

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

FANTASY 5

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DAILY 3

Daytime: 5 1 5

Evening: 3 5 4

DAILY DERBY

1st: 01 Gold Rush

2nd: 05 California Classic

3rd: 09 Winning Spirit

RACE TIME: 1:44.30

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

The super-reclusive, 280-person German cult Villa Baviera, holed up in Chile since 1961 and worshipping of former army nurse Paul Schaefer (now age 81, with whereabouts unknown), broke into the public eye in a November Reuters dispatch describing how most members have finally, after four decades, come to realize that they were mistaken in their belief that Schaefer is God's messenger on Earth. The cult lived frozen in time, with few modern conveniences, wearing clothing from the 1930s, and in total obedience to Schaefer, who had imposed many idiosyncratic policies, including an ironclad no-intimacy rule.

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1941, novelist James Joyce died in Zurich, Switzerland.

In 1962, comedian Ernie Kovacs died in a car crash in west Los Angeles.

In 1982, an Air Florida 737 crashed into Washington, D.C.'s 14th Street Bridge after takeoff and fell into the Potomac River, killing 78 people.

In 1966, Robert C. Weaver became the first black Cabinet member as he was appointed Secretary of Housing and Urban Development by President Johnson.

In 1971, the groundbreaking situation comedy "All in the Family" premiered on CBS television.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"To want to be the cleverest of all is the biggest folly."

SHOLOM ALEICHEM
RUSSIAN AUTHOR-HUMORIST (1859-1916)

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Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

A city worker hauls sand to cover the Montana Avenue storm drain. The area has been under construction for weeks.

Dog days of Santa Monica

Canines should be allowed frolic in the sand, city says

BY CORTNEY FIELDING

Special to the Daily Press

COUNCIL CHAMBERS — It looks like it'll be dog day afternoons at the beach for canines.

In an unanimous decision, the City Council voted Tuesday to begin work on a dog beach pilot program that would set aside a small portion of Santa Monica State Beach for dogs to swim and run off-leash.

Georja Umamo Jones, founder of "Unleash the Beach," the organization of that introduced the proposal, began her campaign last summer by collecting thousands of signatures in support of a dog beach. Jones said Tuesday she had the support of at least 2,500 Santa

Monica residents.

"We could have gotten a lot more signatures, but we just got tired of collecting," Jones said.

Jones and five others who spoke Tuesday on behalf of the proposal, touted the beach's benefits and explained how it will operate.

Jones said the park will have a positive effect on city revenue and will bring more people downtown. Using Huntington Beach and Carmel as examples, she claimed both cities saw increased business after implementing their dog beaches.

Jones said the Santa Monica dog beach will model a one-year pilot program that the city of Long Beach completed in September. She said the reason the Long Beach program was successful was because a non-profit group called the "Recreation Dog Park

See BOW WOW, page 5

Budget: Residents want cash for arts, bathrooms

BY DIDIER DIELS

Special to the Daily Press

CITY HALL — While officials here express caution as they prepare next year's budget, dozens of community members lined up in City Hall Tuesday looking for money to fund their projects.

Residents and commission members appealed to the City Council to fund everything from the arts to a handicapped bathroom in City Hall

as budget talks for the 2005-2006 fiscal year got underway.

A projected \$1.1 million gap in the general fund budget has shrunk and may be eliminated all together because of larger-than anticipated city revenue through sales and hotel bed taxes, officials said. The new revenue, increased by both increased business and higher taxes, will likely prevent the \$350,000 cuts anticipated for both the police department and

City divided over who deserves affordable units

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — Elected leaders traded barbs Tuesday night over how the city's least expensive apartments are divvied up among Santa Monica residents and outsiders.

After voting to give nonprofit developers more autonomy in building new housing projects, the City Council entered into a charged discussion of whether Santa Monica residents and workers are getting a fair shake in the quest for cheap rentals.

There are more than 3,000 units reserved for low-income households in Santa Monica and hundreds of new units are in the pipeline. Housing officials give preference to local workers and residents when possible, but said nearly half of new units are filled by people who previously lived outside the city.

"We're talking about spending Santa Monica people's money to provide this housing and I think folks, whether they're right or wrong, they don't feel that way," City Councilman Bobby Shriver said at the Tuesday meeting.

"Everybody in the world wants to live in Santa Monica," Shriver continued. "It's a very, very desirable place."

Shriver called for a report detailing how applicants are chosen to fill low-income housing vacancies. The overwhelming feeling on the

street, he said, is units ought to be set aside for teachers, firefighters, police officers and others.

Local projects that rely on any amount of federal funding cannot give preference to Santa Monica residents and workers. Ron Barefield, City Hall's housing administrator, said projects recently have

"I just want to say that I am not inadvertently being seduced by anybody to harm poor people ... I take offense at that."

— BOBBY SHRIVER
City Councilman

been able to rely less on federal funds as local developers pay for the privilege of not including affordable units in new projects.

City Councilman Richard Bloom said some preference for local residents was good, but added the practice can be taken too far.

