

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

2 3 6 9 35
Meganumber: 1
Jackpot: \$11 Million

FANTASY 5

11 16 23 24 26

DAILY 3

Daytime: 3 5 4
Evening: 8 7 0

DAILY DERBY

1st: 07 Eureka
2nd: 12 Lucky Charms
3rd: 01 Gold Rush

RACE TIME: 1.44.23

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site: <http://www.calottery.com>

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

In January, a parrot named Greeny inherited a half-million-dollar property in Boulder County, Colo., through an elaborate trust fund after its owners, Patricia Borosik, 49, and (a man with essentially four first names) Paul James Stewart Scott, 54, committed suicide. If Scott had lived a few more days, he would have had to report to court to be sentenced for offering \$13,000 to two underage girls to have sex with him and then to asphyxiate him with a pillow.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 40th day of 2006.
There are 325 days left in the year.

On Feb. 9, 1943, the World War II battle of Guadalcanal in the southwest Pacific ended with an American victory over Japanese forces.

In 1825, the House of Representatives elected John Quincy Adams president after no candidate received a majority of electoral votes.

In 1861, the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States of America elected Jefferson Davis president and Alexander H. Stephens vice president.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"What we call progress is the exchange of one nuisance for another nuisance."

HAVELOCK ELLIS
ENGLISH PSYCHOLOGIST (1859-1939)

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Samohi taggers reignite tensions

BY KEVIN HERRERA

Daily Press Staff Writer

SAMOHİ — Parents are outraged over what they feel was a weak response by school officials to a rise in tensions here after racist graffiti was spotted last week in at least two locations on campus.

During a Parent-Teacher-Student Association (PTSA) meeting on Tuesday in the Santa Monica High School cafeteria, mothers of African-American students said school officials and district administrators have avoided their calls for action and seem to "be running from the issue," said Lori Williams, a concerned parent and alumna of the school.

The vandalism, which authorities believe was committed late last Thursday or early Friday, included the "N"-word spray-painted several times, along with expletives and violent threats.

"It read n----r killers. N----rs die. F--k n----rs. It was just disgusting, particularly during Black History Month," Williams said.

Samohi principal Ilene Straus said she followed district policy regarding graffiti. She notified police, and is conducting mediation and counseling sessions with students to discuss the graffiti, its

impact and what can be done to foster better relations between different ethnic groups on campus.

"We have reported this as a hate crime to the police and we are taking this very, very seriously."

ILENE STRAUS
Samohi principal

EMOTIONS RUN HIGH

The sessions were created following an April 15, 2005 brawl involving dozens of Latino and African-American students. Since then, six community outreach members have been hired and the administration has partnered with the Anti-Defamation League to promote unity throughout the district, school officials said.

"This touched all of us in a very emotional way ... bringing up a lot of anger and frustration," Straus said to parents regarding the graf-

See SAMOHİ, page 10

Reaching an impasse



Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

A late afternoon accident in Sunset Park caused this van to careen into the Moose Lodge building on Ocean Park Boulevard. The van, heading south on 16th Street, struck another vehicle before coming to a stop against the west wall of the lodge. The driver was treated for minor injuries at a local hospital, according to SMPD Lt. Frank Fabrega. The accident is currently under investigation.

Bay city trawlers



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

ALL ABOUT THE AGAVE: Also known as a century plant, the indigenous flowering plants along Bay Street frame a boat (top) heading north along the Santa Monica Bay this week. The same shot (above) is captured a subsequent day under a brilliant sunset, rendered more dramatic by the smoke emanating from wildfires burning to the south.

Firefighters warn Santa Anas may stir things up

By staff and wire reports

MALIBU — Firefighters battling blazes that have burned more than 7,200 acres of rugged Southern California landscape were wary of flare-ups on Wednesday amid Santa Ana winds and rising temperatures.

"I'm very concerned. If the winds pick up, it could spread to the ocean," said Malibu Mayor Andy Stern, as about 200 firefight-

See WILDFIRES, page 6

LOCAL

On notice: City Hall assists the activists

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITYWIDE — Mailers calling on Santa Monicans to become more active in their respective neighborhoods isn't just junk mail, despite the generic "resident" greeting.

So say local neighborhood leaders, who are concerned their outreach efforts may not have had the intended impact.

