

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

20 28 38 42 43
Meganumber: 27
Jackpot: \$56 Million

FANTASY 5

9 25 32 33 35

DAILY 3

Daytime: 0 6 6
Evening: 6 8 2

DAILY DERBY

1st: 07 Eureka!
2nd: 08 Gorgeous George
3rd: 05 California Classic

RACE TIME: 1:48.93

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPARD

Child Support Follies: News of the Weird has reported several times about hard-luck men who, believing they are biological fathers, agree to child support, only to learn via a DNA test that they are not, but whom judges will not let rescind those agreements. An even more ironic case emerged from the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal in December. A man had originally agreed to support his new wife's daughter, but then he and his wife divorced, and the court ruled he must continue to support the girl even though the wife has now married the man who is the girl's biological father.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the fourth day of 2006.
There are 361 days left in the year.

On Jan. 4, 1965, President Johnson outlined the goals of his Great Society in his State of the Union Address.

In 1821, the first native-born American saint, Elizabeth Ann Seton, died in Emmitsburg, Md.

In 1948, Britain granted independence to Burma.

In 1951, during the Korean conflict, North Korean and Communist Chinese forces captured the city of Seoul.

In 1960, French author Albert Camus died in an automobile accident at age 46.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Very few men are wise by their own counsel; or learned by their own teaching. For he that was only taught by himself, had a fool to his master."

BEN JONSON
ENGLISH DRAMATIST AND POET (1572-1637)

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Finances of city housing put under microscope

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — The recent release of a financial report is expected to help elected leaders make better decisions regarding the new Civic Center, while some insist obtaining the report was like "pulling teeth" and that city staff is in need of an attitude check.

At least one Santa Monica City Councilman said the financial analysis for three housing development proposals should have been given to him weeks ago, shortly after he and the rest of the City Council requested it from staff, who already had access to the information.

City Council members said a 60-page report released last week will finally allow them to understand why a staff recommendation to approve a proposal submitted by the Related Companies of California's to build housing at the new Civic Center is the best development plan.

Although council members said they are more satisfied with the information provided in the financial report, some feel city employees need to be reminded that elected leaders direct public policy in Santa Monica, and not the other way around.

"Staff has become increasingly arrogant, and it has to stop," City Councilman Herb Katz said on Tuesday. "Staff should never make the decisions of what (the council) should or should not see. The Civic Center is a huge project that will set a standard for years, and it's essential (the council) has as much information as possible."

The City Council decided on Dec. 13 to put off choosing one of three development proposals for the "Village," the housing component of the Civic Center. The City Council delayed the decision because more financial information was needed to determine

See THE VILLAGE, page 7

On the edge of their sea



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Onlookers on Tuesday sit high atop the dunes created by the Los Angeles County department of Beaches and Harbors in Venice, hoping to see some tall-reaching waves. High surf advisories continue for the second week in a row. Check page 3 for today's surf report.

LOCAL

Making the grade means walking the line

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

MALIBU CITY HALL

Elected leaders are set to decide on Thursday whether students who fail the state's high school exam should be allowed to walk with their fellow classmates at graduation.

The board of education of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District is expected to decide whether or not seniors scheduled to graduate with the class of 2006 — but who have failed the California High School Exit Examination — should be allowed to walk with their classmates in June.

According to staff's recommendation, those students, instead of receiving a diploma, would walk with their class-

See SENIORS, page 6



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Santa Monica Police question a man on Tuesday at the corner of Euclid Street and Pico Boulevard regarding a drive-by shooting that occurred several blocks away.

Shots ring out in Pico

By Daily Press staff

PICO NEIGHBORHOOD — Police are looking for the person or persons who shot a Santa Monica teenager in the arm on Tuesday.

At 4:17 p.m., two Santa Monica Police officers assigned to the Pico

Neighborhood detail were notified of shots fired in the area of 1800 block 16th Street. Officers immediately contained the area and a short time later, officers saw a dark vehicle leaving the alley. The vehi-

See SHOTS FIRED, page 6

Jacquie Banks

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Santa Monica Daily Press



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS The stars show the kind of day you'll Have:

★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★★★★-Average ★★-So-so ★-Difficult



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★ You might be more mellow than you have been in a long time. A partnership enhances your sense of well-being. Do share more of what you consider to be a high priority or critical for you. Others are most receptive. Tonight: Schedule a personal night.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ Your efforts to contact someone at a distance pay off. You might feel much better than you have in a long time. A partner is only too pleased by your efforts, and visa versa. Step into the winner's circle. Tonight: Don't be shy.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★★ Others want your attention, at any cost. Fortunately, you have the energy you need to be anywhere and everywhere. Others admire your vigor. Just make sure you follow through. Your instincts serve you well. Tonight: A force to be dealt with.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ Tune in to your intuition, and you can hardly go wrong. Enjoy yourself, and follow through on key priorities. Your humor helps you jump through hoops. Creativity could warm up your personal life. Tonight: May there be music around you.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★★ Your instincts are right on target regarding a financial partnership or a personal matter. You come from a positive space. Act on your thoughts, and you might be quite pleased with the end results. You build on security. Tonight: Be with someone who counts.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ Others are too pleased to hear from you, or you them. In either case, communication finally flourishes, and you feel better than you have in a long time. It is time to express your deeper feelings. Don't hold back. Tonight: Clear the air.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Your sixth sense homes in on an opportunity. How you see a situation could change dramatically, allowing you to gain both financially and professionally. Plug into your sixth sense, and you are nearly guaranteed a home run. Tonight: You might be putting in some extra hours.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ You have periods in which you are unusually lucky. Today is one! Let what needs to happen simply occur spontaneously. Let go of your strong need to control. Your imagination and luck merge. What more could you ask for? Tonight: So what if it is Wednesday night? Act like it is Friday evening.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ You are coming from a stable point of view. Think in terms of what you need to do in order to make yourself comfortable. A discussion with a time-honored friend or adviser helps you center even more. Tonight: At home.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Meetings and crowds in general stimulate your thoughts. You are lucky with many people. Pick up the phone. Make it OK to take an extra-long lunch. Tonight: Say what is on your mind.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★★ You might decide that spending a little on your image is very helpful. Sometimes you don't realize the impact of first impressions. Realize that you have to get more into the swing of things (which, in your case, might be acting a bit more conservatively). Tonight: Take a hard look at your budget.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★★ Claim your power and know what you want to do. Only you can stop yourself, with the Moon in your sign. Positive news comes from a distance. Ask questions if feeling doubtful. Yes, you are lucky. Tonight: Top dog.



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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Kids the focus in the world of books

By Daily Press staff

West LA's Children's Book World is hosting a number of events in January, featuring meet and greets, book readings and autograph opportunities.

The events include:

■ Storytelling with Jon Reed. Join Reed, a professional actor and singer, for a comical retelling of classic children's books. The show will be held Saturday, Jan. 14 at 10 a.m. and it is recommended for children ages 4 to 8.

■ Author talk and autographs with Claire and Monte Montgomery. The Montgomerys are the authors of the middle-grade novel, "Hubert Invents the Wheel." They will talk about the process of writing their first book and getting it published, as well as offering facts about ancient Mesopotamian culture. The event will be held on Saturday Jan. 21 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and it is recommended for children ages 9 to 12.

■ Storytelling with Kathleen Zundell. Zundell and her puppet friends invite children ages 3 to 8 to join them for stories and songs guaranteed to make everyone laugh. The show will be held on Saturday, Jan. 28 at 10:30 a.m.

