

Good Morning, here are today's top stories and the weather forecast for Monday August 2, 2010

Albuquerque Weather: High 88 (30% chance rain)

Rio Rancho Weather: high 88

Espanola Weather: high 88

Santa Fe weather: high 83

Belen/Los Lunas weather high 90

and now the news:

Focus on the Family is expected to announce another series of lay offs next week, continuing a downtrend in the ministry's size.

As many as 200 people could lose their jobs at the conservative organization founded and once led by James Dobson.

In 2008, Focus on the Family laid off 149 people and decided not to fill 53 vacant positions. Then again in 2009, 75 more positions were eliminated.

Since 2002, the group's work force has been reduced by nearly 50 percent.

A spokesman for Focus on the Family said leaders would take the weekend before giving specifics on the new layoffs.

"This is really a family time today and we'll have more to say on Monday, publicly," said Gary Schneeberger, vice president of ministry communications.

Dobson founded Focus on the Family in 1977 and slowly began reducing his role in the ministry after resigning as president in 2003 and as board chairman in 2009.

He hosted his final Focus on the Family radio show in February of this year.

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>>BP Expects To Start "Static Kill" Tuesday

(Venice, LA) -- The latest effort to permanently plug BP's broken oil well in the Gulf of Mexico is facing a short delay. BP executive Doug Suttles told reporters the first step is to finish the casing

in the relief well. After that's done, crews will start the so-called "static kill." It involves pumping heavy drilling mud and cement into the busted oil well. Suttles said right now it looks like static kill will start Tuesday. He added he believes the situation in the Gulf is less dire now, to the point that he would eat seafood taken from Gulf waters.

>>Canadian Oil Company Cites Progress In Kalamazoo River Cleanup

(Battle Creek, MI) -- A Canadian energy company is citing progress in its oil cleanup efforts near Battle Creek, Michigan. Enbridge Energy says about half of the estimated one-million gallons of oil that leaked from its pipelining into the Kalamazoo River last week has been cleaned up. Officials from the company the Environmental Protection Agency say there is still a long way to go. A strong smell of oil remains in the area, and the fumes continue to cause health problems for nearby residents.

>>Iranian President Challenges Obama To Debate

(Tehran) -- Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad [[ahmah-DIN-ee-zahd]] is challenging President Obama to a debate. Speaking in Tehran, Ahmadinejad said he's planning a trip to UN headquarters in New York. He said, quote, "Toward the end of the summer we will hopefully be there for the General Assembly and I will be ready for one-on-one talks with Mr. Obama, in front of the media of course." Ahmadinejad said the goal would be to see who can come up with the best solutions for the problems facing the world today.

>>NYC Mayor Rules Out Presidential Run In 2012

(New York, NY) -- New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has ruled out running for President in 2012. Bloomberg was asked about his political future on NBC's "Meet the Press" over the weekend. He responded by saying he isn't planning on a presidential run, adding that he's already got "the best job" he could ask for. Bloomberg also touched on the allegations of ethics violations facing longtime U.S. Congressman Charles Rangel. Bloomberg said, quote, "Congressmen and women should do a better job policing themselves."

>>Lindsay Lohan No Longer Behind Bars

(Los Angeles, CA) -- Lindsay Lohan is no longer behind bars. The 24 year-old actress was released from the Century Regional Detention Center in the Los Angeles suburb of Lynwood at 1:35 a.m. Pacific time. A swarm of paparazzi was at the jail to see Lohan's release. She was immediately taken to UCLA Medical Center, where she will be placed in a substance abuse treatment program. Lohan served just a fraction of her 90-day sentence for violating probation.

>>Plea Deal Possible For Charlie Sheen

(Aspen, CO) -- A plea agreement in Charlie Sheen's domestic violence case could come as early as today. That's when the actor is due to appear at a hearing in an Aspen, Colorado courtroom in connection with the case. Sheen was arrested in Aspen in December 2009 for an alleged domestic violence incident involving his now-estranged wife Brooke Mueller. His attorneys have been trying to hammer out a deal that would keep him out of jail and let him start filming the next season of the CBS sitcom "Two and a Half Men" this week.

>>Obama Takes Sasha To WNBA Game

(Washington, DC) -- The WNBA's Washington Mystics had a VIP in the stands for their game against the Tulsa Shock yesterday. President Obama and daughter Sasha sat courtside at the Verizon Center in Washington, DC for the contest. The President received a standing ovation from the crowd. Obama is a big basketball fan, and has made his predictions for the NCAA Tournament known publicly twice since taking office. The Mystics went on to win Sunday's game 87-62.

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>>Father And Son Safely Escaped Plane Crash

(Rio Rancho, NM) -- A Rio Rancho father and son were able to escape a fiery Sunday morning plane crash with their lives. Ovide Morin says that the rented Cessna he and his son were flying was headed south from the Santa Fe Airport when smoke started billowing out of the aircraft around 10 a.m. Morin landed the plane in a field around rocks which caused it to become engulfed in flames. An investigation into why the plane malfunctioned is being conducted.

>>Wells Fargo Employee Embezzlement Suspect

(Albuquerque, NM) -- A former bank employee appeared in court for embezzlement on Sunday. Police say 31-year-old Jose Loya convinced a customer to open an escrow account while he worked at Wells Fargo and then proceeded to steal money from the account. Loya worked for the bank for six-years before he was fired for a charge unrelated to the embezzlement. Along with embezzlement Loya is being charged with identity theft, forgery and fraud charges.