The purpose of the mailers is to build membership for the

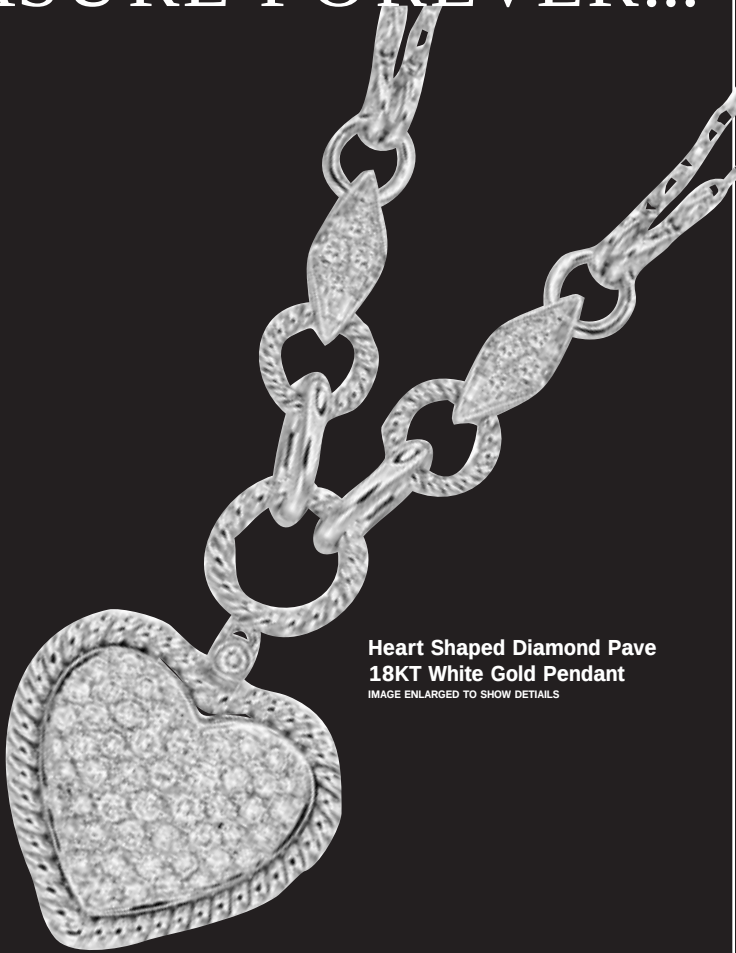
See MAILERS, page 11

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HOROSCOPES

Don’t buck the trend, Taurus

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 will want to anchor in and consider a sudden thought. Test your idea on others. Others act in an extremely emotional manner. Feelings and indulgence mark your interactions. Realize that others are coming from a space of goodness. Tonight: Happy at home, preferably with company.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★★ You hear unexpected news that draws a very strong reaction. Think positively, knowing your limits and what you need to do. Your humor and caring dominate your actions. Tonight: Let others make your life easier. Don’t buck the trend!



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★ Your finances mark your decisions, but know that those you count on could act flaky. Extremes mark situations and your daily life. You might want to think carefully about what is going on. Fortunately, you have tons of energy to meet today’s demands. Tonight: Treat yourself well.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★★ You are very happy and lovable. Sometimes you need to think before you launch into action. Extremes occur with surprises. You can reverse any problem with some effort. Think positively. You have what you need. Tonight: Happy as a cat.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★ Take your time making decisions. You are not always right. Understand where someone is coming from. You have a way and a style that draw others close. You know what you want and can make it happen. People knock on your door out of the blue. Tonight: Be an information-gatherer.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★★ You need to take action in order to create more of what you want. Halfway measures will not work, even in the face of others’ unpredictability. If you want a job done your way, you’d better do it yourself. Tonight: Communication flourishes.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★★ Investigate different opportunities with a positive attitude. You set the pace, and others will follow. You know what you are doing, even if you have to do a total reversal. Your finances benefit from your strong reactions. Tonight: Count on being in demand.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★★ Take an overview. Your emotional response will point you in the right direction. Listen to what is happening with someone at a distance. There might be nuggets of information heading your way. Tonight: You naturally make the right choices.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★★ Take time to emotionally digest what you are hearing. Listen to what is going on within your immediate circle, but especially with someone who you value. Your intuitive knee-jerk reaction is right on target. Tonight: Close encounter.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★★ Review information carefully. Success heads your way. Evaluate what might be going on in your day-to-day life. Meetings and working with others illuminate your day. Defer to a partner or associate. Tonight: Happy as can be.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Plunge into work or a project with enthusiasm. You might be surprised by what heads down your path. You are inordinately dynamic and creative. Know what you want and where you are heading. Tonight: A smile works.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ You move in sudden and unexpected ways. Use your creativity and ability to respond emotionally with intelligence. If you are worried, please detach and gain a perspective. You might want to get more information. Tonight: Happy as a cat.



