associate law professor Edward Morse and economics professor Ernie Goss conducted the study that charted 250 U.S. counties containing casinos. They compared bankruptcy filings from 1990 to 1999 with non-casino counties of similar population, income, and rates of poverty and employment.

The study found that individual bankruptcies were more than 100 percent higher in casino counties than in non-casino counties.

Please see CASINOS/page A6

# Mexican deaths up sharply

JUSTIN PRITCHARD  
The Associated Press

The jobs that lure Mexican workers to the United States are killing them in a worsening epidemic that is now claiming a victim a day, an Associated Press investigation has found.

Though Mexicans often take the most hazardous jobs, they are more likely than others to be killed even when doing similarly risky work.

The death rates are greatest in several Southern and Western states, where a Mexican worker is four times more likely to die than

the average U.S.-born worker. In Nebraska, nine Mexican-born workers have been killed since 1996, including four in 2002, the last year of complete federal data.

These accidental deaths are almost always preventable and often gruesome: Workers are impaled, shredded in machinery, buried alive. Some are as young as 15.

For the first study of its kind of Mexican worker deaths in the United States, the AP talked with scores of workers, employers, advocates and government officials and analyzed years of federal

safety and population statistics.

Among the findings:

◆ Mexican death rates are rising even as the U.S. workplace grows safer overall. In the mid-1990s, Mexicans were about 30 percent more likely to die than native-born workers; now they are about 80 percent more likely.

◆ Deaths among Mexicans increased faster than their population in the U.S. Between 1996 and 2002, as the number of Mexican workers grew by about half, from 4 million to 6 million, the number of deaths rose by about two-thirds, from 241 to 387. Deaths peaked at 420 in 2001.

Please see WORKERS/page A6

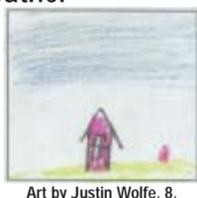


MARCIO JOSE  
SANCHEZ/AP

Workers exit the Excel Corp. meat packing plant at the end of their shift in Schuyler July 15, 2003. Jesus Soto Carbajal, a former Mexican-born worker in the plant, died at work after accidentally severing his jugular vein with a carving knife.

## Weather

Lo: Partly cloudy tonight.  
20s Mostly cloudy  
Hi: Partly cloudy Tuesday.  
50s



Art by Justin Wolfe, 8, Sandy Creek School

## Nation

Carmichael has been painting a baseball that hangs in a shed behind his home. It now weighs 1,300 pounds, is more than 35 inches in diameter and has a 111-inch circumference due to more than 18,000 layers of paint. On Saturday, Carmichael

watched as a crew took a core sample from the green ball that's needed before it can earn a spot in the Guinness Book of Records.

In honor of Carmichael's work, Saturday was declared Ball of Paint Day in Alexandria.

The Associated Press

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MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Luis Ramirez stands in a tobacco field where his brother, Urbano Ramirez, was last seen alive near Enfield, N.C., on July 19, 2003. A coroner determined Urbano Ramirez died of natural causes, but his body was too badly decomposed to verify what Luis suspects was heat stroke. Both brothers were born in Mexico.

## Workers: Mexican deaths up

Continued from page A1

◆ Though their odds of dying in the Southeast and parts of the West are far greater than the U.S. average, fatalities occur everywhere: Mexicans died cutting North Carolina tobacco and Nebraska beef, felling trees in Colorado and welding a balcony in Florida, trimming grass at a Las Vegas golf course and falling from scaffolding in Georgia.

◆ Even compared to other immigrants — those who historically work America's hardest jobs — what's happening to Mexicans is exceptional in scope and scale. Mexicans are nearly twice as likely as the rest of the immigrant population to die at work.

Why is all this happening?

Public safety officials and workers themselves say the answer comes down to this: Mexicans are hired to work cheap, the fewer questions the better.

They may be thrown into jobs without training or safety equipment. Their objections may be silent if they speak no English. Those here illegally, fearful of attracting attention, can be reluctant to complain. And their work culture and Third World safety expectations don't discourage extra risk-taking.

