

CORRECTION

In last week's story about state and local political races, the Plain Talk mistakenly identified Rich Holland, who is a candidate for Southeast Ward alderman in the upcoming city council election. We regret the error and apologize to Mr. Holland.

AAA: End of fuel price increases may be in sight

South Dakota's average retail price today for regular gasoline is \$3.540 per gallon, the highest it's been since Sept. 27, 2013, according to www.FuelGaugeReport.AA.com. However, today's state average retail price is almost four cents below one year ago.

The national average gas price today – \$3.56 per gallon – is the highest since Sept. 11, 2013. It is three cents more than one week ago and 10 cents more than one month ago, but still seven cents less than on this same date last year. Despite recent increases, the March nationwide average of \$3.51 per gallon was also the least expensive for March since 2010.

The national average has now entered the range in which AAA expects prices to peak this spring, between \$3.55 and \$3.75 per gallon. Prices may move a little higher in the coming weeks; however the end is likely in sight for many drivers across the country. The exception to this trend could be motorists in regions where unexpected refinery or distribution issues cause prices to temporarily spike.

Oklahoma's refineries have weathered the transition but 13 refineries in Texas and Louisiana are still going through this annual rite of spring when

refiners are required to switch to producing summer-blend gasoline by May 1.

The changeover increases the possibility of a disruption to production, which can send prices higher in an area that is normally supplied by a limited or offline facility. So far, these sorts of refinery issues have been minimal.

Average pump prices in all but seven states have moved higher over the last week. The price jump has been most dramatic in Florida, where gasoline prices have risen eight cents, and in Washington, D.C., where they're up seven cents. Drivers in Hawaii and now California are paying an average gas price above \$4 per gallon, the only states above this threshold.

Weak global economic data and the growing consensus that geopolitical tensions with Russia are unlikely to disrupt crude oil distribution have kept a cap on crude oil prices. However the price of West Texas Intermediate (WTI) has remained near or above \$100 per barrel, which is \$5 to \$10 higher than the price last year.

This trend continued yesterday as the price of WTI settled at \$101.58 per barrel, down nine cents on the day.

Speaker explores pop culture, feminism

By Travis Gulbrandson
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Don't just change the channel. That was the advice offered by Andi Zeisler, co-founder of Bitch Media, on how to confront sexist images offered by the mass media and pop culture.

"You don't have to come out of the gate a full-blown activist," she said. "You can start small. You can see what's out there, and maybe contribute to it."

Bitch Media is a non-profit multimedia organization – and publisher of a magazine, also called Bitch – that aims to provide and encourage an engaged, thoughtful feminist response to mainstream media and popular culture.

"The idea behind Bitch is that speaking up and responding to both the market forces and the intellectual forces that shape culture is a really worthwhile form of activism and might be a really viable way to affect change."

Zeisler addressed the issue as part of the keynote address at the University of South Dakota's Diversity Symposium, "We are the Voices of the Silenced," which was held March 27 at the Muenster University Center.

A common response to criticism of negative portrayals is, "It's just pop culture," Zeisler said.

"No one is forcing us to consume individual pop products, but that's not the point," she said. "As time has gone on and our culture has become more mediated, it's become clear that you really can't escape popular culture and the media by changing the channel or flipping the page. It's always there."

Citing statistics from the Media Education Foundation, Zeisler said the average adolescent watches three to four hours of TV each day.

By the age of 18, they will have seen more than 350,000 commercials, she said.

They will also have seen approximately 200,000 acts of violence on TV, she said.

This is a problem because "the stories that the media and pop culture tell are the ones that we

believe," Zeisler said.

For example, Googling the word "beauty" will yield almost nothing but pictures of thin, young white women, she said.

"One of the first parts of responding to the media is identifying the way these stories are presented and how they're used in the service of promoting consumerism and affecting the behavior of people who are able to buy things," Zeisler said.

That ability to respond is now made easier by the Internet through such venues as Facebook and Twitter, and several incidents have shown how a few dissenting voices can be utilized to spearhead actual change.

"There was a 2011 news article in the New York Times that covered the gang-rape of an 11-year-old girl by 18 men and boys in a small town in Texas," Zeisler said. "Not only did the piece mention how the girl was dressed, but the tone of the piece was far more sympathetic to the 18 men who raped this child than to the victim herself."

"Thousands of people were outraged, and rightly so," she said.

Those people then took to the social networks, and at the same time sent thousands of e-mails and letters to the paper.

The story was then reassessed by an editor, who ultimately commissioned a new one.

"This is an example of how the Internet has made it both easy to do activism and very important in demystifying what activism is," Zeisler said. "It also has a really crucial power of making activism accessible to people who may not have the option of speaking up in daily life, either because of their age or their job or their religion. They can act their activism online."

Bitch Media takes its name from the effort to reclaim an offensive word, much the same way the LGBTQ community reclaimed the word "queer," Zeisler said.

However, having the word "feminist" in the official magazine's subtitle has proved just as controversial, she said.

"A lot of people without even looking at the magazine or the Web

site think they know what it's about," she said. "They think it's about man-bashing or ... something ugly and offensive. It's not."

"To us, feminism's image problem was something we wanted to work to upend, and we understood that the word 'bitch' and the word 'feminism' weren't going to be an easy sell to everyone, but we really wanted to try and see what we could do with that," she said.

Despite the connotations to the movement of the 1960s and 1970s, Zeisler said Bitch Media wants to make it clear that the feminist movement is still going, and still relevant.