■ Author talk and autographing with Louis Sachar. A chance for both children and adults to meet author Louis Sachar. His books are popular with children age 7 through teenage. His works include, "Marvin Redpost," "Wayside School" and "Holes." The event will be held Saturday, Jan. 28 from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. and is open to guests ages seven and up.

Children's Book world is located at 10580 1/2 Pico Blvd. For more information, call (310) 559-BOOK.

Auction to benefit pro bono law firm

By Daily Press staff

A local law firm is collaborating with Los Angeles artists to benefit a pro bono law firm.

Russ, August & Kabat will host a silent auction of contemporary artists' works to benefit Public Counsel, the L.A.-based national leader in pro bono public interest law.

The free, public silent auction will feature works by major California contemporary artists. More than 50 works of art, including contemporary sculptures, will be offered. Artists include Vasa, Brad Howe, Laddie John Dill, Woods Davy, Astrid Preston, Pattsi Valdez, Frank Romero and Jim Morphesis.

Prominent members of Los Angeles' legal community also will be in attendance.

The auction will be held at the newly expanded Russ, August & Kabat office, located at 12424 Wilshire Blvd., 12th floor on Jan. 19 from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS

DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM

BEAR MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
6"	12"-12"	8:00am - 4:00pm	8	9/12

CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Loose Granular, Thin Cover

JUNE MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
36"	40" - 72"	8:30am - 4:00pm	35	2/16

CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
40"	120" - 144"	8:30 am - 4 pm	50	11/28

CONDITIONS: Powder, Packed Powder, Machine Groomed

MOUNTAIN HIGH

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
6"	8"-10"	8:00 am - 10:00 pm	3	3/16

CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Wet, Thin Cover

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
14"	8"-1"	8:00 am - 4:00 pm	0	0

CONDITIONS: N/A

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
6"	12"-12"	8:00 am - 6:00 pm	8	8/13

CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Loose Granular, Thin Cover

SNOW VALLEY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
10"	12"-12"	8:00 am - 9:00 pm	2	4/11

CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed

CONDITIONS

WATER TEMP: 59°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (11-17 FT)

In SoCal, most west-facing breaks are seeing sets running three-feet overhead. Standouts are seeing some set waves reaching 15 feet on the face at times. Please note that today's swell is increasing the risk of riptides, especially at direct west-facing beach breaks, and especially during the outgoing tides. Alongshore currents are also a concern. Caution is advised. Contamination is also a major concern today from our recent rains. As a reminder, there is a risk of increased bacteria levels through a period of at least 72-hours following the end of any measurable rain event. Water contact should be avoided during this period, especially within 100 yards of drainpipes, creek outlets, river mouths, etc.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

Wednesday, size will drop a bit as our current NW swell will be replaced. This next swell is from a system that we've been watching since last week under Aleutian Chain that increased in strength as it entered the Gulf of Alaska. This will be a tad weaker than recent swells.

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA

WEDNESDAY	LOW TIDE:	6:01AM	2.1FT	6:54PM	0.2FT
HIGH TIDE:	12:51AM	4.3FT	11:53AM	5.2FT	
THURSDAY	LOW TIDE:	7:26AM	2.0FT	7:40PM	0.5FT
HIGH TIDE:	1:42AM	4.6FT	1:01PM	4.2FT	
FRIDAY	LOW TIDE:	9:05AM	1.7FT	8:29PM	1.1FT
HIGH TIDE:	2:35AM	4.9FT	2:33PM	3.4FT	

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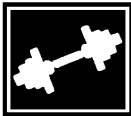


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The Q Line

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Now that a new year is upon us, 2006 will prove to be 365 days of opportunities and challenges. The city of Santa Monica has many of both — a new city manager will start his job this month, as will a "homeless czar" who is charged with effectively dealing with our growing residentially-challenged citizens.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "What is the biggest issue facing Santa Monica and how should we as a community deal with it?"

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your responses in the weekend edition. Please try to limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.

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OPINION



COMING SOON: "THE MANY LOVES OF TOM CRUISE!" © 2006 WWW.FUNNYPAPERZ.COM

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mental illness problem is not theoretical

Editor:

The article by psychiatrist David Sirkin, M.D. “Give them shelter, not leave them in the streets” (SMDP, Dec. 30, page 4) discusses remedies for homelessness, and touches on a cause of homelessness. The latter point needs to be emphasized. A major decision by the United States Supreme Court in 1975 changed much of the street scene. In decades prior to that decision, it was rare to see people living on the streets.

The Court in O’Connor v. Donaldson, 422 U.S. 563 (1975), held that an adult with a mental disorder could not be placed in a mental hospital for treatment against his will unless he was a danger to himself or others, or was incapable of surviving outside of the mental hospital.

The book “Escape from Freedom” (Erich Fromm, 1941) was very popular in the ’60s and discussed the distinction between freedom from and freedom to. In the context of this discussion, the person with a mental disorder may be free from commitment to a mental hospital, but just what is he free to do now? Sleeping on the streets, panhandling, and searching through garbage cans do not strike me as real choices. They are choices of someone who needs effective treatment. Hence, the court’s decision in O’Connor 20 years ago turns out to be a decision not truly protecting a constitutional liberty interest, but only a theoretical one. The issue must be revisited.

Frank R. Burton

Santa Monica

OPINIONS EXPRESSED are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned. Preference will be given to those that are e-mailed to editor@smdp.com. All letters must include the author's name and telephone number for purposes of verification. Letters also may be mailed to our offices located at 1427 Third Street Promenade, Suite 202, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.

That ring bling thing



ICONOCLAST

BLAST

BY SETH BARNES

I must come clean. I am a bumbling fool, a jolly, clueless bumpkin. Contently, I’ve been going about my life lacking even the slightest understanding of the motivation, desire and emotional makeup of every woman on planet earth. Surely I’m not alone in my ignorance, but that doesn’t make up for the fact that every assumption I’ve collected about womankind over the years has turned out to be a steaming pile of poppycock.

Whoops.

Oh, there were red flags along the way indicating that something was off kilter. For instance, I remember getting back a high school essay that had received a generally favorable overview from Ms. Douglas, a demanding political science instructor. However, on page six, I made a typographical error of enormous dimensions, mistakenly using the singular “woman” when the plural “women” was required. Ms. Douglas savagely attacked the error, shouting in bleeding red ink that, “You know Seth, there are more than one of us.”

Over the holidays, I received a jolting piece of news from my girlfriend and mother concerning the way women see the world. Of course, popular culture and armchair psychologists have already laid out the awe-striking behavioral and emotional differences between men and women. But this didn’t prepare me for a dumbfounding fact: The very first thing women look for when they meet somebody is an engagement ring and/or wedding band.

Ignoramus that I am, I had assumed when meeting complete strangers, women took measure of character and ethical makeup. OK, and I suppose I could also conceive of a situation where an enterprising lady might make absolute judgments about somebody based on their physical appearance alone.

But in truth, the “Engagement Ring Assessment” is the ultimate benchmark.

This visual cue separates the masses into two distinct camps: “Available” or “Unavailable.” And it doesn’t matter if you’re young, old, male, female, or transsexual ... you fall into one of the two divisions. You see, women aren’t judging whether an individual is dating or relationship eligible — although that can be one motivation. Rather, they are assessing a person’s standing in the world. Every other personality trait flows from your status of “Available” or “Unavailable.”

Of course the reason for this instantaneous investigative work is that it would be transparently rude and nosy to ask probing personal questions seconds after meeting somebody. So it’s much better to make unsubstantiated assumptions about them based on the presence — or lack thereof — of a shiny stone they’ve clasped around their finger.