Santa Monica Daily Press

Published Monday through Saturday

Phone: (310) 458-PRESS (7737) • Fax: (310) 576-9913

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Nonprofits get Place of their own

By Daily Press staff

Now is your chance to learn about the wealth of Santa Monica’s non-profit organizations.

The Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce has partnered with Santa Monica Place to host Santa Monica’s first Nonprofit Festival. More than 30 local nonprofits will have exhibit booths on the Third Street Promenade, between Wilshire Boulevard and Arizona Avenue.

The Nonprofit Festival is described as a free, family-friendly event, where attendees can learn more about local nonprofits. The booths will have displays about their products and services, people to talk to, and information on how to volunteer and assist the organizations. In addition, a nonprofit resource guide will be available to attendees to reference throughout the year.

“This family friendly event is a great opportunity to tap into the heart of the Santa Monica community,” noted Sharon O’Rourke, public affairs manager for the Gas Company and festival chair. “Santa Monica is home to numerous organizations that provide invaluable support to youth, seniors, the arts, homeless, and more that help foster the great quality of life that Santa Monica is known for.”

The festival will be held on Feb. 25, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Santa Monica doctor a real sport

By Daily Press staff

A local doctor has risen to the top for his work in sports medicine.

Soccer physician Dr. Bert Mandelbaum has been honored by the United States Sports Academy with the 2006 Dr. Ernst Jokl Sports Medicine Award.

Mandelbaum, who practices in Santa Monica, has worked at Pepperdine for the past 15 years and has been medical director for Major League Soccer since its debut in 1996. He was chief medical officer for the United States women’s World Cup soccer teams in 1999 and 2003, and has been team physician for all of the U.S. men’s national soccer teams since 1991.

Prior to working for Pepperdine, Mandelbaum was team physician for UCLA for four years. He also served on the editorial board of the American Journal of Sports Medicine and the Physician and Sports Medicine, as well as an executive board member for the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine.

Mandelbaum has been featured in and helped produce the video: “Ready, set and play: Injury care and prevention in youth soccer,” which received an award from the International Medical Film Society. He has served as a contributor to ESPN Sport Zone and was the orthopaedic surgical consultant to the CBS television drama “Chicago Hope” from 1997-2001.

The Ernst Jokl Sports Medicine Award has been presented by USSA since 1994 as part of the Academy Awards of Sport Medallion Series, honoring the artist and the athlete. Past winners include four-minute-mile runner Roger Bannister and five-time Olympic speed skating gold medalist Eric Heiden.

The United States Sports Academy, “America’s sport university,” is an independent, nonprofit institution that offers sport-specific programs to students, teachers, and administrators around the world. The Academy has a special mission to serve the sports industry as a resource in instruction, research and other vital sports-related services. It is the only freestanding institution of higher learning in the United States offering bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in sport science and sport management, in addition to its extensive certification programs.

For more information about the United States Sports Academy, call (251) 626-3303.

INTERESTED IN YOUR DAILY FORECAST?
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SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS

DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM

BEAR MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-36"	LIFT HOURS 8:30am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 18	LIFTS OPEN 10/12
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CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Wet

JUNE MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 96" - 120"	LIFT HOURS 8:00am - 4:00pm	RUNS OPEN 35	LIFTS OPEN 6/6
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CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Groomed

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 144" - 168"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 150	LIFTS OPEN 25/28
-------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------------	------------------	---------------------

CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Groomed

MOUNTAIN HIGH

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-24"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 10:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 16	LIFTS OPEN 8/16
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CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Wet

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 4:30 pm	RUNS OPEN 4	LIFTS OPEN 2/4
-------------------------	-----------------------	---------------------------------	----------------	-------------------

CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Made

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12"-36"	LIFT HOURS 4:30 am - 4:30 pm	RUNS OPEN 18	LIFTS OPEN 14/14
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CONDITIONS: Machine Made, Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Wet

SNOW VALLEY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 24"-12"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 10	LIFTS OPEN 5/11
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CONDITIONS: Machine Groomed, Spring

CONDITIONS

WATER TEMP: 57°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (5-7 FT)

Today the swell fades off to around chest to head high as the last lagging periods arrive.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

NW due 12th-14th...

