

Mother beats children

BEATRICE — A Clatonia woman accused of bruising her two children by striking them with a fly swatter says she did nothing wrong, according to court records. The children were struck apparently after being caught playing with gasoline and a lighter.

Bernice Antons, 40, has been charged with felony child abuse for allegedly striking her 9-year-old girl and 6-year-old boy. She told police she hit the children Sunday after finding them in the garage playing with gasoline and a lighter, court records state.

Wilber Police Deputy Doug Klaus said he saw five bruises on the back and thigh of the girl at the Wilber-Clatonia School, court records state. The girl told Klaus the bruises were the result of a beating with a fly swatter administered by her mother.

The bruises ranged from about 1 inch to 7 inches in length and were

consistent with the size and shape of a fly swatter handle, Klaus said. It looked as if the girl had been struck about eight to 10 times, he said.

The boy also told the officer his mother had repeatedly struck him with a fly swatter handle on the buttocks, leaving two small bruises, court documents state.

Wilber police became aware of the swatting after receiving a child abuse complaint from school officials Monday, court documents indicate. Antons was formally charged Tuesday in Gage County Court.

Antons told Klaus that she ordered her children into the house after finding them with the gasoline and lighter. She said she struck their bare buttocks repeatedly with a fly swatter handle, court records state.

The next court appearance for Antons is scheduled for Thursday.

Voters divided on gambling

Issue to be decided by November vote

OMAHA — Opponents and supporters of a proposal to allow off-track betting were about even in a poll published in the Omaha World-Herald.

A Sept. 6-8 survey of 1,006 people who said they were registered voters indicated that 42 percent would vote for off-track betting and 44 percent said they would vote against it. Fourteen percent said they didn't know or declined to answer.

Voters will be asked Nov. 8 to vote on a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow tracks to set up betting facilities away from

the tracks. Gamblers would be able to go to those sites to place bets directly into the pari-mutuel pool and then watch the races live on simulcast television.

The poll, conducted by the Gallup Organization of Princeton, N.J., had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

Those polled were asked whether they would vote for or against the proposal if an election were held that day.

Poll results indicated that people with higher incomes were more likely to support the proposal. Of those who said their annual income was less than \$20,000, 34 percent said they would vote for the proposal. Approval increased to 44 percent among people with incomes between \$20,000 and \$50,000 and to 50 percent of those with income

higher than \$50,000.

In a June World-Herald poll, 47 percent of those surveyed said they favored off-track betting and 39 percent said they opposed it.

Nebraska racing officials say off-track betting would make the state's racetracks more competitive for the state's gambling dollars. Since the state's five tracks are in the eastern half of Nebraska; Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, South Sioux City and Columbus, off-track betting sites could make it easier for people living in western Nebraska to gamble on horse races.

AKsarben opened an off-track betting facility in Bennington earlier this year under a law passed in 1992. The attorney general's office has challenged the constitutionality of the law. The Nebraska Supreme Court is to consider the case.

Meditation may benefit inmates

OMAHA — A small Nebraska citizens' group wants state corrections officials to use transcendental meditation to relieve inmate and employee stress.

Citizens for a Crime-Free Nebraska, which has about 15 members mostly from Omaha and Lincoln, is asking for adoption of a program designed by Farrokh Anklesaria.

Anklesaria is international director of rehabilitation programs for Maharishi European Research University in Selisberg, Switzerland, and for Maharishi International University in Fairfield, Iowa.

Transcendental meditation is a method of deep relaxation through meditation.

Anklesaria has met this week with corrections and law enforcement officials from Douglas County and the state and two State Parole Board members in an effort to sell the TM concept.

A member of the group, Keith Miller, said transcendental meditation is something that should be considered in light of rising crime rates.

"Now is the time for the citizens of Nebraska to act," said Miller, an Omaha attorney. "Crime is rising, slowly but steadily. We are in danger of losing our state's special quality of life."

Schools receive Internet funds

OMAHA — Several school systems across Nebraska are getting a financial boost into the age of technology.

U S West Communications on Thursday gave schools in Omaha, Crawford, Grand Island, North Platte, South Sioux City and Wayne a total of \$1.8 million to help them provide Internet access to more students and teachers across the state.

In addition, Educational Service Unit No. 3, which serves Omaha-area suburban school districts, received \$139,000, and the University of Nebraska at Omaha's College of Education received \$114,300.

Sen. Bob Kerrey, D-Neb., who has pushed for Internet services to schools, called the U S West gift a first step. He said the benefits of technology need to be available to every student.

He read from a McMillan student's speech about using the Internet to do research in a Moscow library and to simulate a space shuttle takeoff.

"The urgency I feel with this technology comes from watching young people learn from it," Kerrey said. "This young person and others acquire motivation, and that's the most important ingredient."

"We believe these schools will be showcase examples of Internet access and educational usage," Jim Hawes, U S West Communications Nebraska vice president, said at a UNO press conference.

In most cases, the schools will use the money to wire their buildings to build networks of computers that can be connected to the Internet, the global computer network.

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