Let’s say we have an unavailable woman wearing an unremarkable engagement ring with a tiny diamond. Clearly her husband is cheapskate and/or she didn’t have the moxie to hook up with a guy who treats her like a 21st Century Suburban Princess. How about a young lass wearing an ostentatious stone that glitters like the North Star on steroids? Looks like we have a 5-Point Trophy Wife on our hands. That stocky fellow you caught covertly removing his wedding band as he stepped into the bar? He’s a Wannabe Available until his wife leaves him when she finds out he’s been spending all his free hours talking to girls half his age in the sports bar next to his office.

I think a lot of time could be saved by skipping this whole engagement ring cat and mouse game all together. What if we all wore nametags that neatly summed up our place in the world? Wouldn’t this make things easier?

Just think about the possibilities. “I’m a scumbag who just put my wedding ring in my back pocket so I can chat up this college-age waitress.” Or, “I’m a dimwitted socialite who committed to eternal matrimony in exchange for unlimited use of a luxury automobile.”

Wouldn’t that be a lot more exciting and honest all the way around?

(Seth Barnes can be reached at barnes-seth@hotmail.com.)



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Purple and green, with a few shades of gray



INCITES
BY ED SILVERSTEIN

irony, something I was contemplating as I loaded a new manure fork into the back of my Mercedes ML 500.

Montana is truly purple. With a population of fewer than 1 million, Montana has only a single congressman. He's a conservative Republican. The governor is a Democrat as is the majority of the State Legislature. The two senators are split, one Democrat and one Republican, but both were in absolute agreement when it came to taking cash from lobbyist Jack Abramoff. Though, to be fair, the GOP's Conrad Burns received eight times more money and, upon receiving the cash, suddenly had a change of heart regarding all votes that related to the lobbyist's interests. Montanans also voted for Bush ... twice, but recent polls suggest that a majority have seen the error of their ways.

While the state is predominantly conservative, Missoula and Bozeman — or BozAngeles as the locals derisively call it — are both college towns and are relatively progressive. But even there troubling exceptions exist, such as when a Missoulian teacher, her lesbian lover and their infant daughter were nearly murdered when someone, whose "Christian values" were offended by their gay lifestyle, set the couple's house on fire while the three were in bed asleep.

And, while not as psychotically religious as the South, Montana does have strong Christian underpinnings. For a "liberal Jew" it is disturbing to ride along the public thoroughfares and come across ubiquitous billboards sporting a Goliath Jesus with a caption that implies that "His" is the only legitimate form of worship.

But a far worse crime than being a non-Christian in Montana, is being from California. As the locals see it, Californians' buy up the most beautiful pieces of the state, jack up prices until the dream of ownership is forever out of reach of the people who grew up there, then try to change everything that attracted them in the first place so it more resembles California. And of course they are right.

But while there are pockets of resentment and bigotry, the majority of the people are open and friendly in ways that are so typical of small towns. When you go into the hardware store there is always someone to ask what you need and who will know the exact location of that screw, washer or tool all without the fear of being crushed by a 500 pound pallet of Chinese-made toilet seats tumbling from 20 feet above. And if you get stuck in a snowdrift or ditch, almost everyone will stop to help, even if you had a knock down drag out fight at a bar the night before.

Without using even a dollar's worth of gas, we can water, downhill and cross-country ski, snowmobile, kite board, hike, snow shoe, canoe and mountain bike. Every morning we wake up in a pristine wilderness. Countless lakes, rivers, streams and creeks are nestled in the surrounding mountains. The sky is a constantly shifting melodrama, loath to ever show the same face twice. Moose, deer and elk slip through the willows and woods outside our window as hawks, owls and eagles soar among the treetops above.

We are living in paradise.

(Ed Silverstein used to live in Santa Monica but has gained more insight since moving to Montana.)

"Oh my God, he's Jewish, too!"
I am with two friends, all of us Jewish, all of us speechless. Which is strange enough in itself, but not half as strange as the scene before us.

It's two bits shy of noon. We have just ducked into a local eatery to check the menu when one of the two trailer-park rejects, entrenched at the bar, ashtrays overflowing, sipping double whiskeys with another eight dead soldiers between them, uttered:

"Oh my God, he's Jewish, too!"

But the source of the shock is not so much the exclamation, but rather that it was directed at the nine-inch television perched on the back bar. What had enthralled this pair of intellectually challenged reprobates was "The Bird Cage," a remake of a French farce about a pair of aging gay men, one of them a flamboyant cross-dressing queen, who are having ... marriage problems. And yes, "Oh my God," one of them is Jewish, too.

Welcome to my new home ... Montana.

But how does someone who spent his entire life in the teeming, solidly blue, metropolises of New York and Los Angeles end up in the rural West? Trout! Big rainbows, cutthroats, brooks and browns. But trout alone is not reason enough to give up four-star restaurants for a single menu — seemingly shared by every eatery — featuring red meat and potatoes or fried chicken as the healthy alternative.

There is a pivotal moment in every love affair. Such was the case in that began the ménage between my wife and I and Montana. It was during a horseback ride into the wilderness that we came upon a doe standing protectively on the trail along the edge of a willow swamp. A pair of wolves were tormenting her — repeatedly charging in, only to be chased off by the defiant doe, each time a little further, finally ... too far. It was at that moment that a third wolf, crouched behind a bush less than 20 feet from our trembling horses, shot into the willows. An instant later we heard the mortal scream of a fawn secreted in the brush. It was an instant of pure natural savagery, as if National Geographic had staged the moment for our personal wonderment.

We were hopelessly smitten. This was Eden. Though one that has succumbed to the Serpent's temptations and partaken of the apple, albeit probably a crab apple and a wormy one at that.

Montana, at times, seems totally overrun by a tribe of intolerant, pugilistic Irishman who, like gang bangers in South Central, are too quick to take offense at any perceived slight to their unjustified pride. And if you believe the old joke, that when God created the earth it tilted and everything loose rolled to California, then anything that took a funny bounce probably landed in the Big Sky State. And yes Virginia, the sky really is bigger.

But it is hard to define Montana. It is a place of stark contradictions and sardonic



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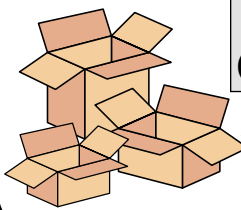
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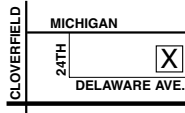
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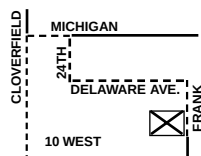
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No suspects arrested in Pico drive-by shooting

SHOTS FIRED, from page 1

cle was stopped in the 1200 block of Pico Boulevard and the occupants were detained. A field show-up was conducted and the witness identified one of the occupants in the vehicle as a person that was seen holding a gun in his hand, police said.

While officers were conducting the investigation, police dispatch was notified of a person who walked into a local hospital with a gunshot wound to the arm. The victim is an

18-year-old boy from Santa Monica.

The investigation is ongoing and at presstime the suspect had not been booked.

Anyone having any information is encouraged to contact the robbery-homicide unit of the Santa Monica Police Department at (310) 458-8451 or the watch commander's office at (310) 458-8426. Callers who wish to remain anonymous may also call the We-Tip national hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME (27463).

Students have more than one shot at high school exit exam

SENIORS, from page 1

mates and receive a certificate of attendance that indicates they have completed other graduation requirements.