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA

FRIDAY	7:04AM	1.1FT	6:41PM	1.02FT
LOW TIDE:				
HIGH TIDE:	12:40AM	5.1FT	12:49PM	3.7FT

SATURDAY	8:38AM	1.0FT	7:23PM	1.8FT
LOW TIDE:				
HIGH TIDE:	1:29AM	5.1FT	2:29PM	2.9FT

SUNDAY	10:24AM	0.7FT	8:24PM	2.4FT
LOW TIDE:				
HIGH TIDE:	2:29AM	5.1FT	5:09PM	2.7FT

MONDAY	11:48AM	0.1FT	10:07PM	2.8FT
LOW TIDE:				
HIGH TIDE:	3:39AM	5.1FT	7:04PM	3.0FT

TUESDAY	12:46PM	-0.3FT	11:37PM	2.8FT
LOW TIDE:				
HIGH TIDE:	4:50AM	5.2FT	7:53PM	3.4FT

WEDNESDAY

N/A

THURSDAY

N/A

FRIDAY

N/A

SURF AND SNOW QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS? EMAIL ALEX@SMOP.COM



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The  Line

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Santa Monica residents will soon be polled as to whether they are interested in cleaning the city's beaches and coastal waters, and whether they're willing to pay for it.

A soon-to-be-released cleanup plan would make Santa Monica compliant by 2020 with several new environmental regulations. City officials say there will be a considerable need for a new funding source for the project. Capital costs alone could reach \$95 million over a period of 15 years. In addition, operating and maintenance costs could at least double the current \$36 annual stormwater fee homeowners pay, according to a recent staff report.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, “**What are you willing to pay for a cleaner coast?**”

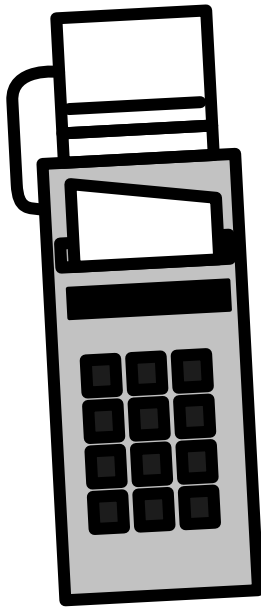
Call **(310) 285-8106** before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your responses in the weekend edition. Please try to limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Keep looking, Mr. Brooks

Editor:
Wow, Albert Brooks makes one little movie — “Looking for Comedy in The Muslim World” — and look what happens. Albert, I guess here is your answer: um, there ain’t any?

Henry Rosenfeld
Santa Monica

Doctor obviously doesn’t know the cure

Editor:
I was surprised by the awful simplicity of Dr. David Sirkin’s most recent letter (SMDP, Jan. 24, page 4). The language and “reasoning” he employed seems more like that of a struggling high school student than that of a physician. Furthermore, it is sufficiently self-evident that almost everything he discusses therein is substantially outside the scope of medicine, so it is not clear to me why he chose to sign off with his medical degree.

Dr. Sirkin apparently believes that we need a big homeless shelter in downtown Santa Monica that will ideally meet the emergent needs of all homeless persons in the area; that we need more police to protect homeowners and businesses from dirty homeless criminals and psychotics who won’t go to that shelter; and that wealthier Santa Monicans — who benefit fiscally from a relatively mild climate (he apparently forgot about our petroleum, phone, water, internet and cable TV charges) — should surrender more tax monies to pay for the big downtown shelter and the extra police. Apparently, if we follow his prescription, “homeless persons and their filth on our streets” will be sufficiently reduced in Santa Monica and “they will learn that they must have incomes in order to have the kind of freedom they want, unless they want to live as survivalists in wilderness areas.” Wow, what a doctrine.

I think we need to drastically reduce our police force and concomitantly demonstrate more compassion toward the homeless in Santa Monica. I see our homeless community almost everyday and I say they’re about as law abiding and flawed as every other group. With a third of the current force, the police can adequately do their important work addressing actual criminality by the homeless and the rest of us, if they stop making false arrests and tormenting say — marijuana consumers — and alternatively focus their efforts on matters concerning the abridgement of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. There’s always more than enough there to keep police busy. Conversely, we really need to stop arresting people for doing things that don’t really harm anyone else, like being homeless.

In fact, Dr. Sirkin should spend a few days viewing “criminal” proceedings in our courthouses. If he did that, he might learn about the great injustice, cruelty, inequity, and waste that our already hyper-criminalized police state has created. And as for his “creative” remedy of raising taxes to pay for his unnecessary procedure, I am reminded of Moliere’s time-proven aphorism that “nearly all men die of their medicines, and not their illnesses.” If Dr. Sirkin observed our hyper-criminalized legal system at work for any reasonable period of time, he could see that adage in action. Criminal prosecutions, fines and legal fees only serve to keep poor homeless people poor and homeless.