"We don't live in a post-feminist world," she said. "We live in a world where some women have gained some ground in some areas, and because of that state of affairs, all women are treated as though they're this kind of overbearing feminist threat to the so-called natural order of things."

That is why some states have seen abortion restrictions increasing over the past decade, she said.

It also is the reason why some of the images broadcast by popular culture may seem confusing.

"If we live in a post-feminist world ... then why is the highest-rated offering on television a reality show in which single women are painted as these diamond-crazed husband-hunters?" Zeisler said.

The aim of Bitch Media has been to continue the work that started with the original feminist movement, and point out how central pop culture is to forming the impressions of people, and their beliefs about the world, she said.

"That means taking pop culture seriously and taking media seriously, and not thinking of them as something that is separate from real life, but instead something that informs and reflects real life," Zeisler said. "Something we've always said is, 'Don't hate media, make media.'"

Effort encourages residents to know their numbers

"The Big Squeeze 2014" is underway. Sanford Vermillion Medical Center is kicking off the first annual blood pressure awareness effort this week. Vermillion's goal for the number of residents receiving a blood pressure screen in the month of April is 2,000.

A group of public and private partners from the Vermillion community have agreed to combine efforts this month, including Sanford Medical Center Vermillion, Vermillion Medical Clinic, Olson Medical Clinic, Clay County and Union County Public Health Nurses.

The "Big Squeeze" program originated as part of the Live Well Sioux Falls initiative and is in its fourth year there. Sanford Vermillion Wellness nurse Carol Lavin has coordinated the efforts in Vermillion with a goal of educating local and area residents on how to live a healthier lifestyle through improved nutrition, increased physical activity, reduced tobacco use, and by managing risk factors for disease; such as high blood pressure.

In addition to the project partners, "The Big Squeeze" engages businesses and other organizations in the

community to host on-site screenings.

The City of Vermillion, Vermillion School District, Davis Pharmacy, USD Wellness Center, Wal-Mart, Polaris, Trinity Lutheran and St. Agnes Churches have all agreed to offer BP screenings to their employees, students, clients and members in April.

"About 72 million Americans have high blood pressure. That's one in three adults. High blood pressure usually has no symptoms and increases your risk of heart attack and stroke," said Lavin.

"High blood pressure is a 'silent killer,' but it can be controlled. The Big Squeeze is a great chance to raise awareness throughout the month of April. By participating in a screening, people have the opportunity to learn if their blood pressure is in a normal range, and if not, can take action and see their health care provider," she said.

Screening locations and events this month can be found at www.sanfordvermillion.org.

For more information on how to become involved in "The Big Squeeze," contact Carol Lavin, Wellness Nurse at (605) 638-8367.

Amelia Vogel

Amelia (Amy) Katherine Vogel passed away on March 27, 2014, at Dougherty Hospice House in Sioux Falls. A Mass of Christian Burial was held on March 29, 2014, at St. Agnes Catholic Church in Vermillion.



Vogel

Amy was born in Yankton on Dec. 9, 1968. Born with Spina Bifida, Amy faced many challenges throughout her life. Her strong faith and positive attitude enabled her to accept her life's hurdles with courage and grace.

Amy dearly loved and cherished spending time with her niece, Stephanie Tabor, and her nephews, Reid Tabor, Rush, Patrick, Jakob, and Rory Vogel, and Noah and Wesley Wittgraf. She enjoyed her family cats, especially "Toby," who passed away several years ago. Amy also liked watching cooking shows,

movies, shopping and reading.

Amy grew up in Vermillion where she attended St. Agnes Elementary School and Vermillion Middle and High Schools. Amy spent the last few years of her life living at Covington Heights in Sioux Falls. Although her health declined in recent years, she maintained her sense of humor and thoughtfulness towards others.

Amy is survived and lovingly remembered by her parents, Deacon Thomas E. Vogel and Ione; her brothers, Tom (Marta) Vogel, Joe Vogel, and Bob (Christie) Vogel; her sister, Ann (Jason) Wittgraf; and her niece and seven nephews. She was preceded in death by her sister, Julie.

The pain of Amy's passing has been lessened with the knowledge that she is now with Jesus in Heaven, free of suffering and her lifelong challenges. She is survived by the great number of people who knew her and by her example, learned

how to live life with perseverance, dignity and faith.

Kober Funeral Home of Vermillion was in charge of arrangements.

Condolences may be posted online to www.koberfuneralhome.com.

Ann Christensen

Ann Carol (Danielson) Christensen, 77, of Vermillion, died March 26, 2014, at the Morningside Manor in Alcester, while surrounded by her husband and children.

Ann Danielson was born May 17, 1936, in Vermillion, to Francis M. and Ida LaVern (Eklund) Danielson. She married Marvin Christensen on July 25, 1959, and they resided in rural Vermillion where they farmed and raised their four children.

She is survived by her husband, Marvin, of

Vermillion; a daughter, Kim Christensen and husband Michael Grimme of Yankton; daughter, Beth (Chris) Doyle of Rapid City; a son, Mark (Amy) Christensen of Vermillion; and a daughter, Amy Christensen and husband Darren Simpson of Colorado Springs, CO; and a sister, Kay (Duane) Zubrod of Arizona. In addition, Ann is survived by nine grandchildren, Elaine and Neil Doyle, Madelaine and Kylar Christensen, Alexandra, Gabriel, and Mya DeJong, and Sean and Elon Simpson.

Funeral services were 10 a.m. Saturday, March 29, 2014, at the Dalesburg Lutheran Church, 30595 University Road, Vermillion, with private family burial at a later date.

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