>>Teen Jailed Following BB Gun Incident

(Albuquerque, NM) -- A teen is in jail after a stray BB he allegedly shot hit a passerby. The Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office say 18-year-old Saul Rios was shooting a BB gun at birds when he struck a person walking by in the shoulder on Sunday. Rios is being held on charges of aggravated battery and tampering with evidence. The victim's injuries are believed to be minor.

>>Increased Patrols In Downtown Albuquerque

(Albuquerque, NM) -- Police have stepped up downtown patrols following a rash of violent activity in the past few weeks. Albuquerque police say they've begun to split their patrols into smaller groups in an effort to stop issues before they start. APD believes the changes in patrol tactics can help to stop violent incidents like the recent assaults that occurred outside of downtown night clubs.

>>City Councilor Aiming To Change Neighborhood Rules

(Albuquerque, NM) -- A bill that would override homeowner and homeowner's association contracts is being pitched by a city councilor. Councilor Issac Benton says the change would allow residents to change their yards and homes without getting HOA permission. Benton believes that allowing residents to switch from grassy green laws to desert landscaping would raise water conservation. Council President Ken Sanchez agrees that water saving efforts could improve, but he has yet to fully endorse the plan.

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>>Foreclosures On Upward Trend

(Rio Rancho, NM) -- The New Mexico Housing Authority says foreclosures continue up with the biggest hike in Rio Rancho. The June statistics put the community with one in 178 homes in foreclosure. Rio Rancho Mayor Tom Swisstack says compared to the same time in 2009, that's a 25-percent increase. A market turnaround is not expected until late next year or early 2012. But officials say New Mexico's picture is brighter than areas such as Las Vegas, Nevada where foreclosure filings affect one in 15 houses.

>>County Survey Targets Nepotism

(Sandoval, NM) -- A small number of Bernalillo County department supervisors told a survey they have family members in their departments. Deputy County Manager for Public Works Tom Zdunek says the relatives will be reassigned. The survey comes as county officials refine the nepotism policy. Commissioner Art de la Cruz says the new policy will make sure a hiring, firing or demotion is not influenced by a supervisor who is also the employee's family member. More than 400 supervisors responded to the request for information.

>>Pedestrian Dies On Commuter Train Tracks

(Albuquerque, NM) -- Albuquerque police say a man on the Rail Runner commuter train tracks was killed Saturday. The incident involving the train was between Montano and Osuna. Authorities say it looks like alcohol played a role. The 125 train passengers were taken off the train and loaded onto buses heading north and south.

>>Police Say Woman's Death Is Suspicious

(Albuquerque, NM) -- Albuquerque police are probing a death they say is suspicious. A woman was not breathing when she was found Saturday at Singing Arrow Park on Piru SE. She died at University of New Mexico Hospital. Police say there were indications of trauma to the body.

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>>Cross-Country Cycling For Audio Bible Ministry

(Undated) -- Troy Love is cycling cross-country to raise funds for solar-powered Audio Bibles. Troy will travel 52 days from San Francisco to Yorktown, Virginia, to raise awareness for an initiative from the ministry Faith Comes By Hearing, called "Proclaimers." A Proclaimer is a dedicated audio player that can be used in the world's most remote and rugged locations. An embedded microchip is pre-loaded with an audio recording of the New Testament in more than 400 foreign languages. Love's goal is to raise 157-thousand dollars to provide one-thousand Proclaimers for poor and illiterate people around the globe. Troy's progress can be followed on Twitter or Facebook.

>>World Missionary Leader Announces Retirement

(Undated) -- Southern Baptist leader Jerry Rankin has announced the end of his 17-year service as president of the International Mission Board. Mission Network News says Rankin began his leadership of the IMB after serving 23 years on the mission field. Rankin's service as IMB leader by huge changes in the world and discovering new ways to spread the Gospel into tougher and more restricted places. Rankin says, quote, "We stand on the verge of unprecedented opportunities to complete the task of engaging every nation, people and language with the Gospel."

>>Georgia Minister Displeased With High School's "Demon" Mascot

(Warner Robins, GA) -- A Georgia minister is unhappy with a school's choice of mascots. The choice is a green-eyed, pitchfork-carrying demon that is the mascot for Warner Robins High School. WMAZ-TV is reporting that Donald Crosby, a pastor at Kingdom Builders Church of Jesus Christ, became alarmed when he realized his son could be among the students this fall yelling "Go Demons!" to cheer on the home team. Crosby is trying to move his ninth-grade son to a school with a different mascot. Houston County school officials say it is not likely that the mascot would be changed.

>>Fired Religion Professor Offered His Job Back

(Urbana, IL) -- The University of Illinois religion professor fired amidst hate speech allegations, has been offered his job back. Kenneth Howell has until August 6th to decide if he wants to keep teaching at the school. If he does, he would be paid by the school, rather than by the local Newman Center, which had previously paid Catholicism teachers. The axe fell on Howell after a student complained Howell wrote an e-mail about the moral implications of homosexuality. The decision to offer Howell his job back comes after the recommendation from a faculty committee assembled to look into the matter.

That's the news, I'm Frank Haley, cjf for God's Glory alone.