Across the USA

News from every state

Alabama:

**Tuscaloosa** — NorthStar EMS launched the area's first specially designed ambulance to transport obese patients. The vehicle has a heavy-duty stretcher and a winch that can lift as much as 1,600 pounds. The ambulance mainly works around the city, where DCH Regional Medical Center already has four extra-large beds for patients who weigh as much as 1,000 pounds.

Alaska:

**Anchorage** — The Hoonah Police Department has added to its ranks. The department is back at full force after hiring a recent academy graduate and the return of a veteran police officer. The department was down two people after two officers were shot and killed in late August. John Marvin Jr., 45, is accused of murdering Matthew Tokuoka and Anthony Wallace.

Arizona:

**Tucson** — An 11-year-old female giraffe has made her debut at Tucson's Reid Park Zoo and has a new name. The zoo held a Name the Giraffe Contest. Zookeepers selected the name Elinor, submitted by 4-year-old Leya Jorgenson. She chose the name because a character named Eleanor from *Alvin and the Chipmunks* wears pigtails and has big eyes, resembling a giraffe.

Arkansas:

**Little Rock** — Gov. Mike Beebe says lottery director Ernie Passailaigue should lose his job if he can't quickly fix a variety of shortcomings revealed in a recent state audit. Beebe told the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* that someone with a high-profile job such as Passailaigue should know he has to keep accurate travel records and properly document other agency spending.

California:

**Los Angeles** — The city of Bell wants its former city manager to return millions of dollars he's accused of misappropriating and enriching himself through a hefty salary. The city has filed a complaint against Robert Rizzo, claiming negligence, fraud and unjust enrichment. Rizzo, who resigned in July, is facing public corruption charges.

Colorado:

**Denver** — Firefighters are credited for saving the life of a homeless man who nearly froze to death early Thanksgiving. The man made it to the fire station just before dawn Thursday, when the temperature was 4 degrees. The man knocked on the door of a Denver fire station and was taken to Denver Health Medical Center and treated for hypothermia. The man wasn't named.

Connecticut:

**Stratford** — The federal government will put a contaminated 78-acre former Army engine manufacturing plant back on the auction block Jan. 27. The site along the Housatonic River was sold for $9.6 million in 2008 to a developer who wanted to turn it into a movie studio, but funding could not be secured. The buyer would inherit the obligation to clean up the site.

Delaware:

**Wilmington** — Nearly nine months after the state suspended its low-income weatherization program, officials said it may resume in January. Auditors said in a July report that state oversight was "non-existent." The Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control said it is trying to take the time needed to have a financially solid program.

D.C.:
Montana: abandoned wells can allow contaminants to enter drinking water aquifers. Officials estimate there could up to 500,000 unplugged wells statewide.

Georgia: Jefferson City — Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal Fulton — St. Paul — Minnesota: Windsor buses as well as the People Mover. Bathrooms are closed and sinks and toilets are flooded. The 24-hour venue serves 130,000 daily passengers riding Department of Transportation, SMART and Transit.

Michigan: "I am facing stiff scrutiny from the public and the judicial process — a challenge I am willing to accept in exchange for my mistake," he said.

Hawaii: Honolulu — The Nature Conservancy's Molokai office will be running its lights, air conditioners and electronics on solar power. The conservation organization had Maui's Rising Sun Solar install a 8.88-kilowatt photovoltaic system and said the solar panels will cover all of its energy needs.

Idaho: Sandpoint — A state trooper will be prosecuted for killing a bull moose out of season. Investigators said Cpl. Jeff Jayne killed it four days before the season opened. Jayne said he incorrectly memorized the hunting season dates. "I am facing stiff scrutiny from the public and the judicial process — a challenge I am willing to accept in exchange for my mistake," he said.

Illinois: Urbana — A deal between the University of Illinois and the Science Olympiad will bring the national student competition to campus every four or five years. About 200,000 middle and high school students compete in the math and science event every year. The university has hosted the event twice and plans to host it again in 2014.

Indiana: Elkhart — The Harvest Basket, an agency that provides food for seniors, was slated to close Dec. 31, but will remain open with help from Crossroads Community Church, which will pay the agency's utilities and continue to provide space rent-free. The Harvest Basket serves around 200 people a week, mostly retirees on fixed incomes.

Iowa: Des Moines — Officials with the Blank Park Zoo announced the hatching of a rare pink pigeon. The chick, hatched in mid-October, has left its nest and can be seen flying in the Discovery Center Aviary. The zoo says about 500 of the birds exist in the wild, and another 84 are in zoos. The pigeon comes from the Mauritius Islands off the coast of Africa.

Kansas: Hutchinson — The Associated General Contractors of America said Kansas led the nation in the percentage growth of construction employment, with 61,700 working in the field in October, a 9% increase on October 2009. Stan Whitley, with the Kansas Department of Transportation, says Kansas dedicated about $350 million in federal stimulus dollars to 80-plus projects.

Kentucky: Frankfort — Gov. Beshear, a Democrat, declared Saturday Small Business Saturday in the state to coincide with a national day encouraging shoppers to patronize local businesses. Beshear said that more than 90% of employers in the state have 50 or fewer employees. The U.S. Small Business Administration said there were nearly 28 million small businesses in the USA.

Louisiana: New Orleans — Free HIV tests are available Saturday at the Superdome, when Southern and Grambling State universities meet for the 37th annual Bayou Classic. Health officials said they're trying to inform the black community because the percentage of blacks among last year's new diagnoses was more than double that in the state's population, 75% vs. 32%.

Maine: Vinalhaven — The Department of Environmental Protection is asking the company that operates three wind turbines on Vinalhaven Island to modify its operations because the turbines are too loud. The state said Fox Islands Wind's turbines have exceeded nighttime noise limits, producing noise levels of 47 decibels when they aren't supposed to exceed 45 decibels.

Maryland: Arnold — Broadneck Elementary School Principal Alison Andre Lee made good on her promise to students that she would eat a worm if they read 100,000 minutes collectively in one week, The Capital of Annapolis reported. The principal made a similar bet last year, which resulted in her eating five crickets. Lee downed the worm at a schoolwide assembly.

Massachusetts: Boston — A Public Health Commission analysis said alcohol-related problems are sending nearly 1,000 college-age residents to hospital emergency rooms each year. Since 2008, 18- to 22-year-olds have made 40,000 visits to emergency rooms, and of that number, more than 2% were alcohol-related. The number of visits was highest from September to November.

Michigan: Detroit — The $22.5 million Rosa Parks Transit Center, which opened last year, has become so filthy that city officials are asking the public to help keep it clean. Bathrooms are closed and sinks and toilets are flooded. The 24-hour venue serves 130,000 daily passengers riding Department of Transportation, SMART and Transit Windsor buses as well as the People Mover.

Minnesota: St. Paul — Minnesota has been named the "Best Trails State" in the country. The award is presented every two years by American Trails, which works on behalf of all trail types, including bicycling, hiking, cross-country skiing, equestrian, snowmobile, off-highway vehicle, and water trails.

Mississippi: Fulton — Police Chief Ray Barnett will retire in January after 28 years in law enforcement — 18 of which he spent as chief of police. The Marine Corps veteran told the Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal that he intends to travel, fish and hunt.

Missouri: Jefferson City — The state Department of Natural Resources is giving 13 water suppliers more than $90,000 to find and plug abandoned drinking wells. Unplugged abandoned wells can allow contaminants to enter drinking water aquifers. Officials estimate there could up to 500,000 unplugged wells statewide.