The proposal, if approved, is expected to affect between 60 to 80 Santa Monica high school students per year, officials said.

The exit exam has two parts that include an English and mathematics section, according to staff.

Special education students who pass the test with modifications may receive a waiver that would allow them to graduate, staff said. Earlier this year, the SMMUSD approved waivers for 12 seniors who qualified.

However, dozens of other students may not qualify for the exemptions, officials said. Many of them may have made substantial efforts to overcome educational hurdles over the years, but they still fail the exam. Some might have passed the math section but failed English, and vice versa, officials said.

Not recognizing such students in some capacity at graduation may do more harm

than good, officials said.

"The impact of this test is that you can't get into a four-year college out of high school, and for those who do not go on to college at all, they may have trouble getting a job without a high school diploma," said Oscar de la Torre, a school board member. "We don't want to categorize or standardize these students any more than we have to, and we want a program with the most positive outcome for the students."

Current seniors first took the exit exam in March or May of 2004. Students who did not pass both sections had two additional opportunities to take the test last year and will have three opportunities this year, staff said.

There also have been several programs put into place to help students pass the test. The state has provided each 10th grade student a test study guide. Students also take a pre-test in ninth and 10th grade which also targets students for intervention if needed, the staff report said.

Students who fail the exit exam would only be able to walk with their classmates if they met all other graduation requirements.



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LOCAL



City Hall paid \$54K for financial analysis of Village development

THE VILLAGE, from page 1

which proposal is best.

Katz, as well as Councilman Bobby Shriver and Mayor Bob Holbrook, asked city staff to provide the financial analysis. Other council members, while confident that staff's recommendation was the best, agreed to postpone a decision in light of the controversy.

Because of scheduling conflicts, the City Council is not expected to make a decision about the proposals until February, according to Judy Franz, City Hall spokeswoman.

Based on information staff provided, Related's proposal would allow 165, or 51 percent, of the housing units to be affordable. The remaining would be market rate condominiums.

To attain the 325 total units requested by elected officials, however, Related wanted a building height adjustment from 56 to 65 feet.

The proposals by two other companies — Bridge/BRE and Castle & Cooke — fell considerably short of desired guidelines. Bridge/BRE asserted that in order to have the 325 units and affordable housing, building heights would have to be raised to 80 feet. Castle & Cooke proposed that one of the Village's buildings would have to be 120 feet tall.

The point Katz and other councilmembers raised on Dec. 13 was that Related's proposal might be best, but they wouldn't know for sure until they reviewed the financial analysis behind each proposal.

"The proposals varied so widely it was difficult to know why one called for a 120-foot tower, for example, and the others did not," Katz said. "Because one proposal may look better than the other (on the surface), it's important to understand their differences."

"The goal is to ensure the city is getting the most quality in its housing."

For \$54,300, City Hall hired a consul-

tant, Keyser Marston Associates (KMA), to help evaluate the three proposals. KMA's analysis — along with the financial information on each company's proposal and other charts for comparison — were included in the recent report.

KMA believed Related's proposal was the strongest option for Santa Monica.

Of the three proposals, only Related was able to agree to acquire the site under the terms of a long-term lease, a condition requested by the City Council. Bridge/BRE and Castle & Cooke proposed to buy some aspect of the properties from City Hall.

In addition, Related would pay City Hall between \$14.4 million and \$21.8 million to develop the Village. That was far more than the Bridge/BRE or Castle & Cooke proposals, which under best case scenarios could only offer City Hall \$11.63 million and \$3.25 million, respectively.

According to the report, Related showed it could achieve 325 units, in part, by increasing building height by nine feet; spreading the building bulk across sites; and placing all parking below ground.

By means of comparison, Bridge/BRE compromised its ability to achieve the requested 325 residential units — despite its 120-foot tower — by using one-half of its first floors for parking in a scheme that's mainly underground, the report said.

Bridge/BRE's proposal offered the largest average unit sizes. It included three-bedroom and live-work units that would be 1,231 square feet, and four-bedroom units that would be 1,400 square feet.

Katz and other councilmembers said they would reserve making any judgment of staff's recommendation until they completed reviewing the report.

However, Katz said that of what he's reviewed so far, Related's proposal seems best.

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Lords of file-sharing going legit or out

BY ALEX VEIGA

AP Business Writer

LOS ANGELES — Weeks before the original Napster shut down for good in 2001, Internet users were flocking to alternative song-swapping programs. Nearly 20 million people used Morpheus in its first four months, for example, to trade music and other files for free online.

But the man behind Morpheus was worried. Michael Weiss figured popularity could bring its own perils.

As he feared, the notoriety led Hollywood studios and recording companies to sue Weiss' StreamCast Inc. for copyright infringement. It was part of the entertainment industry's wider effort to contain Morpheus and other Napster clones such as Kazaa and Grokster from taking up where Napster left off.

Now, like Napster founder Shawn Fanning before them, Weiss and other file-sharing barons are facing their own day of reckoning after a landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision last summer.

Over the last four months, several Napster heirs have shut down and others are contemplating what they once couldn't abide — doing business by the entertainment industry's rules to survive.

"We can take a look at another four years of legal battles and spending millions of dollars on both sides, (but) is that where I want to spend the next four years of my life?" said Weiss, 53. "It's better to focus the company's energy on creating new technologies."

StreamCast hasn't shut down Morpheus, but the company recently approached the entertainment industry to pursue talks about settling a lawsuit against the company, according to court documents.

Wayne Rosso, who built a reputation criticizing the recording industry as head of Grokster Ltd., is also pursuing a decidedly more cordial relationship with music labels as he prepares to launch a copyright-friendly file-sharing service.

"It's pretty clear who won," Rosso said. "We always knew that this free trading of all this copyright material couldn't go on. It just wouldn't work."

Such capitulation was once unheard of among the file-sharing operators who lobbied against Hollywood and the recording industry. They billed themselves as defenders of technological innovation who shouldn't be held liable because some people used their software for piracy.

But the high court's ruling in June opened file-sharing operators to potential liability — something the entertainment industry underscored when it sent notices to seven file-sharing software operators in September warning them to shut down or prepare for court.

Companies behind once-popular file-swapping programs like i2hub and WinMX shut down after receiving the notice. LimeWire, BearShare and others also put on notice have yet to make their decisions public.

Separately, an Australian court ordered

Sharman Networks Ltd., which distributes Kazaa, to ensure that new versions of the software filter out unlicensed copyright material.

Still, the amount of file-sharing has continued to increase since the days of Napster, and that's not likely to change much, said Eric Garland, chief executive of BigChampagne LLC, which tracks activity on file-sharing networks.

"These Web sites and these businesses were shut down but it doesn't shut down the software, it doesn't shut down the (file-sharing) networks," Garland said. "The open-source community will continue to build new, uncensored versions."

Mitch Bainwol, head of the music industry trade group Recording Industry Association of America, concedes some file-sharers will find other means of obtaining pirated music online.

"There will always be new technological challenges," Bainwol said.

But he noted a sea change since Napster fell: Propelled by the success of Apple Computer Inc.'s iTunes Music Store, young music fans now have more legal options for obtaining music in digital form than they did back in 2001.

Ultimately, the entertainment companies are banking that the new-look file-swapping services that emerge from the ashes of Napster's heirs will draw computer users away from illegal services. To persevere, file-sharing providers that seek to steer clear of copyright lawsuits will have to hope for the same.

