

After an  
offseason  
rebuild, UNO  
women's  
basketball is  
focused on  
energy, intensity.  
Sports



Omaha  
interior  
designers  
chosen to  
participate in  
Dallas event.  
Midlands,  
Page A3

# Omaha World-Herald

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2025

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LORI POTTER FOR THE FLATWATER FREE PRESS

Five teenagers have been moved out of the Kearney Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center since Sept. 1 due to allegations of sexual abuse by staff members, according to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

## Watchdog investigates youth center allegations

Gov. Pillen pledges accountability if accusations at Kearney facility are proven true

SARA GENTZLER  
Flatwater Free Press

Nebraska's child welfare watchdog has launched an investigation and the governor has promised accountability after multiple allegations surfaced in recent weeks of staff sexually abusing teenagers at a state-run center in Kearney.

The developments, along with a new court order and the emergence of allegations from yet another teen, offered the latest indication that the issues at the Kearney Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center could be systemic.

"The concern for the Court is not solely that the abuse hap-

pened, but the systematic minimization, concealment, and disregard by those in charge of his care," Douglas County Juvenile Court Judge Amy Schuchman wrote last week in an order directing the state to release one of the teens early.

The initial allegations, revealed in court hearings and documents, involved four Kearney YRTC employees and three teenage boys. Douglas County Public Defender Tom Riley said one more teen has since shared allegations against one of the employees.

Five teens have been moved out of the Kearney center since Sept. 1 as a result of allegations, according to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, which operates Kearney



Carter

and two other centers for juvenile offenders.

Jay Wilson, president of the union that represents youth security staff at YRTC, said FOP 88 wasn't aware of sexual misconduct being a wider problem among its members. The union supports its people, he said, but in no case would it condone the alleged behavior.

"I just hope all the allegations are not true," Wilson said.

But Kearney YRTC staff who belong to the Nebraska Association of Public Employees — roles like nurses and administrative support staff — have been consistently concerned about a lack of programming, according to Executive Director Justin Hubly. Their concerns have not been addressed by leadership, he said.

None of the accused are NAPE members, according to Hubly.

Please see WATCHDOG, Page A2

## Judge rules against halt to McCook ICE facility

But the judge does not grant state's motion to dismiss the suit

JOSH REYES  
World-Herald Staff Writer

Red Willow County District Court Judge Patrick Heng did not grant an injunction to halt the opening of McCook's "Cornhusker Clink" after hearing arguments in court on Friday.

The ruling gets the state closer to clearing possibly the final hurdle for opening the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facility.

"I appreciate that the court expedited this decision, which affirms the state's right to enter into the contract with the Department of Homeland Security and provides the authority to operate the detention facility under the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services," Gov. Jim Pillen said in a written statement.

The partnership with the federal government is expected to net Nebraska \$14 million over the next year.

"The agreement we have with DHS is good for Nebraska's taxpayers and it ensures we are doing all that we can to keep criminal, illegal aliens off our streets," Pillen said.

The 13 McCook residents and former state lawmaker DiAnna Schimek who are suing to prevent the facility said through their attorneys that they will continue with their case.

One of the attorneys, Nebraska Appleeed Legal Director Rob McEwen, noted Heng in his ruling released Monday also did not grant the state's motion to dismiss the suit, which names Gov. Jim Pillen and Rob Jeffreys, the director of the Department of Correctional Services.

"The case will carry forward from here, and we will continue to represent the interests of our clients in halting the activities of the Defendants as they relate to the large-scale detainment camp in McCook," McEwen said in a press release. He did not elaborate on next steps.

The residents' suit, filed Oct. 16, also sought a temporary restraining order to stop work, which Heng denied the day the suit was filed.

Despite the suit, the state has continued its progress on converting the Work Ethic Camp prison, making changes like installing a razor wire-topped fence, creating more bed space and seeking to hire more staff for the larger population.

Please see ICE, Page A2

## Hurricane intensifies to Category 5

The storm is on a path toward Jamaica and Cuba

JOHN MYERS JR. AND DÁNICA COTO  
Associated Press

KINGSTON, Jamaica — Hurricane Melissa intensified into a Category 5 storm Monday as it drew closer to Jamaica, where forecasters expected it to unleash catastrophic flooding, landslides and widespread damage.

At that strength, it would be the strongest hurricane to hit the island since record-keeping began in 1851.

Blamed for seven deaths in the northern Caribbean as it headed toward the island, Melissa was on track to make landfall Tuesday in

Jamaica before coming ashore in Cuba later in the day and then heading toward the Bahamas.

It was not expected to affect the United States.

Anticipating the hardship in store for his country, Jamaican Prime Minister Andrew Holness said, "I have been on my knees in prayer."

Hanna Mcleod, a 23-year-old hotel receptionist in the Jamaican capital of Kingston, said she boarded up the windows at her home, where her husband and brother are staying. She stocked up on canned corned beef and mackerel and left candles and flashlights throughout the house.



MATIAS DELACROIX, ASSOCIATED PRESS

A man wades through a flooded street Monday ahead of the arrival of Hurricane Melissa in Old Harbour, Jamaica.

Please see HURRICANE, Page A2

### School rankings

The Elkhorn and Millard districts lead U.S. News' rankings of the best Nebraska K-8 schools.

Midlands, Page A3

### Minimizing injuries

Nebraska football focuses on recovery to ensure injuries don't leave a mark on season. Sports

### Weather

High: 51  
Wind, rain

Low: 42  
Details: A8

### Index

Classifieds ..... B6&7  
Comics ..... B10  
Obituaries ..... B5

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6 59373 00001 0