Simple precautions would save many lives, government records show. "Was not using any type of fall protection," concludes a government report on one worker who fell 150 feet. Says another report: "Untrained worker ... operated the equipment." Another: "Procedure was patently unsafe."

Federal and state safety agencies have started to recognize the problem. But they have limited resources and often can't reach the most vulnerable Mexican workers.

## The story of a worker's death

JUSTIN PRITCHARD  
The Associated Press

SCHUYLER — Every six seconds or so, another hook-held leg of beef swung down the line, and Jesus Soto Carbajal pounced, knife in hand.

Cutting meat requires precision, and Soto was sharp as he severed the muscle seam to free a round of beef from the hulking hindquarter. Draped in protective metal mesh in the meatpacking plant's refrigerated air, Soto sang as he sliced.

Privately, he griped about his aching shoulder. He had looked for other work, but the \$8-plus an hour he got was as good as a low-skilled Mexican could earn in rural Nebraska.

His task was performed in pairs. One man sliced meat from two passing slabs while the other sharpened his knife. Soto and his partner had a deal — one day you knock off five minutes early, the next day cover for me. Let's beat the line to the cleaning room, beat the crowd out the gate, get home. It was a small reward after starting work before dawn. The bosses didn't object.

So there was Soto on July 25, 2000, alone just before shift's end, doing the work of two men.

He was the kind of guy who could get away with it. He was 27 and kept fit playing soccer. After five years at the plant, he knew his job. His purple hard hat was proof: It designated Soto a safety monitor.

No one witnessed the exact moment. Maybe the cuts were taking just that much too long because Soto couldn't pause to sharpen his knife. Maybe the next slab whacked Soto's hand as he turned a beat late.

The wound didn't look that bad. Martin Contreras, still a high-level worker at the plant, had seen gashes gush far more blood. This man will survive, he thought, standing above Soto.

The knife had punctured Soto's chest just above the protective mesh. Above the left collar bone —

where the jugular vein returns blood from the head to the heart.

Within minutes, Soto went from yelling in pain to dazed silence.

Contreras sped behind the ambulance in a manager's car — past cornfields and the Last Chance steakhouse — to the medical clinic. It turned out there was no need to rush.

Soto's wife, Gloria Sustaita, arrived with their young sons. In the emergency room, she didn't flinch, didn't cry. But this was the boy she knew growing up in Mexico City, the 21-year-old man she married, the father of her boys, the reason she stayed in Nebraska.

Afterward, she told a confidant, she felt as if their trailer home had become her own grave — as if she were "in a coffin, too."

Excel was not fined for Soto's death because no federal safety standards covered the circumstances that killed him, according to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. OSHA did make five recommendations: among them, don't let workers pull double duty.

A spokesman for Excel, owned by Minneapolis-based Cargill Inc., said the company has adopted the recommendations and outfitted workers with extended safety tunics.

Two things saved Schuyler, built around a stoplight at one junction of the two-lane lattice that stretches across eastern Nebraska, from becoming another vanishing Midwestern town.

First was the meatpacking plant, which opened in 1968 and came under the Excel Corp. name in 1987. Second was the plant's move toward a lower-wage, majority-immigrant work force.

Though the particulars are Schuyler's own, the sketch applies to towns across the Midwest and Southeast.

## Spain: New leader taking back support

Continued from page A1

Thursday's train bombings — the worst terrorist attacks in Spain's history — killed 200 people and wounded some 1,500.

"The military intervention was a political error for the international order, for the search for

cooperation, for the defense of the United States," Zapatero said, adding that Spain would maintain "cordial" relations with Washington.

"It divided more than it united, there were no reasons for it, time has shown that the arguments for it

lacked credibility and the occupation has been managed badly."

He refused Monday to set a date for a possible withdrawal of Spain's 1,300 troops in Iraq, saying only that one would be set after he takes over as prime minister some weeks from now.

"I have said clearly in recent months that, unless there is a change in that the United Nations take control and the occupiers give up political control, the Spanish troops will come back, and the limit for their presence there is June 30," he said.

Continued from page A1

But casino counties had 35.4 percent fewer business bankruptcies.