"I don't think anybody wants to see a replay of what happened to the entertain-

ment industry when Napster shut down," Weiss said. "The company or companies that find the most effective method for transforming downloaders into consumers will be the biggest winners in 2006."

So far, iMesh has been the only to complete the transition from being sued by the recording industry to relaunching as a new service with the music labels' seal of approval. But others are hoping to follow.

Rosso's new industry-blessed file-sharing venture, Mashboxx, has been in the works for more than a year and is now expected to launch in early 2006.

Grokster settled its long-running copyright lawsuit for \$50 million and is slated to re-emerge as a licensed service, while executives at MetaMachine Inc.'s eDonkey have also opted to transform.

"We're going to go legit," said chief executive Sam Yagan. "The eDonkey of the future will be very much different from what it has been and will be largely dictated by what the recording industry wants."

Rosso, Weiss and other file-sharing proponents insist that over the years, they have sought the recording industry's blessing in one form or another. But such offers were often rejected by major labels that saw the unfettered sharing of their artists' songs as unacceptable.

"We were always in the background trying to get licenses and in those days we would get one of two responses — either, 'We're not going to reward pirates,' or 'Shut down and we'll talk about it,'" Rosso said.

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STATE BRIEFS

The horrific Hemlock is choking the grass

By The Associated Press

MONROVIA, Calif. — Deadly hemlock is choking off native grasses in the San Gabriel Valley.

The poisonous herb has invaded Whittier Narrows, Eaton Canyon, Whittier Hills, Skyline Trail in the Puente Hills, Monrovia Canyon and the Lower Arroyo Seco, said plant expert Jane Strong of the Mount Baldy Nature Center.

Hemlock, which blooms in late April and May, looks much like a carrot top or parsley this time of year. It's considered an invasive species from the Mediterranean.

"It's pushing out our native grasses," said Grace Allen, a guide at the Whittier Narrows Nature Center in South El Monte.

Hemlock is much taller and stronger than the native grasses and is quickly overtaking "raptor fields," the low-grass hunting grounds for red-tailed hawks and American kestrels. But hemlock can grow up to 6 feet tall, making it tough on birds of prey.

"The hawks cannot hunt in that area," Allen said. "When the hawks go someplace else, you start losing the whole chain."

Ancient Greeks frequently used hemlock to kill off convicted criminals.

"It can cause paralysis, convulsions and, of course, even death if the intake is sufficient," said Martin Stoner, professor of plant pathology, mycology and economic botany at California Polytechnic University, Pomona.

Help is on the way faster in LA County

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Deputy emergency response times now average five minutes in cities that contract with the Sheriff's Department and 6.4 minutes in unincorporated areas of the county.

The longer response times to life-threatening emergencies — up 4 percent in cities and 3 percent in unincorporated areas since 2002 — was blamed on budget cuts and a shortage of deputies.

The time it takes deputies to respond to "priority" calls for such things as robberies, burglaries and domestic violence has increased 19 percent in contract cities to 11.1 minutes and 17 percent in unincorporated areas, to 12.9 minutes, the Sheriff's Department said.

Response times to "routine" calls such as stolen vehicles, missing people and vandalism have increased 12 percent in contract cities to 42.9 minutes and 18 percent in unincorporated areas, to 49.9 minutes.

In 2002, the Board of Supervisors cut \$200 million from the Sheriff's Department budget and the department has struggled to boost its ranks. There are currently 8,157 sworn officers.

Although about \$100 million was restored to the sheriff's budget and the department renewed its recruitment campaign in mid-2004, only a handful of officers have been added because of retirements and fierce competition with other agencies.

When the tough get going, they stop

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Crime is down in some of the city's toughest neighborhoods.

Areas of South Los Angeles are posting improving crime statistics, including the southwest area where murders were down 21 percent from 2004 and aggravated assaults were reduced by almost half — from 2,208 in 2004 to 1,277 last year.

Police Chief William J. Bratton credits the Police Department's assertive policing for reducing crime by about 10 percent for a third consecutive year. The increased use of computers, extra detectives and patrol officers in high-crime areas as well as close monitoring of repeat offenders was cited by the chief as reasons for the decline.

"We study crime daily in an aggressive way. We don't just hope we're lucky," said Capt. James E. Craig, commander of the LAPD's Southwest Division. "We have a methodology, a surgical way of looking at crime trends and patterns. We work in a very collective way."

Nursing program gets revived

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The University of California, Los Angeles, is reviving its undergraduate nursing program after a 10-year absence.

Some \$5.2 million will be allocated for a bachelor's and entry-level master's degree nursing program at UCLA beginning in the fall. UCLA will be the only university in the 10-campus UC system to offer the undergraduate degree.

But it will do little to alleviate the statewide shortage of nurses. The UCLA program is expected to produce about 50 graduates a year in each program.

Jan Emerson of the California Hospital Association said the state currently graduates about 6,000 nurses a year and noted there will be a shortage of 120,000 nurses by 2020 if more isn't done.

The UC system shut down its bachelor's degree nursing programs more than a decade ago because of state budget cuts. The University of Southern California shut down its nursing program in 2004, citing high costs.



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Calif. inmate suicides are double national rate

BY DON THOMPSON

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — A record number of convicts killed themselves in California prisons during 2005 — double the national inmate suicide rate, according to state records.

The trend approaching one suicide each week is triggering new complaints from class-action lawyers that the state is stalling prevention efforts. Prison officials deny delays, saying they thwart the vast majority of suicide attempts.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation reported 44 suicides in an inmate population that is at an all-time high — nearly 164,000 — though inmates' attorneys have so far been able to confirm only 41 deaths as suicides. Either figure is up from 26 suicides in 2004, and exceeds the previous record of 36 deaths in 2003.

Using the more conservative estimate, the rate is 27 deaths per 100,000 inmates, compared to a national rate of 14 per 100,000 calculated by the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics. That rate is falling nationally even as California's rate increases.

The National Center on Institutions and Alternatives puts the nationwide prison suicide rate at about 13 deaths per 100,000, compared to 11 deaths per 100,000 in the general community.

Seventy percent of inmate suicides in California occur in disciplinary isolation units, which reported an astronomical rate of

248 suicides per 100,000 inmates in 2004.

"We try to be there and vigilant," said corrections spokesman J.P. Tremblay. "It's always a tragedy when anybody commits suicide, but we're working hard to try to prevent that. We have made some progress, but it's not going to happen overnight."

Lawyers representing more than 26,000 mentally ill inmates in California are heading back to a Sacramento federal judge Thursday, accusing the state of not training guards quickly enough to provide emergency resuscitation when inmates are found unresponsive. Some prisons have trained fewer than half their guards, said Michael Bien, the lead attorney.

Prison attorneys countered, saying most have trained at least 75 percent of guards, and many are above 90 percent.

"While we don't expect 100 percent, it should be at least in the 90s. This is life and death, for heaven's sake," Bien said.

Previous prison policy let guards wait for medical staff to arrive: "You could choose not to help someone who was dying at your feet," Bien said.

California officials have balked at replacing overhead air vents in segregation units with vent covers that have smaller openings to prevent inmates from stringing sheets or cords to hang themselves. The department says the smaller vents would restrict air flow, while the inmates' attorneys say the vents are used in hundreds of prisons, including the California Men's Colony and Atascadero State Hospital for

"We try to be there and vigilant. It's always a tragedy when anybody commits suicide, but we're working hard to try to prevent that. We have made some progress, but it's not going to happen overnight."

J.P. TREMBLAY

Spokesman

California Department of Corrections

the criminally mentally ill.

