

Counts in baby's death dropped

By **Katelyn Newberg**
Las Vegas Review-Journal

Prosecutors on Wednesday dismissed a murder charge against a Las Vegas woman arrested in 2019 in connection with her baby's death.

Kristina Kerlus initially faced felony charges of murder and child abuse,

Prosecutors keep possibility of new charges

neglect or endangerment resulting in substantial bodily harm in connection with the death of her son, 2-month-old Jocai Davis.

Chief Deputy District Attorney Michelle Jobe announced during a court hearing Wednesday that the

state was voluntarily dismissing both counts after an investigation showed that prosecutors could not prove the charges.

The case was scheduled to go to trial on Jan. 3, court records show.

Jobe asked the charges

to be dismissed without prejudice, meaning prosecutors could charge Kerlus again in the future. Kerlus' defense attorney, Ryan Helmick, told District Judge Carli Kierny that he may file a motion in the coming month for the case to be

dismissed with prejudice, so that Kerlus could not be charged again.

"The medical science here is absolute in regard to the cause of this baby's death," Helmick said.

In a statement sent to the Review-Journal, Helmick said Kerlus had been

See **DEATH** 4B



Amaya Edwards Las Vegas Review-Journal @amayaedw5
Rabbi Shea Harlig speaks during a menorah lighting Wednesday in the rotunda of the Clark County Government Center.

On Hanukkah's fourth night

Official: Celebration of religious freedom is for everyone

By **David Wilson**
Las Vegas Review-Journal

Downtown Las Vegas hosted a menorah lighting Wednesday evening on the fourth night of Hanukkah to celebrate religious freedom and light overcoming darkness.

Residents and community leaders gathered around 5 p.m. for the cere-

mony inside the rotunda of the Clark County Government Center.

Clark County Commissioner Michael Naft said Hanukkah is a unique celebration in the Jewish faith because it is celebrated externally rather than just within a family or congregation.

"We celebrate in communities and with the gen-

eral public," Naft said. "I think for me that makes it particularly special whether you're Jewish or not, or observing a faith or not, you can come together and celebrate the miracle of Hanukkah."

Rabbi Shea Harlig of Chabad of Southern Nevada explained the history of Hanukkah and its significance to those in

attendance.

Hanukkah is the eight-day festival that commemorates the rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem after a group of Jewish warriors defeated occupying Greek-Assyrian armies about 2,200 years ago.

Oil used to light the menorah in the temple

See **HANUKKAH** 3B

Pediatric ICUs at capacity

Respiratory cases rise over past year

By **Lorraine Longhi**
Las Vegas Review-Journal

Pediatric intensive care units remain at full capacity as respiratory viruses continue to drive up hospitalizations of children, the Nevada Hospital Association said Wednesday.

The number of cases for respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, has more than doubled in the state over the past year, according to numbers from the Southern Nevada Health District. In October of last year, the state had reported 482 cases of the virus compared with the 1,078 cases it recorded in the same time period this year, communicable disease manager Kimberly Franich said.

As of Wednesday, more than half of the 69 patients hospitalized with RSV across the state were children, according to the hospital association, but the number was down from the 46 children that were hospitalized last week.

After health officials this month recommended a return to mask-wearing indoors, new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in Clark County saw a slight decrease this week, according to data updated Wednesday by the state.

The 14-day moving average of daily new confirmed cases in Clark County fell to 248, a decrease of nearly 9 percent from last week's 270 cases, according to numbers from the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services.

After the Thanksgiving holiday, new cases of COVID-19 jumped by 50 percent. Despite cases leveling off since then, Franich said it's possible for the state to expect another bump in cases after

See **VIRUSES** 4B

Teacher wins \$200K to build out jobs platform

By **Julie Wootton-Greener**
Las Vegas Review-Journal

Sunrise Mountain High School teacher Ben Nguyen came up with an idea five years ago — building a web portal to feature local jobs in an understandable way for students.

Now, he has \$200,000 to pursue what he calls his



Ben Nguyen

Innovation Contest announced Monday by the Andre Agassi Foundation for

"passion project."

Nguyen is among three winners of THE BIG IDEA CHALLENGE: An Education

Education and the Engelstad Foundation.

Applicants were invited to respond to a question: "Who out there has an idea that can help take Nevada's educational landscape to the next level?"

Receiving the funding was a welcome surprise and will allow him to pursue what was a "pie in the sky" idea,

Nguyen told the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

After building out the platform for Las Vegas, Nguyen hopes to expand it to other areas of the state.

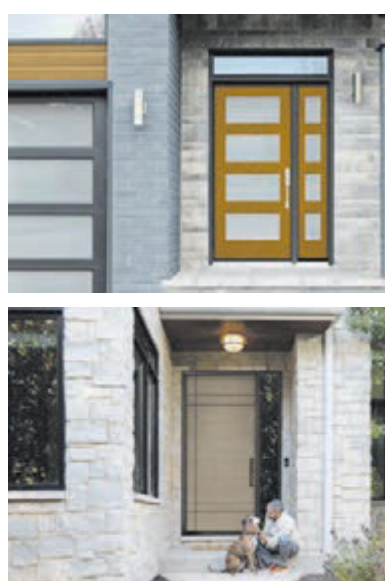
"I really want to make this a Nevada endeavor," he said.

The contest was an "incredible experiment," Kris

See **CHALLENGE** 4B

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