"When we use terminology like, 'We don't favor affordable housing for people from New York' — well, should New York

See HOUSING, page 5



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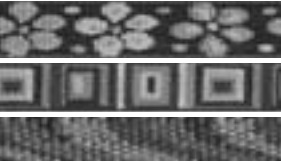


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Accept an apology, Pisces

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 wake up with a smile, but
by the afternoon, challenges boomerang in your
direction. Be careful how you express your frus-
tration and anger. Though you might feel pulled in
two different directions, rise above the situation.
Tonight: You need some downtime.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★ Just when you think you are free
and clear, a hassle erupts. You might be hard-
pressed to keep your focus, attention and temper.
Detach and eye your objectives. A friend cheers
you on. A close associate or money matter comes
forth. Tonight: Let off steam. Play racquet ball
with a friend.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★ Everyone has his or her own agen-
da, which might not be a surprise. Right now, oth-
ers push to have what they want. Avoid tumbling
into a money conflict. Do your best not to react to
various pressures. Concentrate on work. Tonight:
Work late.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★ Others challenge you. Don't curl up
into your shell. Claim your power and don't allow
a slow depression to come on. Avoid reacting by
detaching. Take a walk. Go out. Remember, oth-
ers could be having a hard day too. Tonight: Let
your imagination make the suggestion.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★ Good intentions appear to fall to the
wayside. You might be more exhausted than you
realize. Work with others as much as you can. To
honor your feelings, relate on a one-on-one level.
The stress could be less. Curb irritation and use
your lunchtime for a walk or some other stress-
buster. Tonight: Don't push too hard.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ Reach out for those around you.
Your personal and public lives demand network-
ing and attention. Others could throw a tantrum if
they don't get their way; hold steady and don't
react. This behavior helps others see their
actions. Tonight: Accept an apology.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★ High demands drain your energy. You
can explain all you want, but you cannot please
everyone. Direct your attention where you can
make a difference. Avoid a quarrelsome person
until you are sure that he or she has calmed down.
Tonight: Screen calls.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ Express your creativity, but don't
take unnecessary risks. You cut through others'
contrariness and help them relax. Your humor
lightens up many. You might not get the response
you desire at first. Tonight: Start your weekend
early.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★ Push comes to shove. If you can
cocoon, by all means do so. Chill out and avoid
expressing your frustration and anger. You will only
make a situation into a problem. Also, an apology
could be necessary to clear the air. Tonight: Play it
smart — chill.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ Your efforts fall on deaf ears. You
could be reactive. Go where you might be appreci-
ated and cared about in return. Know when to say
“enough.” Understand your reactions. Tonight:
Swap today's war stories with a buddy.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★ Funds and spending leap out of control.
Depression or exhaustion easily could be a side
effect. Understand what a whirlwind you are in.
Center and jump over the present emotional cli-
mate. Tonight: Get to the root of a problem.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ You might have a magnetic per-
sonality and style. However, the actions of those
around you — bosses, parents and authority fig-
ures — might impair your actions and ability to let
go. The good news is, this situation is only tempo-
rary. Tonight: Accept an apology.



AUDIT PENDING

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Police warn of cell phone scam

By Daily Press staff

A Santa Monican was scammed out of an undisclosed amount of money after he gave his debit card account number and pin to an unknown entity through a text message he received on his cell phone.

Apparently the victim received a text message on his cell phone that said there was unusual activity on his debit card account and to call the number left on the text message for verification. When the victim returned the call, the automated voice message asked the victim to input the account number and PIN number for the debit card. At a later date, the victim discovered that an unknown person had made an unauthorized withdrawal from the account.

The Santa Monica Police Department encourages anyone receiving this type of text message on a cell phone number or an e-mail to not give confidential banking information, such as a pin number, to anyone.

Anyone with information is encouraged to call the SMPD at (310) 458-8491 or detective Maury Sumlin at (310) 458-8437. Callers who wish to provide anonymous information may also call the We-Tip national hotline at 1-800-78-CRIME (27463). Callers with information that leads to an arrest and conviction become eligible for a reward of up to \$1,000.

State of the Bay to be released

By Daily Press staff

The public will soon learn just how healthy the Santa Monica Bay.

A one-day conference to examine progress in the restoration of Santa Monica Bay and the challenges ahead will be held on Thursday in the Ahmanson Hall at the Skirball Center, 2701 North Sepulveda Blvd. in Los Angeles.

Results of a multi-year assessment of the health of Santa Monica Bay will be released at the state of the Bay Conference of the Santa Monica Bay Restoration Commission (SMBRC). The SMBRC’s 2004 State of the Bay report evaluates the environmental health of the bay and measures the progress made towards achieving the goals of the Bay Restoration Plan, a comprehensive plan of action for bay protection and management.

Conference presentations and panel discussions will address approaches to and successes in protecting ocean and coastal resources, storm water management, coastal and ocean habitats, wetlands and watersheds, and public education. California Resources Secretary Mike Chrisman and Los Angeles City Councilmember and chair of the SMBRC Jack Weiss are among the experts who will address the more than 250 conference participants at this day-long event. The conference also will showcase how \$25 million in Proposition 12 bond funds have been used to support Bay restoration and protection.



SURF REPORT

What can brown do for P-block? Look for clean and glassy morning conditions with light offshore winds. The WNW (290-310) wind and ground swell combo drops fast — generally surf is ankle to knee high, but standouts throughout the South Bay should hit near waist high for the dawn patrol. The late-am high tide of near 6ft suffocates the surf – get it early! NW winds increase late morning 5-12 knots and continue through the afternoon — easing near sunset. Low tide 4:45am 1.9ft, High tide of 6.1 ft at 10:48am, with -.9 low at 5:51pm.