Finally, I think signing off on letters with reference to advanced degrees is only successful in swaying decent readers after two important conditions have been met: First, such letters should be especially well written.

After all, each piece should be judged on its own merits anyway, and that is true whether or not the writer possesses or notes an advanced degree. Second, mention of advanced degrees best suits essays or letters that address matters within the scope of the degrees. I can be swayed by experts who express themselves well about matters that seem related to their areas of expertise, but Dr. Sirkin’s letter didn’t satisfy either condition.

Ivan Smason
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.

Word on the street?
Put money in ’hoods



EYE ON
THE CITY
BY ELIZABETH RIEL

It’s that time of year again in our fair city ... time when the City Council begins deciding how to divvy up the budget. And you can be sure that any interest group who has anything to do with Santa Monica is giving our councilmembers and city staff an earful about where to spend the money.

But when 54 percent of residents think City Hall is doing only a fair or poor job of spending our money in the right areas, according to a 2005 city survey, maybe it’d be a good idea for the City Council to pay attention to what should be one of the most important interest groups in town — the residents in Santa Monica’s neighborhood associations.

Friends of Sunset Park, Mid-City Neighbors, North of Montana Association, Northeast Neighbors, Ocean Park Association, Pico Neighborhood Association and Wilshire/Montana are volunteer groups of residents who represent and advocate for the concerns of their particular districts.

Some associations are larger and more active than others, but they all play a crucial role in giving individual residents a collective voice in City Hall and defining the kind of community that is Santa Monica.

And what do residents from across the neighborhood associations want our city’s budget priorities to be? In a nutshell, they want to improve our quality of life in real, tangible ways. Here’s what tops the list: traffic and parking, loss of trees and open space, and services for youth.

Traffic congestion and lack of parking should come as no surprise to anyone, since they have been repeatedly identified as two of the top three concerns of residents in recent years. Aside from the strong desire for a real, long-term plan to deal with traffic and congestion, the neighborhood associations would like our budget priorities to focus on tangible things that keep our kids and pedestrians safe. How about improved crosswalks and signals on major thoroughfares such as Main Street, Pico and Ocean Park? And how about a crossing guard at John Adams Middle School, where a child was hit by a car well over a year ago?

I’ve already ranted about City Hall’s proposed parking plan (SMDP, Jan. 26,

page 4), so I won’t bring up that clunker again. But many neighborhood residents are really suffering from a severe shortage of parking, which also adversely impacts customer and employee parking for our local businesses. Wilshire/Montana has begged for a study to determine the feasibility of turning its north/south streets into one-way lanes with diagonal parking spaces. Even if one-way streets aren’t the answer, how about a serious feasibility study conducted by an outside firm to look at the neighborhoods’ and the city’s parking issues?

With increased traffic and development in our city, as well as one of the highest population densities in the state, it seems like we need more open space and trees as a much-needed respite. Yet there has been a dramatic loss in our tree canopy with large, old shade trees being bulldozed to make way for new construction. Replacing 100-year-old trees on our traffic medians, sidewalks, and residential and commercial properties with shrubs and wispy plants does not make for a green city. Lincoln, Ocean Park and Pico boulevards in particular could use some quality green relief and beautification. And north of Montana is the only neighborhood without a park in its area.

Finally, even though Santa Monica already has some great resources for youth, investing in our children always pays off. How about increased job training and apprenticeships for youth in local industries like the construction trade? And what about more programs that provide academic support, violence prevention and conflict resolution, and services for at-risk and older youth?

The City Council should read and consider the more detailed letters sent to them by the neighborhood associations. They address things large (e.g., runway safety at Santa Monica Airport) and smaller (e.g., increased shuttle service to the Farmer’s Markets), all of which will make daily life better for residents.

After all, it’s our money, right? If you would like to learn more about or get involved in your neighborhood organization, log onto: www.friendsofsunsetpark.org, www.opa-sm.org, www.piconeighborhoodassociation.org, www.smnoma.org, or www.wilmont.org. For Northeast Neighbors contact lynx2lew@yahoo.com and for Mid-City Neighbors contact mbair1@lausd.k12.ca.us.

(Elizabeth Riel is a Santa Monica resident. She can be reached at elizriel@yahoo.com).



FED UP WITH PICO VIOLENCE?
YOUR OPINION MATTERS

PLEASE SEND LETTERS TO:

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Or email: editor@smdp.com

COMMENTARY



GUEST COMMENTARY BY H. LEWIS SMITH

Dignity is derailed by slap to own faces

Throughout Black History Month, while paying homage to Black History — every single day — there will be those African Americans referring to one another with the N-word.