Inmate attorneys are also objecting to prison proposals to reduce the amount of mental health supervision provided in segregation units.

They hope a federal judge will order a hearing into a three-year-old prison policy that treats mental illness as a security danger. The mentally ill are often sent to more secure prisons where they are housed with violent inmates and are more frequently locked in their cells with fewer privileges and amenities.

A special master appointed by U.S. District Judge Lawrence Karlton is set to soon release a report on the correction's department decision two years ago to stop stationing a guard outside the cells of each one or two suicide-risk inmates. Now, guards monitor as many as six inmates at a time via television cameras in the cells, which Bien said is far from foolproof and prevents the human contact that could help deter suicides.

Senate Majority Leader Gloria Romero, who chairs two corrections oversight committees, criticized prison officials for failing to adopt what she called "no brainer" precautions. The Democrat from Los Angeles plans hearings this month.

Bien blamed the prison system's swelling population and understaffing for the increase in suicides. More general population inmates are locked in their cells for longer periods without significant activities, so their conditions more closely approximate those of inmates in disciplinary segregation who are most likely to take their own lives, he said.

The court's special master is preparing a year-end report calling for the prison system to increase spending on mental health staff and services.

The state recently hired Thomas White, a former federal prisons official who now consults on inmate suicide prevention, to help find the cause of the increase and to suggest improvements.

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Real Estate

Forecasts show housing market will remain strong

DAYS ON
THE MARKET

BY JODI SUMMERS

It's looks like 2006 will be a good year for real estate in California, according to industry experts.

"The economic fundamentals at both the state and national level continue to support a strong housing market in the Golden State for the foreseeable future," offered California Association of Realtors chief economist Leslie Appleton-Young, pontificating about what will happen with local real estate in 2006. "We also expect that the wave of new loan products that have flooded the market over the past several years have injected a higher level of risk into the market, while affordability barriers to homeownership will continue to push residents inland and even out of state.

"Declining affordability will constrain sales in 2006 at a greater rate than we've previously experienced, especially in markets where there are higher price points compared with the state as a whole," Appleton-Young continued. "Not all areas of the state will continue to experience the unprecedented double-digit median price increases of the past five years. Some high-cost areas, especially those in the more costly coastal regions, face a potential leveling off of median price gains compared with the 10 percent gain we expect for the state as a whole."

The California Association of Realtors (CAR) goes on to predict that the median

home price in California will increase 10 percent to \$575,500 in 2006, up \$523,150 from last year. Sales for 2006 are projected to reach 630,610 units, falling 2 percent from 2005.

Of course, things are different in Santa Monica. According to the MLS, the median price of a single-family home in 2005 was \$1,575,000 up from \$1,400,000 in 2004 and \$1,042,500 in 2003. In 2005, 295 homes sold in Santa Monica. In 2004, 328 homes sold. In 2003 it was 386 homes.

In the condo market, the median sale price was \$675,000 in 2005, as compared with \$621,500 in 2004 and \$467,000 in 2003. Locally, 596 condos sold in 2005; 664 in 2004 and 715 in 2003.

Economists say that the double-digit appreciation that California has experienced for the past five years will continue due to the continuing shortage of housing across much of the state. In 2005, Santa Monica saw an average appreciation rate of 13.8 percent.

"The market will be coming off of a five-year boom and experience a soft landing (in 2006)," said David Lereah, chief economist of the National Association of Realtors. "An uptrend in mortgage interest rates will cause some slowing of the sales pace, but we forecast 2006 to be the second-highest year on record and housing will continue to support the overall economy."

Another factor that will keep housing prices strong is that California typically gains nearly 250,000 new households annually. The state will build about 200,000 new housing units in 2006, creating a shortfall of about 50,000 units — and those low construction numbers will

continue. Inman News reports that single-family building permits are down 18 percent and multi-family starts are down 36.1 percent since November 2004.

This year is expected to bring additional uncertainty when Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan retires in January after 18 years, leaving the esteemed, but unproven Ben Bernanke to guide the economy.

"A housing price slowdown, in part triggered by the Federal Reserve's policy actions, will become more pronounced as the year 2006 progresses, placing consumer spending, credit-quality, and job creation at some risk," notes Wells Fargo senior economist Scott Anderson.

Anderson predicts that rising mortgage rates will affect housing demand, inventories will rise, and the pace of sales and construction will slow. He feels the main risk for the economy in 2006 is that the slowing housing market could dampen consumer spending, credit quality and job creation.

"We expect the fixed mortgage interest rate to rise to 6.4 percent next year, and the adjustable rate to hit 5.1 percent, which will make it more difficult for many families in California to be able to afford a home," said CAR President Jim Hamilton. "While still near their historic lows, up-ticks in interest rates coupled with the continued increase in the median home price will push affordability in California to a new all-time annual low of 15 percent next year."

Exotic loan products such as interest-only loans will figure into the slowing housing cycle.

"People with adjustable-rate mortgages will probably do everything they can to

hold on to their house, as long as their mortgage payment doesn't go up too fast," observed Delores Conway, director of the Casden Forecast at the University of Southern California Lusk Center for Real Estate. "But, if you have a speculator who took out an interest-only loan, planning to flip the property for profit in a short time, and the prices go down, they might just walk away from it."

Another possible panic for real estate is the plan that was presented on Nov. 1 to President George W. Bush's Advisory Panel on Federal Tax Reform, calling for replacing the mortgage-interest deduction with a more limited 15 percent tax credit, among other things.

The best thing that could happen in 2006?

"A situation where the U.S. economy continues the modest job growth it has produced over the last year is the best-case scenario," predicted Mark Dotzour, chief economist at Texas A&M University's Real Estate Center. "Modest job growth creates underlying demand for housing and very little threat in the way of inflation. That's what keeps interest rates at low levels like the ones we've enjoyed for the last five years. If we have moderate job growth resulting in low inflation and in turn a low mortgage interest rate environment, the U.S. will have another successful year."

(Jodi Summers is director of the investment division at Boardwalk Realty Santa Monica. Contact her at jodis@boardwalkrealty.com, or call (310) 309-4219. Visit her community history Web site at www.santamonicalandmarks.com.)



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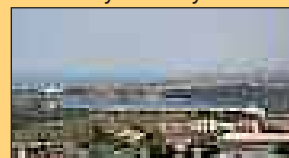
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Grapes in California's wine country expected to survive stormy weather

BY MICHELLE LOCKE
Associated Press Writer

NAPA, Calif. — Winter storms made a mess in California's wine country, but the rains were not expected to wash out the region's valuable grape crop, officials said.

Weekend storms washed debris over vine trellises, knocked down posts and sent soil downhill. But with the 2005 harvest safely in weeks ago and the vines dormant for the winter, vintners were not expecting serious problems.

"There's certainly been a lot of vines under water, but they've been under water before," said Nick Frey, executive director of the Sonoma County Grape Growers Association, on Monday.

The big problem facing vintners was repairing damage to downed posts and flooded equipment, cleaning out the rubbish washed in by urban floodwaters and digging out from sediment.

Hillside growers face the opposite problem of building up soil eroded by the storms.

The storms hit hard over the weekend, swelling the Napa River to 5 feet above flood stage and swamping several downtown blocks. Napa officials said about 600 homes and 150 businesses were flooded, causing about \$50 million in damage. Estimates for vineyard flooding were not immediately available.

"There'll be debris washed up and there probably was some debris taken off the property," said Chris Carpenter, winemaker at the Cardinale winery in Oakville. "The vines are pretty resilient and they're all shut down, so they can be completely submerged and they'll all come back."