Write us at wood@smdp.com and tell us what the surf is doing today at your local break.

Today the water is:

60°

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	12:15	2.3	2:15	1.6	6:45	6.7	8:52	3.7
SUNDAY	1:08	2.2	3:00	1.9	7:33	7.1	9:34	3.9
MONDAY	2:00	2.0	3:43	2.0	8:21	7.2	10:16	4.0
TUESDAY	2:51	1.9	4:27	1.8	9:09	7.1	10:58	4.1
WEDNESDAY	3:45	1.8	5:10	1.5	9:58	6.7	11:42	4.3
THURSDAY	4:42	1.8	5:52	0.9	10:48	6.0	N/A	N/A
FRIDAY	N/A	N/A	1:31	1.0	5:57	6.2	8:07	3.5

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The Q Line

It’s the beginning of the new year, and with it comes a whole new set of issues. This week, the SMDP would like to give residents an opportunity to sound off. So this week, Q-Line asks, “What’s on your mind in this city by the sea?”

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we’ll print your response in our 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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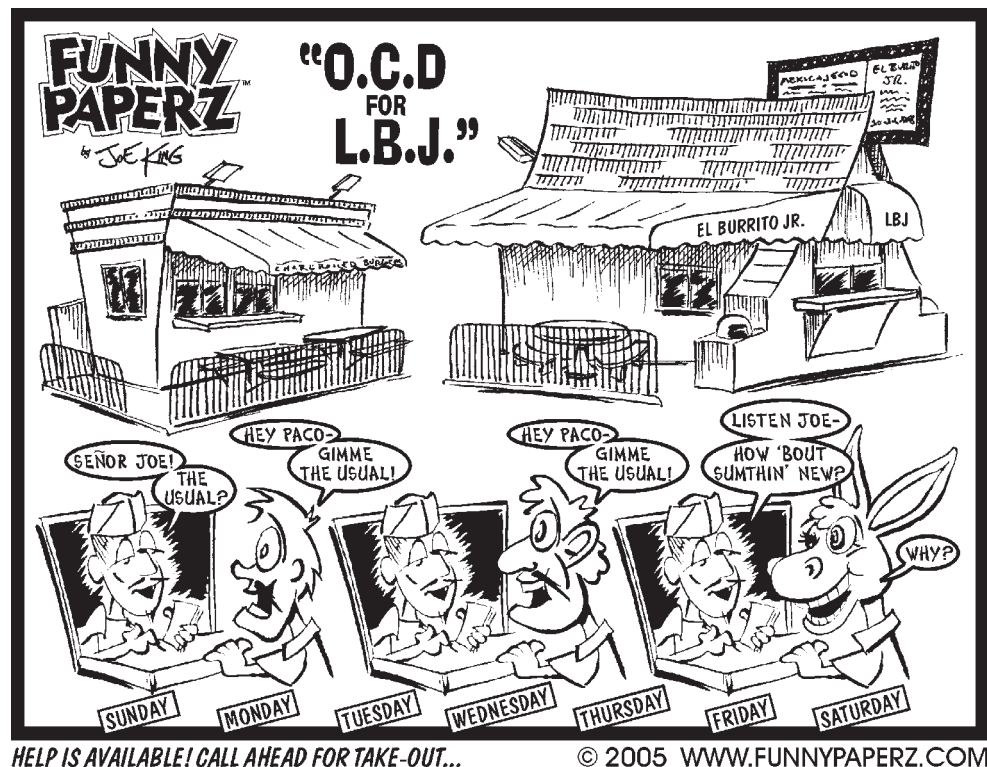
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OPINION



Mother nature, phone sex spur wealth spread

NEWS ON THE EDGE

BY RON SCOTT SMITH



beneficent hand-out, courtesy of the red, white and blue.

Talk about your basic, gross ingratitude? Mel Gibson didn't even so much as thank heaven the other night when he received the People's Choice Award for best movie of the year. Gibson's rendering of Jesus' gruesome final hours on earth has pulled in more than \$600 million all across that same earth, and you'd think — along with kudos to his gaffers, costumers, best boys and make-up girls, and his unabashed thanks to the minions who paid to see the movie — he might have thrown in just a slight nod to the one who provided the storyline. Maybe he's a little stricken by the irony of having attained fabulous wealth through this undertaking, remembering something said by the subject of his film along the lines of how it's easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into heaven.

Many of those of the overly abundant means appear to be looking for ways to spread it around a little in the wake of a Mother Nature who has absolutely flown off the handle and who is now demanding it of them. They lighten their load, perhaps so as to easier fit through narrow entryways in the future. Kobe Bryant, for instance, donated \$1,000 to Tsunami relief for each point he scored last Friday. A nice, friendly gesture. But seeing as to how he banks something around a cool \$10,000 for each point he scores over the course of the season — and he's on pace to score about 2,500 — maybe a couple three-pointers here and there could go toward something a little closer to home, like getting that 80-year-old lady sleeping on a cardboard slat in front of Toys R Us every night, off her cold concrete bed. If the U.S. government, the mega-corporations of America, and every Tom, Dick and Kobe with a few extra bucks to throw around, can instantaneously mobilize into a massive coalition of compassion in the wake of the monster wave halfway around the globe, why can't a mere fragment of such thoughtfulness be extended to that woman? Sorry, I keep forgetting. It's her own fault.