Isn't it ironic, that the very word that was used to denigrate African American ancestry and those African Americans that homage will be paid to in the coming weeks ahead, blacks now use affectionately and endearingly among themselves ... the N-word. What a way to really show one's respect, gratitude and appreciation!

Since Rosa Parks' demise, much has been made of her contribution to the civil rights movement of the '50s and '60s. There is the Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday. Black History Month is here. There should be a sense of reverence, pride and respect enveloping the African American community. But is there really?

Throughout Black History Month, while paying homage to black history, every single day there will be those African Americans calling one another the N-word. And this mockery, undignified act and lack of respect is supposed to be acceptable and condoned.

Rosa Parks worried and warned that young blacks had absolutely no sense and appreciation of the titanic battles that she and the civil rights leaders waged to make America live up to its much betrayed promise of justice and equality. In a reflective interview, years later, she did not absolve herself and other blacks of her generation of blame for failing to pass on the torch. She called for a redoubling of the effort to make young blacks, as she put it, know what it means to be black in America today.

Decades ago it was the white man conditioning and programming the minds of African Americans to identify themselves with the N-word. Today, there are now blacks programming other blacks to identify themselves with the N-word. The supposition being to take this incredibly degrading word and try to change it from a hateful, racial, derogatory slur, and turn it into an affectionate and endearing purring little pussycat. With a slight adjustment in the spelling and pronunciation, this is supposed to make everything OK and acceptable.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is the one and only holiday recognizing a distinguished African American, which was by no means a gimme. Because white Americans didn't think a black man was worthy of a holiday, it took a hard-fought battle to get that recognition approved. And so how will African Americans be showing their respect and gratefulness? African Americans did as they do everyday, showed no appreciation and respect for the civil rights struggle. They took the very same word that was used to vilify Dr. King and others and used it affectionately among them. What a SLAP in the face.

Black History Month? Is it only window dressing? The answer should be obvious. Worldwide, African Americans are recognized and respected for their musical talent and athleticism, but are giving very little credit for having any kind of brainpower. I wonder why.

(H. Lewis Smith, author of "Bury That Sucka," can be reached at <http://www.hlewissmith.com>.)

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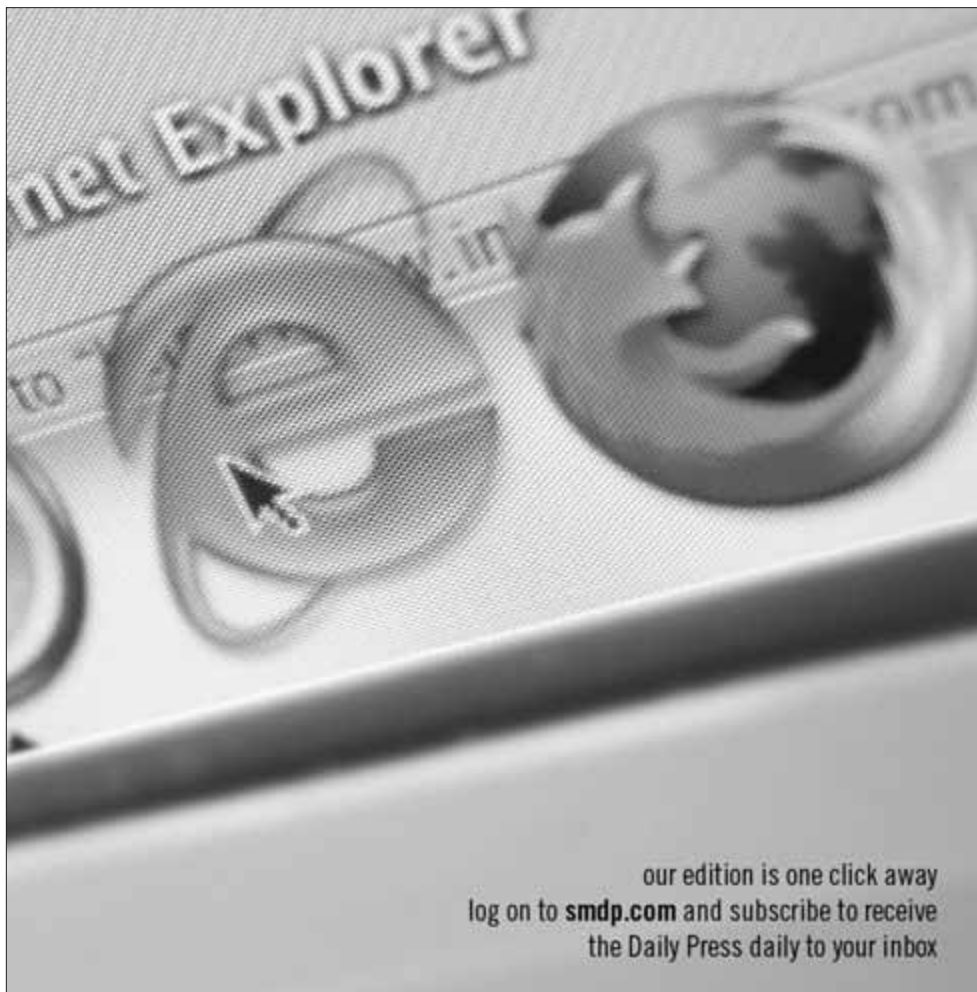
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Teacher training key to improving schools