People have planted crops in flood areas "for millennia," he said. "What's happened is they're also starting to plant houses in flood areas because they're beautiful places to be in."

REAL ESTATE BRIEFS

Movielink to stay in Santa Monica

By Daily Press staff

Movielink, the leading broadband video-on-demand (VOD) service, recently signed a lease renewal for 21,261 square feet of office space at Equity Office's Arboretum Courtyard, located at 2120 Colorado Ave. in Santa Monica's special office district.

Movielink, which occupies space on the fourth floor, has been located in the 100 percent occupied building since 2002.

"We are pleased to be able to remain at Arboretum Courtyard, which is a premier location within the Santa Monica special office district," said Jim Ramo, CEO of Movielink. "The creative environment is a perfect match for Movielink."

Mark Robinson, Paul Stockwell and Arlene Sommer of Studley represented Movielink. Equity Office was represented in-house by Gail Goldstein, director of leasing.

"Our goal is to work with our customers to support their renewal needs. The Santa Monica market is experiencing increased absorption as companies continue to seek high quality office space," said Bert Dezzutti, senior vice president of Equity Office's Los Angeles region. "The trend is clearly toward media companies wanting to be in Santa Monica's special office district because of the synergies to other companies in the entertainment industry nearby."

Located in the heart of Santa Monica, Arboretum Courtyard features approximately 140,000 square feet of creative office space. The two, four-story buildings were built in 1999 and designed in Santa Barbara Classicist architecture utilizing limestone and granite. The courtyard features landscaping, bench and patio seating and a reflecting pool.

Movielink is an online movie download service offering U.S. broadband customers a selection of recently released films and classic movies covering every genre, from action, comedy, drama, family and romance to sci-fi, horror and thrillers. The service is owned and operated by Movielink, LLC, a joint venture of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios, Paramount Pictures, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Universal Studios and Warner Bros.. Movielink content offerings are drawn from the current releases and the libraries of those studios, as well as from those of Walt Disney Pictures, 20th Century Fox, and leading independent studios.

Equity Office Properties Trust, operating through its various subsidiaries and affiliates, is the nation's largest publicly held office building owner and manager with a total office portfolio of 619 buildings comprising 112.9 million square feet in 18 states and the District of Columbia. Equity

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Santa Monica Daily Press

NATIONAL



Arizona Navajos act to stop potential uranium rush

By The Associated Press

PHOENIX — As the price of uranium continues to rise, so does the potential for another uranium rush in Arizona — something Navajos are trying to stop.

Last year, 700 mining claims were filed and 100 test holes were bored into the remote high desert in northern Arizona, The Arizona Republic reported.

Scott Florence, director of the Bureau of Land Management's Arizona Strip district in St. George, Utah, said those numbers are significantly higher than any year since the frenzy of the 1980s.

"Finding the right mine site is a real art. But it seems like everyone and their mother is trying now," Florence said.

Fueling the hunt is the price of uranium, which has tripled in the past two years to \$36 a pound on the spot market. At the height of the last rush in 1979, uranium got to \$43 a pound.

Fearing another rush, Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley Jr. issued an executive order in November banning negotiations with uranium companies or uranium exploration on the three-state Navajo Nation.

Arizona, which has the richest deposits of the ore, also has the worst legacy associated with its mining, along with New Mexico.

After the first wave of uranium mining began on its reservation in the 1950s, the Navajo Nation became embroiled in a public health tragedy. Dozens of premature deaths of Navajo miners and passed-on genetic defects have been attributed to uranium exposure.

"You look around the reservation and see so many elderly people who are crippled and can barely breathe," said Robert Stewart Sr. of Tuba City, a Navajo who worked for five years in a mine in the mid- to late 1950s. "This pretty much devastated much of a generation."

Meanwhile, some say the exploration ban on the Navajo Nation could increase the urgency to look for ore on state, federal and private lands between Interstate 40 and the Utah border. There are dozens of potential uranium-ore bodies that would make financial sense to mine if market prices remain at their highest levels in 25 years.

Despite the creation in 2000 of two national monuments north of the Grand Canyon — Grand Canyon-Parashant and Vermilion Cliffs — fears remain about mining between the monuments and old claims.

Florence said the creation of the monuments restricts any future mining claims, but pre-existing claims have grandfathered rights.

"The richest area of uranium deposits is in a 50- to 75-mile area between the two monuments, and the exploration there won't be affected," Florence said.

Shirley's spokesman, George Hardeen, said the Navajo president spent two days in Washington meeting with members of Congress to re-emphasize tribal sovereignty and to try to keep uranium firms from "going in the back door" with the Interior Department and negotiating their own mining contracts.

"Uranium left a deadly legacy on the Navajo Nation, which (Shirley) has called genocide," Hardeen said. "The tribe is giving up millions of dollars in royalties to keep history from repeating itself."

Meanwhile, companies are eager to open more sites. International Uranium Corp. of Denver hopes to have four mines operating soon between the North Rim of the Grand Canyon and the town of Fredonia.

International Uranium Vice President Harold Roberts said the company is considering opening Canyon Mine, south of the Grand Canyon, a site that was partly developed before the uranium market crashed in the late 1980s.

"The mines are more developed north of the Grand Canyon, but we are very excited about the prospects south of the Canyon between Flagstaff and the national park," Roberts said. "We still have a ways to go before this becomes an all-out rush."

But the demand for uranium may soon shoot up, said Lyle Krahn, a spokesman for Cameco Corp. — Canada's main uranium producer, which also has mines in Wyoming and Nebraska —

"The U.S. has been inching ever closer to announcing 10 new nuclear-power generating sites," Krahn said, "and this would have big ramifications for our industry."



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Mexico opens investigation into U.S. shooting of migrant

BY WILL WEISSERT

Associated Press Writer

MEXICO CITY — Mexico took the unusual step of opening an investigation into the killing of a man officials said was shot while sneaking into California, using the death to again draw attention to a contentious U.S. anti-immigration measure.

The death of the 18-year-old came as Mexico's government continued its vocal campaign against the bill approved by the U.S. House of Representatives last month.

"This occurrence does no more than provide evidence that only a law that guarantees legal entry and is respectful of human rights can resolve the migratory problem both countries face," Ruben Aguilar, the chief spokesman for President Vicente Fox, said Monday.

Many Mexicans oppose the U.S. measure, which would build more border fences, make illegal entry a felony and enlist military and local police to help stop undocumented migrants.

Aguilar said the death of Guillermo Martinez showed that extending border walls will not curb illegal immigration.

Martinez died Saturday in a Tijuana hospital, the Baja California state attorney general's office said. He died one day after he was shot by a U.S. Border Patrol agent near a metal wall separating that city from San Diego, according to witnesses cited by Mexican officials.

Raul Martinez, a spokesman for the Border Patrol said the agent had been "assaulted by an individual who threw a large size rock."

"The agent, fearing for his life at that time, fired one round at the individual, who fled back to Mexico," Martinez said Monday.

The spokesman, who is not related to the dead 18-year-old, said U.S. investigators were unsure if the victim had been struck by the bullet because he crossed back into Mexican territory.

Mexico's federal attorney general's office said the probe was opened against "whomever is found to have been responsible," but did not name a suspect. Mexico generally does not try to apply its laws to events that occurred in other nations.

The attorney general's statement said Martinez was with four other people when he was shot.

Martinez was from the western city of Guadalajara but was living in Tijuana with his older brother, who apparently witnessed the shooting, said Luis Cabrera, Mexico's consul general in San Diego. Cabrera said Mexican officials were collecting reports from him and other witnesses.