But, before it all gets too warm and fuzzy around here over these sudden bursts of generosity, know that of the 21 most economically developed countries on earth, America ranks 21st in Tsunami relief, based on percentage of wealth contributed. We're in the cellar, folks. Last place. Now don't laugh, but some insist that our military presence around the globe must be added into any calculation of generosity. Try convincing those living in the shadows of the tanks and bombers that the constant threat of brute force is a

On another spread-the-wealth front, Fox Network's No. 1 revenue-raiser, Bill O'Reilly, recently redistributed a sizable portion of his by shelling out a reported \$30 million to a young female staff member to shut her up about the no-spin-meister's crass attempts at sexing her up over the phone. That's the same Bill O'Reilly who has been relentlessly bashing Ludacris and other inner city hip-hop artists for being negative role models for kids.

And that's the same Fox Network whose top football announcer, Joe Buck, just about fell off his chair over Randy Moss on Sunday because the Viking receiver faked mooning the Green Bay crowd after a fourth quarter touchdown in humorous response to a Packers fans' tradition — they drop pants and flash their naked behinds at the visitors' team bus after every home victory. But with the week-long commotion stirred up by the murderers row of Fox News pundits, you'd conclude there was nothing humorous about it, that the fabric of a decent nation has only been torn further asunder. It's OK for Packer fans to show their pale butts, but Moss can't even fake it. It's OK for Nicolette Sheridan to drop the towel wrapped around her in a pre-game locker room skit, but the guy she drops it in front of, Terrell Owens, gets viciously pummeled for playing along. And how is it again that Justin Timberlake skated right through that whole trumped-up Super Bowl debacle, while Janet Jackson took the heat, when he's the one who reached across her chest and pulled half her bra off? Do we see a disturbing pattern of color emerging through all of this nonsense?

If Moss and Owens, Jackson and Luda are leading us straight to hell in a hand basket as the O'Reilleys out there would have us believe — what better way to turn things around than to install a strong arm to the post of top cop of America? That's what the president did, nominating one Mr. Alberto Gonzalez as the next Attorney General. The position requires a highly-calibrated legal mind and Gonzalez showed his off at the beginning of the wars on Afghanistan, terror and Iraq by presenting Bush with a successful argument that sanctioned the use of torture on enemy detainees. If you're tough enough to persuade the president of the United States that it's OK, sir, to torture the bastards, then somehow you're the right man for the right job- the highest law enforcement officer in the land. And somehow, it all makes perfect sense in the perfect storm that continues to brew above America.

(To reach Ron Scott Smith, e-mail him at edgeofthewest@aol.com).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rain is more than a nuisance

Editor:

I can only conclude from today's column (SMDP, Jan. 11, page 4) that Heidi Manteuffel is living in her own little world. In a recent column she fails to appreciate the many glories of life in California and in today's she is dismissive of her fellow residents' complaints about the recent precipitation, peppering her article with comments such as "it's just rain" and "why get upset when it rains?" Has she not seen the reports of the devastation the storms have wrought? Why get upset over a little rain? Because people have lost their homes and lives. That's why.

Sunny Kreis
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 sack@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.



Council to review affordable housing compliance

HOUSING, from page 1

be closing its doors to people from Santa Monica?" he asked.

"We live in a mobile society," Bloom added. "Homeless people, and people who are forced out of housing, people who need to leave their housing but can't afford it, come from all walks of life and they come from all parts of our country and all parts of our region — and we need to bear that in mind."

City Councilman Ken Genser called the discussion "divisive" and "a waste of time." If any discussion was merited, it should have focused on overall density in Santa Monica and also examined private developments, Genser said.

"One of the council members tonight said, 'Everybody supports affordable housing.' I wish that were true," Genser said. "I don't think that is the case in this city. I think most people do, but I think there is a very vocal minority that does not."

"And I think there's a very vocal minority that uses nasty misrepresentations to try and make their arguments against affordable housing — and I really believe it to be code words against poor people and code words against minorities, and people wanting to gentrify neighborhoods and eliminate poor people from those neighborhoods," Genser added.

"I'm not saying my colleagues here

want to do that, but I think that some may be falling accidentally into that or being seduced by the arguments being made."

Shriver took exception to the insinuation.

"I just want to say that I am not inadvertently being seduced by anybody to harm poor people," he said. "I want to be very clear on that, and I take offense at that."

The discussion of how to pick applicants for affordable housing units was raised during a discussion over how much latitude nonprofit housing developers should have in building affordable projects with City Hall funds. The council voted 6-1 to increase from \$5.4 million to \$9 million the amount of money those developers can spend on projects without approval from the City Council. The vote also increased from \$4.5 million to \$8.4 million the amount developers can spend on converting old buildings into affordable units without council approval.

City Councilman Bob Holbrook, the lone dissenting vote, raised two related issues, first pointing out that public housing projects have a less intensive public review process and are approved more quickly than private projects. That means residents often are caught unaware by the size and scale of projects slated to be built in their neighborhoods, Holbrook said.

What's more, as long as affordable housing projects draw families from outside of Santa Monica, the local schools

will continue to swell, causing a cycle where the school district slashes programs and continually returns to City Hall for help, Holbrook added.

"Why do I want Santa Monica more congested than it already is, unless it's directly benefiting Santa Monica residents first?" he asked.

Attempting to reassess the situation, City Councilman Herb Katz asked that a separate public meeting be scheduled.