BY JULIET WILLIAMS

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — Improving student achievement in California depends on increasing teacher training and keeping the best teachers and administrators in public schools, the state's top education official said Tuesday.

In a nearly hourlong address, Superintendent of Public Instruction Jack O'Connell told an auditorium full of educators, policy-makers and politicians that California is lagging behind other states and countries in failing to address a widening gap between the highest achievers and the lowest.

"The simple yet terrible fact is that the population of students that is growing the fastest in this state is the population that is lagging the furthest behind," O'Connell said.

He said research has shown that students who are poor or minority are more likely to have an unprepared or less qualified teacher than white students and those in more affluent neighborhoods.

"Let's face it, closing the achievement gap won't happen until we first close the teacher-quality gap," he said.

He said he will sponsor legislation to spend \$53 million for teacher coaches in the lowest-performing schools. He also encouraged financial incentives to recruit teachers to work in those schools and said the state should reopen teacher-recruitment centers that were closed during bud-

get cuts several years ago.

O'Connell also said he would:

- Redesign the mandatory School Accountability Report Cards schools are required to file so they use less jargon and are easier for parents to understand.

- Bring California's school standards more closely in line with those under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

- And tour the state in support of director Rob Reiner's universal preschool initiative, Proposition 82, on this June's statewide ballot.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Education Secretary, Alan Bersin, said the governor included \$100 million in his budget proposal to recruit and retain teachers in the state's hardest-to-staff schools.

"This is an area where we know if we build school cultures and communities of learning and we provide resources to attract teachers and retain them — and it's not only money, but money is one of those elements — if we provide excellent principals and terrific leadership at schools, students will benefit," Bersin said.

Also Tuesday, Schwarzenegger announced that he has appointed Margaret Fortune as his director of public affairs. Fortune, 34, had been his adviser on initiatives to fix failing schools and was the lead spokeswoman for last November's unsuccessful Proposition 74, which would have extended teacher probationary periods from two years to five.

Schools in Malibu expect to get back down to basics

WILDFIRES, from page 1

ers and several aircraft worked to corral a 25-acre fire in the Santa Monica Mountains. The fire, burning in an area with a history of destructive blazes, was 7 percent contained.

Near Malibu, the fire burned along steep, rocky canyons covered by shoulder-high chaparral.

As a result, officials with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District decided early Wednesday morning to close Point Dume, Webster and Juan Cabrillo elementary schools, along with Malibu High School.

"There is only one evacuation route out of Malibu, so if there is ever a problem, that becomes critical. We decided to take every precaution and close schools for the day," said Superintendent of Schools John Deasy. "Also, (firefighters and police) use that route to bring equipment and create a staging area, so the less cars and buses on the road, the better."

Deasy said the district deals with fire closures and evacuations nearly every year during the fire season, and has developed an evacuation and school closure plan that "works efficiently and smoothly." Most parents were notified of the closure through "phone trees," a network of parents who keep one another informed on school activities, Deasy said.

Schools are expected to reopen today.

Deasy said students most likely will not have to make up the canceled school day because the closure is considered by district officials to be an emergency. The dis-

trict must appeal to the County Office of Education, which makes the final decision.

The fire was sparked shortly before 5 a.m. by a burning sport utility vehicle parked on a dirt road, authorities said.

The canyons are historical fire corridors. Wind-pushed wildfires swept from the Calabasas area to Malibu in 1993 and 1996, destroying hundreds of homes.

"The whole Malibu area has had a history of fire," Los Angeles County fire Inspector Sam Padilla said.