Mexican officials have grown increasingly vocal in their opposition to the House bill passed Dec. 16, which Foreign Relations Secretary Luis Ernesto Derbez branded as "stupid and underhanded." Fox has called it shameful.

Officials of Mexico's federal Human Rights Commission have acknowledged that Mexico already employs some of the same methods in its own territory. But Aguilar again attacked the U.S. measure Monday, saying "walls and police crackdowns never will resolve migration problems."

In 2004, Mexican migrants in the United States sent home more than \$16 billion in remittances, according to Mexico's central bank, giving the nation its second biggest source of foreign currency after oil exports.

The U.S. Senate is expected to address the immigration measure in February.

U.S. officials prepared for post-holiday influx at border

By The Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — U.S. immigration officials have made preparations to handle an increased influx of people that will continue into next week as Mexican immigrants who spent the holidays in their hometowns come back.

In Nogales, the busiest port of entry between Arizona and the Mexican state of Sonora, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials will keep all eight lanes open at the main crossing point downtown with extra personnel on hand to process the travelers, said agency spokesman Brian Levin.

Officials are also prepared to process travelers by keeping lanes open longer at a second border crossing in Nogales.

Some of the thousands of paisanos, or countrymen, who make the trek south each year got a head start back as early as Friday, mostly because they had to work. Mexico's holiday season ends Jan. 6.

Ricardo Chavez, his wife, Maria, and their 11-year-old son, Ryan, were on their way to Las Vegas late last week after more than three weeks in the Mexican state of Jalisco. "It's time to get back to work," said Chavez, a construction worker.

Despite the expected increase in northbound crossings, Mexican immigration figures show that for the third straight year, fewer paisanos — presumably those who live in the United States illegally — are venturing back to Mexico for fear that tightened borders will keep them from re-entering this country.

Rodolfo Aguilar, a spokesman for the Mexican consulate in Nogales, said statistics appear to show a clear trend of fewer people going back to Mexico for the holiday period, which begins there on Dec. 16.

Mexican immigration figures show a decline in late-year southbound crossings through Nogales in 2004-05 as compared with the 2003-04 season, as well as through all but one of the four other ports of entry between the two states, Aguilar said.

The numbers show that 141,412 paisanos entered Mexico through Nogales from Nov. 24, 2003, to Jan. 11, 2004. The number fell to 61,981 from Nov. 18, 2004, to Jan. 9, 2005.

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INTERNATIONAL



Officials halt search at collapsed ice rink

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM

Associated Press Writer

BAD REICHENHALL, Germany — Rescuers halted their search Tuesday for survivors feared trapped for nearly a full day under the wreckage of a fallen ice rink roof that killed 11 people, including six children, fearing the ruins could collapse further.

An expert survey showed “that it would be irresponsible for more rescue workers to go in,” said George Grabner, a local councilor for the region that includes the Alpine town of Bad Reichenhall.

Four people were still missing following Monday’s roof collapse — a woman and three children between the ages of 12 and 16, officials said.

Officials were awaiting the arrival of more heavy equipment later Tuesday evening and they hoped the rescue operation would resume by dawn Wednesday.

“As soon as it is possible, we will continue to work with dogs and helpers into the area to find the people who are still in the wreckage,” said Rudi Zeil, a local fire official. He said operations would continue “until we have rescued or recovered all the missing.”

Rescuers used trained dogs to try to find people, but hopes were dimming for finding survivors 24 hours after the accident. Two bodies were carried from the wreckage just past noon Tuesday.

Officials said another 18 people were seriously injured in the collapse of the snow-laden roof, which occurred Monday at 4 p.m., just as the rink was about to close for the day. Schools were still on Christmas break and about 50 people were in the building at the time.

Rescue workers recovered two bodies just after midday Tuesday, slowly carrying a stretcher covered with a white cloth out of the tilting wreckage of the 1970s-era recreational center in southeastern Germany. Officials said 18 people were injured and several more remained missing.

Heavy equipment was used in the search, which included about 500 firefighters, police and rescue personnel from Germany and neighboring Austria, as well as dogs trained to find earthquake victims.

Heavy snow hampered the rescue efforts. Cranes dangled firefighters onto the collapsed roof with long chains to guard against a sudden shift so they could shovel away new snow.

Officials vowed to keep digging but the mood grew more somber as hours passed. A 6-year-old girl was rescued with no major injuries Monday more than five hours after the collapse. Rescue officials, however, expressed concern that anyone still trapped would suffer from hypothermia.

Among the confirmed deaths were a 13-year-old boy, and two girls ages 7 and 8, one of whom was killed along with her mother. A 12-year-old boy who was rescued at the scene died later in the hospital.

In Berlin, Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her “deep sympathy” for the victims and praised the work of rescuers who were in “a race against time” to find survivors.

Bavarian Gov. Edmund Stoiber toured the rescue site and expressed his sympathy as well, describing the scene as “shocking, I’ve got no words for it.” A memorial service was planned for next week.

Police and prosecutors said they would investigate the cause of accident amid angry suspicions from some town residents, who said the building had been due for renovation.

“There’s something rotten about this. We’ve had a lot more snow than this before,” said retiree Erna Schweiger-Nolte as she stood outside the police cordon.

She said it was “well known” that the building was in poor shape and leaking.

Suspicions were fueled by news that an official with the town’s ice hockey club said he had been told by town authorities 30 minutes before the accident that a regular practice session for youth players later in the day was canceled because there was a risk of the facility collapsing.

Officials said there had been a roughly 8-inch layer of snow on the roof. Mayor Wolfgang Heitmeier said the weight of the snow had been measured at midday Monday and that it was well below the point at which the rink would have had to be closed.

Heitmeier told reporters that, following heavy snowfall in the afternoon, there had been some concern that those levels could be reached the next day, and the planned Monday evening practice was canceled as a precaution. The snow was to have been shoveled off Tuesday morning.

He said officials did not see any danger “because the levels were significantly below the limit.”

Meteorologists measured nearly 1 1/2 feet of fresh, wet snowfall on Monday in the Bavarian Alps, where Bad Reichenhall is located. Heavy snowfall warnings were also issued for Tuesday, as the snow continued to come down. Two people were killed in an avalanche in the area Monday, and police cleared the train station Tuesday in nearby Traunstein, the hometown of Pope Benedict XVI, after rail personnel expressed worry about the heavy snow on the roof there.

Bad Reichenhall, a town of some 15,000 people, is on the border with Austria and about six miles from the city of Salzburg.

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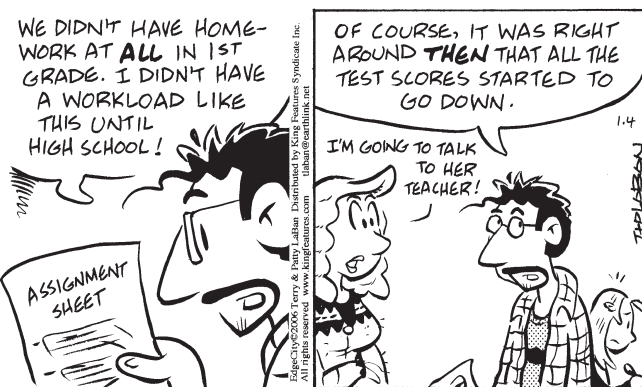


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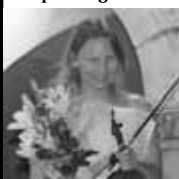
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