"I just think it's a good idea, based upon the fact that (with) most of the citizens that I've spoken with ... there's confusion on what is and what can be, and what isn't allowed," Katz said. "And I think clearing it with the public, clearing it with ourselves, is healthy. When you're afraid to have a discussion, that worries me more than anything else."

Katz's request failed in a 3-4 vote. Genser raised a subsequent motion that was backed by the entire council to review the city's lack of compliance with Proposition R, which was passed by voters in 1990 to

ensure that 30 percent of new developments in Santa Monica be affordable.

"I am stunned," Genser said earlier, after Katz proposed the public meeting to discuss affordable housing. "I don't know why we're going to focus on the few ... affordable units that we can build in this city by marshaling our resources carefully and trying to say, 'That's a scapegoat for overcrowded schools' and 'That's a scapegoat for traffic' or this or that, when maybe we need to change our ability — although the state limits us severely in doing this — for the commercial development and the privately funded development."

Genser said he backed giving some priority to local residents, though he said the process already was handled well.

"I also don't think it's such a huge issue about if someone who doesn't live in this city gets into an affordable unit," he added. "In the range of issues that are affecting this city, is this one that we want to focus on? I think we need to prioritize."

Towers 11 and 12 in the ruff?

BOW WOW, from page 1

Association" was responsible for the area, cleaning it regularly and because many people volunteered to monitor the beach while it was in use.

Using the same model, Jones said Unleash the Beach is planning on becoming a non-profit group and already has signed up 56 people to volunteer at the Santa Monica dog beach.

"It is the only way the beach can be successful," Jones said.

Residents' biggest objection to dog beaches are potential environmental damage. However, Jones argued that dog beaches don't have an adverse affect on the environment.

"We are environmentalists ourselves," she said.

Jones hopes results from water quality tests in Long Beach will calm resident concerns over water quality issues. After a year of allowing dogs to swim in the ocean, "there was absolutely no decline in water quality," she said.

While some of the concerns residents expressed included dogs relieving themselves on the beach, Unleash the Beach member and city groundskeeper Patricia Gordon said most droppings left behind were from unleashed dogs allowed to roam while their owners used the bike baths.

"People's preoccupation with poop is unwarranted," Gordon said.

But to quell the fears associated with dog feces, the group said it has found a company to pick up any droppings left behind by the canines.

While the location of the dog beach has not yet been decided, Unleash the Beach has pinpointed the area between lifeguard towers 11 and 12, between California Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard.

Because that section does not regularly see many beachgoers, and there are no homes in the area, it is ideal for dogs, Unleash the Beach member Michelle Jones said. The placement of a storm drain also makes the area less desirable, and therefore will allow the dogs to run around with a minimal disruption to the public.

Going into Tuesday's vote, the group was not expecting much opposition from the council. It had the support of Councilman Bobby Shriver, who endorsed the group last fall during his campaign, as well as City Councilman Herb Katz. Jones said the group also labeled Councilmen Richard Bloom and Ken Genser as "dog friendly."

Unleash the Beach will now work with city staff to decide how to best implement the dog beach. Jones hopes the beach will be ready to go this summer.

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Art grants key to SM status, backers say

BUDGET, from page 1

orities through a series of discussions and a phone survey of the community. The results of that survey will be presented to the City Council on Jan. 25.

Among Tuesday's most vocal contingents were members of the art commission, who called for more funds to sponsor the arts and education programs and, especially, money to preserve the city's art collection, including outdoor murals and those intended for the new main library currently under construction.

"A community that thinks without the arts thinks without any sense of life," said commission member Julian Brawn Kessler. Kessler

added that on a budget of \$17,000, preserving all the city's aging murals has become increasingly difficult. Only about three murals can be worked on at one time, he said.

Commission member Donna Sternberg also noted that Santa Monica could lose its status as an artistic hub if more, and larger, grants for local artists were not given. Sternberg said that since City Hall established the arts grant program in 1987, which range up to \$5,000, have never been adjusted for inflation and should now exceed \$8,000.

Beyond increasing funds in the general operating budget, City Hall also has a long, and expensive list of large-scale projects slated for the next three years, including \$30 million for

proposed land acquisitions, \$30 million for affordable housing to accompany the redesigned Civic Center, and up to \$250 million for parking structure renovation and construction.

Art commission chairwoman Phyllis Green stressed that the need to replace the more than decade-old cultural plan with new a framework is necessary to guide the look and feel of the city's many development projects and the displaying of art around the community.

In keeping with a Tuesday resolution supporting preschool for all California 4-year-olds, City Hall also has plans to devote roughly \$8.1 million over the next three years to an Early Childhood Development Center, also connected to the Civic Center.

Disaster aid flows from grateful SoCal surfers

BY BEN FOX

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Long before Asia's devastating tsunami, many of the hardest-hit coastal communities of Sri Lanka and Indonesia were beloved for a different kind of wave: the perfect breakers that draw surfers from around the world.

Now, the bond that surfers feel with those remote villages has prompted many to dig deep into their board shorts to raise money for victims of the catastrophe.

"Almost all the main places that were hit are places where we've been and met people," said Keith Malloy, a Southern California surfer who helped organize a fund-raiser last week that generated about \$14,000. "It kind of hit home for us."

