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Nebraska

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## Crime scene lessons anything but elementary

GRAND ISLAND (AP) — Grand Island teachers were hoping that crime does pay for sixth-grade high ability learners.

No, the teachers weren't hoping the pupils could commit a profitable crime. They wanted the students to solve a crime and become a little more knowledgeable about using the scientific method in the process.

Pupils from Westridge, Barr and Walnut spent most of the recent afternoon in the Walnut Middle school media center/library trying to solve a mystery called "CSI: Who Killed Henry Ward?"

Integration specialists from all three schools were involved in the daylong project. "The students were to gather all the data and then objectively make a conclusion," said Kim Madison, the lead integration specialist for yesterday's project.

Pupils had to examine fingerprints, perform hair analysis, look at footprints, analyze blood spatter, perform blood typing and, eventually, look at DNA results from the crime scene.

"This is a 'cold case,'" said Madison, who noted that the case involved a very old traffic accident before anybody even knew about the science of DNA.

She said some evidence might point pupils toward certain suspects, while other evidence could point them toward different people as being guilty of the hit-and-run crime.

Madison said pupils were being cautioned not to begin drawing any conclusions before they had rotated through all the crime scene evidence.

Pupils worked in teams during the afternoon, but Madison said they would each sit down at the computer at the end of the session and type up their

own conclusions.

Not only were pupils supposed to name the guilty party, they were to cite the supporting evidence and explain how they reached their conclusions.

Walnut sixth-grader Gavin Oakman said the hair analysis included identifying hair types. In this case, hairs at the scene included gray, blond and brown.

That was the simplest analysis. Oakman said pupils also had to analyze the medulla pattern and medulla type. He said medulla refers to the middle of the hair.

One additional test was on the scale pattern of the hair. Oakman said the tests were designed to help determine whether the hair samples were human or animal. If they were human, students then had to make matches to possible suspects.

Oakman was asked which of the various tests — fingerprint, blood type, blood spatter, etc. — had been the most difficult.

"Blood spatter," he said. A brief conversation with Barr sixth-graders Molly Mrvicka and Alexis Petersen showed why blood spatter was a challenging exercise.

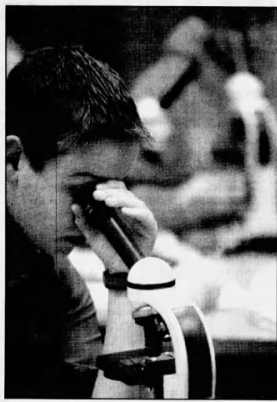
"The blood spatter shows which way the victim was walking when he died," Mrvicka said. "It could show which way the suspect was walking, as well," Petersen said.

The girls explained that blood droplets from a moving person leave telltale spikes. The direction of the spikes point to the same direction in which the person was moving.

Petersen said bigger drops of blood could indicate a more severe injury than smaller droplets. Mrvicka said bigger drops of blood also might indicate the force of the impact. Blood spatter might also

indicate which way a person was walking at the time of the accident and which way the vehicle was moving at the time of the accident.

"You have to think," Petersen said. That, of course, was the whole purpose of the exercise.



Sixth-grader Gavin Oakman looks at a hair sample in a microscope Monday during a laboratory session called "CSI: Who Killed Henry Ward?" at Walnut Middle School in Grand Island. Students from Westridge, Barr and Walnut middle schools used scientific methods to analyze crime scene evidence to solve a mock hit-and-run crime.

### Body found under Omaha bridge is identified

OMAHA (AP) — Omaha police have identified the body found under a freeway bridge Wednesday.

He was 48-year-old Omaha man, Daniel W. Coen, police said Friday.

An autopsy was being conducted, but police said there didn't appear to be anything suspicious about Coen's death.

### Woman charged with embezzlement kills self

OGALLALA (AP) — A woman accused of embezzling thousands of dollars from a Habitat for Humanity chapter has died after shooting herself at the home of the person who turned her in.

According to Keith County Attorney Jeff Eastman, Theresa Roath, 40, was arrested on Oct. 17 on 13 felony counts of theft, totaling \$27,800.

Roath was treasurer of Central Nebraska Habitat for Humanity based in Ogallala, Eastman said Thursday, and the investigation showed the thefts began in April and ended in July.

After her arrest authorities learned that Roath was on probation for felony theft in Colorado.

"She bonded out of jail within hours of being arrested," Eastman said. "Then a

call was received on Saturday morning with a report of a suicide.

"Apparently she went over to the home of the person who reported her for theft, and that's where it happened," Eastman said.

Roath was taken to Regional West Medical Care Center in Scottsbluff, where she died Saturday evening.

### Former corrections chief pleads not guilty to theft

KEARNEY (AP) — The former Hall County corrections director has pleaded not guilty to charges he fraudulently billed the county for computer work.

While heading the corrections department, Dave Arnold also served as administrator of the county's law enforcement computer system.

A state investigation found that Arnold billed the county for work he said was done between March 8, 2003, and Aug. 1, 2004. But that work, the investigation alleges, was never done.

Arnold was charged March 7 in Hall County District Court with theft by deception. He resigned the same day.

The case was moved to Buffalo County District Court in August after the Hall County judge excused himself.

Arnold made his plea on Thursday. A trial date has not been set.

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