The report's authors did not take into account a county's debt load. It is possible that a casino county's population had a higher debt load before the casino arrived and the casino did not add to that debt load, a report on the study said.

The report was released last week, even as a proposal in the Legislature to allow two casinos in

Nebraska failed to overcome a filibuster.

There are several gambling petitions under way by various gambling interests — including keno parlors, racetrack interests and a Las Vegas casino — to give voters a chance this November to allow casinos and other expansions of

legal gambling in the state.

Morse theorized that individual bankruptcies outpace business bankruptcies in casino counties because the casino increases potential for problem gamblers in that county, thus causing more bankruptcies for individuals.

## Auditions: Movie draws hundreds

Continued from page A1

Schukei will pair each photo with the application and will also make a copy of the three-hour video that contains all of the auditions. From that point, the information will be sent to New York and Chicago where it will be reviewed.

The same information also will be reviewed from the New York audition held at an earlier date.

No casting decisions will be made until applicants from both auditions are viewed.

Schukei said she can't wait for the people in Chicago and New York to view the Nebraska auditions.

"I am proud to send the auditions there," she said.

Chad Zachrisson came from Mitchell, S.D., to audition for a major role. He is a theater major and plans to pursue acting in Chicago next year.

"I'm very excited about this opportunity," he said. "Adding this to my resume would be a good thing."

"We had people from all over," Schukei said. "I think friends called each other and it got through by word of mouth."

Schukei said that besides the handful of major roles offered, many extras are also needed. Schukei said they were hoping for at least 30 people to show up.

"The number one reason people showed up is just to have a part," she said.

People of different ages and experience levels auditioned. Schukei said a few actors with legitimate credits showed up from Omaha and Lincoln.

"You could tell when someone had acted before," she said. "But there were also some that had never acted before and they literally shined on camera."

Rod O'Sullivan of Grand Island came with his teenage children, who were auditioning. O'Sullivan said both of his kids seem to be naturals at acting, and it should be fun for them to get involved and find out what movie-making is all about.

Daughter Kelsey O'Sullivan would like to pursue an acting career.

"It won't be a big deal if I don't get cast," she said. "But I'd like to pursue an acting career, and this would give me experience."

Colleen Lewis of Kearney said she really doesn't have any experience either.

She said she would like to get the chance to be cast as an extra to gain some experience.

"Last time there was a film in Nebraska I missed the audition because I found out too late," she said. "I saw a poster at UNK (for 'Independence') and decided it was something to pay attention to."

Jamie Fortune of Hastings joined a friend who was also auditioning. Fortune was one of many applying for a crew position, which are needed to work off-camera to make the movie a success.

"Many were even experienced in lighting, photography and running cameras," Schukei said.

Fortune said she worked as a crew member for plays in high school and was looking for something fun to do to gain experience.

Margaret Marsh of Hastings was also applying for a crew position. Marsh brought her two daughters, Ricki Frasier, 7, and Tuesday Frasier, 9, to audition as extras.

Schukei said there were many kids that showed up for the audition, and some were very good actors. Both of the Frasier girls were excited to audition for the movie.

Ricki said she had never been in a movie before, except for the home videos her mom shoots.

Schukei said she loved the fact that so many families showed up.

"We're doing it just to day we did it," said Rebecca Kruchek of Kearney, who was auditioning as an extra. "We're not serious actors, but you don't get opportunities like this in Nebraska."

Schukei can be reached by e-mail at colleen@babylionproductions.com

### The story

"Independence" is a story about Samantha, a naive, privileged and overachieving college student who loses her father to cancer and finds herself feeling abandoned.

She desperately needs to pay rent, so she takes a job in Cozad selling fireworks.

Although the setting is in Cozad, the movie will be shot in Hastings this July.

Sam finds out that taking the job will mean she will be living alone in a tent on the side of the highway without basic necessities. She must decide whether to fulfill her commitment or return home and face eviction.

Through her struggle for survival, she finds strength and courage. Sam lets go of her prejudices and judgments of others and allows the most unlikely people to sustain and protect her.

Source: [independencethemovie.com](http://independencethemovie.com)

## Casinos: Study finds more bankruptcies

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