One organization, SurfAid International, which ran a health program in Indonesia's Mentawai islands even before the disaster, has collected more than \$500,000 — a figure expected to grow after a trade show this weekend. SurfAid has used the donations to dispatch

a medical team to the Indonesian island of Nias, a renowned surfing spot where the tsunami killed at least 340 people and left 10,000 homeless.

"There is a feeling that surfers get so much enjoyment when they go down there and now is a good time to put something back in," said Sean O'Brien, editor in chief of TransWorld Business, a trade magazine in Oceanside that covers the surf industry.

The Dec. 26 quake and tsunami struck a region that forms part of a far-flung surfing circuit. When the disaster struck in the Indian Ocean, the world's surfers were among the few to have firsthand knowledge of places that many people cannot even pronounce. Appeals for aid quickly spread by e-mail and on surfing Web sites.

"There has been a groundswell of support from the surfing community beyond anything I could have imagined," said Robert Gerard, a Laguna Beach lawyer who is chairman of SurfAid's board of directors. The group was

founded in New Zealand in 2000 and has its U.S. office in Encinitas.

Malloy, a professional surfer from Ventura, helped organize the fund-raiser, which included a silent auction of surfboards donated by local shops.

"We've had some of the best times of our life there," he said. "It's a special place."

Because SurfAid was already active in Indonesia, it has become a conduit for disaster relief. The group has collected between \$500,000 and \$750,000 in money and in-kind contributions from individuals, surf-wear companies such as Quiksilver and Billabong, and the government of New Zealand, Gerard said.

The total is expected to grow after this weekend's Action Sports Retailer convention in San Diego, where industry groups plan to sell black bracelets made of neoprene — a material used for wetsuits — to raise money for tsunami victims. Organizers hope to make the bracelets available at surf shops and on the Internet.

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Hybrids, others continue to cut into the auto market

BY TIM MOLLOY

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Ann Deren-Lewis thought it would be hard to give up her Jeep Cherokee — SUVs were everywhere in her gated community and at the horse shows and stables she frequents.

Then a new job 40 miles away got her thinking about guzzling gas. Out went the Jeep and in came a Honda Civic which runs on compressed natural gas, an alternative fuel cheaper than gasoline.

Her car isn't a hybrid, the increasingly popular vehicles fueled by gas and electricity. Environmentalists say it's even better. Not only do fill-ups cost Deren-Lewis less than \$10, her car produces no smog-creating emissions and cuts an hour from the daily commute by letting her drive alone in the carpool lane.

"I'm driving a car that doesn't put any bad things into the environment, it's cheap to operate and maintain," said Deren-Lewis, a marketing executive at Neutrogena. "And it's comfortable."

But despite the enthusiasm of drivers such as Deren-Lewis, automakers are retreating from vehicles which run on natural gas or gas-free electricity. Car makers say there's little demand for so-called "alt-fuel" vehicles. Environmentalists say car makers aren't trying.

Meanwhile, hybrids such as the Toyota Prius are taking off.

At this weekend's North American Auto Show in Detroit, automakers touted hybrid SUVs and sedans. About 88,000 hybrids were sold in the United States last year, according to J.D. Power and Associates, which projects the number to more than double to about 220,000 this year.

Alternative-fuel vehicles never caught on like that — it took about seven years for their number to double, according to federal statistics. As of 2002, Americans drove an estimated 471,000 alternative-fuel vehicles (including those powered by electricity, natural gas, propane, ethanol and methanol) the U.S. Energy Department said — up from 247,000 in 1995.

It's barely a tiny fraction of the more than 15 million new vehicles sold annually in the United States.

Environmentalists say any vehicle that uses less gasoline is a good start. But many wonder why automakers don't focus more on promoting alternative-fuel vehicles.

"Watch television or listen to the radio, you're bombarded with ads for gas-powered vehicles," said Andy Weissner, a spokesman for the American Lung Association of California who bought a natural gas vehicle out of concern about air quality. "I have never seen a natural gas vehicle ad."

Deren-Lewis only learned about natural gas cars after Neutrogena offered incentives for alternative-fuel drivers.

Internet research and word of mouth led her to a sell-

er. In her own experience, "you don't just pull into a Honda lot and say, 'Can you get me one of these?'"

Alternative-fuel cars do come with inconveniences: natural gas vehicles can only be fueled at special stations and electric cars take up to eight hours to recharge. Rarely can either go more than 250 miles without refueling.

For Deren-Lewis, it's not a big deal. She fills up every third day at isolated fueling stations happily located near her home in suburban Bradbury and work at Los Angeles International Airport.

Automakers see that kind of convenience as an exception. They favor hybrids because buyers can fill up at regular gas stations, said Gloria Bergquist, a spokeswoman for the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers.

"While natural gas is widely available, the number of refueling stations is a small universe," she said. "We can build the vehicles but we can't build the fueling infrastructure."

Study: Water conservation should begin on farms

BY MARK JOHNSON

Associated Press Writer

ALBANY, N.Y. — A growing population coupled with diminishing fresh water supplies should force major changes in the way the world's farmers water their crops in the coming decades, a recent study recommends.

Since agriculture uses about 70 percent of the world's fresh water every year, farming should be the focus of intense conservation efforts, said David Pimentel, a professor at Cornell University and primary author of the study published in the October issue of the journal BioScience.

"We in the U.S. waste a lot of water in contrast to other people," Pimentel said. "Agriculture is going to have to give up water as the population grows. States like California, Colorado, Texas and Nebraska are going to have to make some major changes."

The study said farmers should use water-conserving irrigation methods combined with water and soil conservation practices to minimize run-off. The study also suggests governments eliminate water subsidies to farmers to encourage more efficient water use, work to reduce water pollution and protect forests and wetlands.

In parts of Arizona, water from major aquifers is now being withdrawn more than 10 times faster than it can be recharged by rainfall. In California, agriculture accounts for about 3 percent of the state's economic production but consumes 85 percent of the fresh water.

The United Nations estimates world population will rise to 9.4 billion by 2050 from about 6.3 billion now. The increasing demand for water is already causing problems.

Pimentel cites the Ogallala aquifer, under parts of Nebraska, South Dakota, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas, that supplies water to a fifth of all irrigated land in the country. The underground water source has dropped 33 percent since 1950 — half the volume of Lake Erie, said Sandra Postel, director of the Global Water Policy Project in Amherst, Mass.

Similar problems are happening worldwide, from the

Chenaran plain in northeastern Iran to Guanajuato, Mexico. Of particular concern is Asia, home to 60 percent of the world's population, but only 30 percent of its fresh water. Postel says water efficiency will have to double to meet future needs.

"The pace of the problem is proceeding faster than the pace of the solution," Postel said. "It takes a while to overhaul things and I don't see policy makers taking these issues seriously enough that they get corrected."

"We are using tomorrow's water today to meet our food needs," she said.

By 2050 "water will to be the most critical resource issue we face in the entire world," said Bob Stallman, president of the American Farm Bureau Federation and a Texas-based rice farmer. "Frankly, I think wars will be fought over water. There are already border disputes in some parts of the world between countries over water."

Stallman said farmers have made efforts to conserve water in the past two decades.

Much of the problems stem from current methods of irrigation. Sprinkler systems lose much of their water through leaks and much of the water applied by that method or flood irrigation ends up as runoff.

Farmers should turn to drip irrigation, a system that pipes water directly to plants, or better sprinklers that can cut water use by 50 percent to 80 percent, Postel said. In the Texas high plains, more efficient systems are now easing the strain on the Ogallala aquifer, she said.

But drip systems could be at least 30 percent more expensive, may require more energy to run and require clean water to prevent clogging.

Government subsidies only exacerbate the problem. The United States provides \$2.5 billion to \$4.4 billion in annual construction subsidies for irrigation, the study said. Worldwide, governmental water subsidies from 1994 to 1998 totaled about \$60 billion.

Pimentel argues that cutting those subsidies would encourage farmers to conserve.

Adding to the problem in the United States is a population shift from rainfall-rich areas like the Northeast to warmer, drier areas in the South and Southwest.

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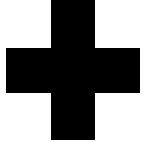
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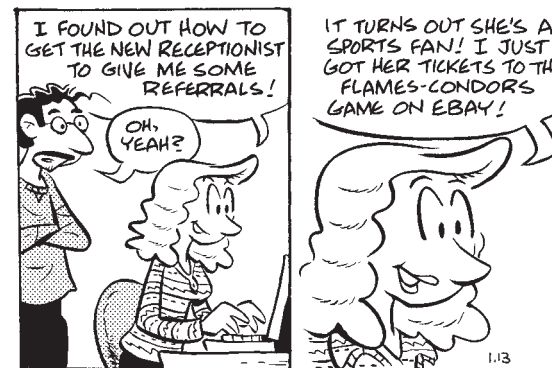


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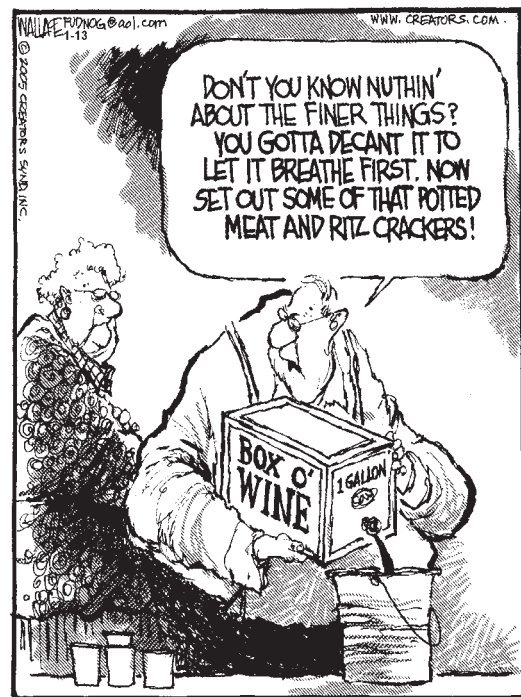
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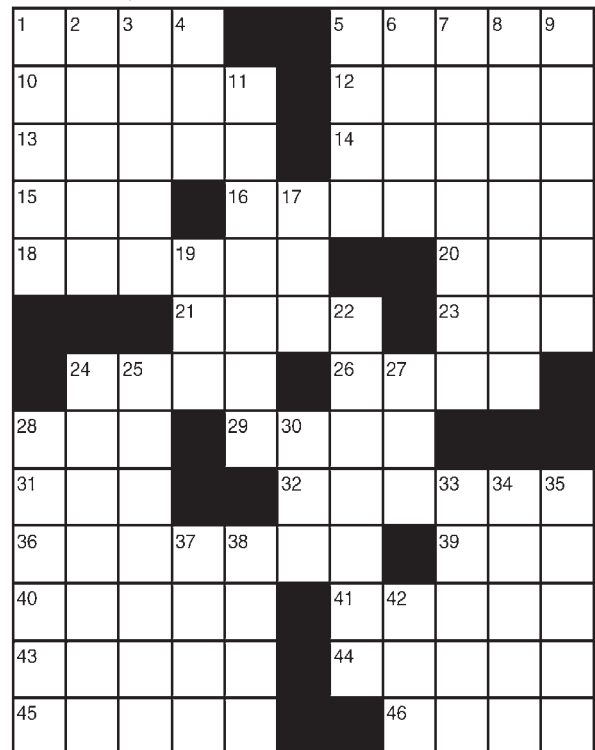
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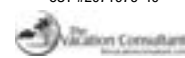
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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Who will be the first ‘Greatest American?’

By Daily Press staff

LOS ANGELES — Discovery Channel and America Online are joining in a national contest to name the “Greatest American” ever.

Starting Thursday, online voters can throw their support behind the person they believe “most influenced the way they think, work and live,” according to a statement from Discovery Channel and AOL.

The top nominees will be listed in March, with Discovery planning a seven-hour, four-night series in the spring about the leading vote-getters and the winner.

The first episode will air in May and will profile a selection from the top 100 nominees. The list will be pared down by further online voting, with the No. 1 choice profiled on the final episode in June.

From March through May, Discovery Channel will provide AOL with biographies of leading candidates in news, sports, entertainment and other categories.

LONDON — England captain and Real Madrid star David Beckham has filmed a 30-second public service announcement for UNICEF to help raise funds for tsunami victims.

Beckham, who was appointed Wednesday as a UNICEF goodwill ambassador, filmed the message in Copenhagen, Denmark, during a visit to UNICEF’s supply division, which is key to the organization’s emergency response division.

His recording will be sent to UNICEF centers, which will negotiate with national broadcasters about when the appeal will be aired.

“I, like any other person, was deeply moved by the effects of the tsunami disaster,” Beckham said in a statement. “So many people have lost loved ones and particularly children have suffered greatly with over a million who are vulnerable and at risk of disease.

“People have been so generous to date and it is important that they continue to donate money to organizations such as UNICEF to help in aid relief and reconstruction.”

UNICEF said Beckham’s message would be a valuable fund-raising tool as the organization seeks to raise \$143 million to help the 1.5 million children affected by the disaster in southern Asia and parts of Africa.

“The global TV appeal he has recorded will be enormously useful to help UNICEF meet the immediate survival needs of children affected by the tsunami in the short term and in the weeks and months ahead as they rebuild their lives,” said executive director Carol Bellamy.

Meanwhile, Paul McCartney and his wife, Heather, announced a \$1.9 million donation to the International Rescue Committee U.K. — an aid group that works with the New York-based IRC network — to help victims of the tsunami.

The charity was “overwhelmed by this generous gesture,” according to a statement from McCartney’s press office.

BANGKOK, Thailand — Pop singer Ricky Martin says he knew he had to come to Thailand to help after watching the devastating scenes of the Asian tsunami.

“After looking at those images on television, it was impossible for me to stay at home with my arms crossed,” said Martin, who arrived Wednesday from New York.

The 33-year-old Puerto Rico native talked about the Ricky Martin Foundation’s anti-trafficking People for Children project, and the momentum he hopes to bring to the relief efforts in Thailand.

“I have a very powerful tool, and I must say, that is music. Music has given me the opportunity to reach masses of people,” said Martin, whose hits include “She Bangs,” “Shake Your Bon-Bon” and “Livin’ La Vida Loca.”

He said he felt a need to give back, particularly to

children, and to add to the efforts of the Thai government and international organizations.

“They are doing such a beautiful job reconstructing the souls, especially of these children,” he said. “I just want to be one more.”

Martin said he wants to figure out what his foundation can do to help, whether it is building orphanages and schools, or producing charity events.

“I will meet with victims tomorrow, and I will see in their eyes where is it that they’re weak,” he said, adding that he’s prepared to give “everything, and then more.”

Thailand has about 5,300 confirmed deaths and more than 3,000 are still missing from the Dec. 26 tsunami that killed more than 150,000 people around the Indian Ocean region.

NEW YORK — It’s their dad’s day, but look for President Bush’s twin daughters to make a statement of their own at the Jan. 20 inaugural ball in sexy, stylish Badgley Mischka gowns.

Jenna Bush plans to wear an emerald silk crepe column gown with metallic green banding and jeweled insets at the hip. “It looks gorgeous on her,” said Mark Badgley, who, with partner, James Mischka, designed the dress.

“Jenna’s dress is sophisticated, sleek and sexy on her. She was into various shades of green, and this particular one looks good with her skin and hair,” Badgley told The Associated Press Tuesday.

Barbara’s dress is a little more dramatic and romantic. Badgley described it as a pale aquamarine silk chiffon gown with a plunging neckline, a ruffle seam skirt and jeweled straps.

“I get the feeling they are interested in fashion. They are always dressed beautifully,” Badgley said, noting that they are among the few 23-year-olds who need several gowns in their closets. “They have places to go,” he added with a laugh.



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