In Orange County, a 7,179-acre fire east of Anaheim and Orange was 22 percent contained.

"It's hot out here. It's low humidity, in the single digits. Winds are gusting to 35, to 40 mph," said Dennis Shell, a spokesman for the Orange County Fire Authority. "It's a huge concern for all of us."

A red flag warning of extreme fire danger was extended through Saturday as Southern California faced another week of hot, dry winter weather.

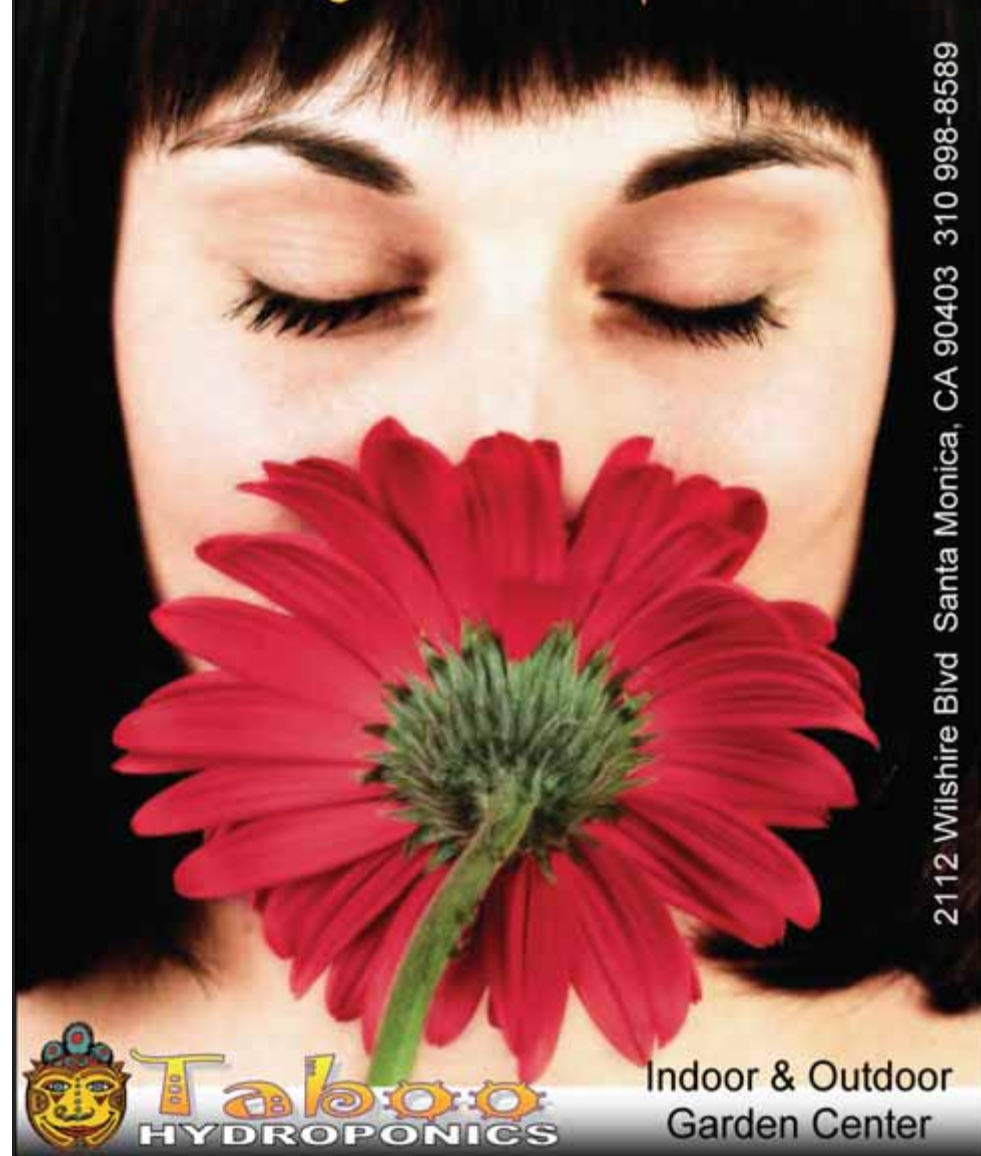
In Orange County, the fire that began as a controlled burn in the Cleveland National Forest on Feb. 2 was not threatening any homes.

A mandatory evacuation was lifted Tuesday, allowing about 2,000 people to return to their homes.

The fire burned in ankle-deep grass on rolling hillsides and in canyons choked with head-high brush that hadn't burned for 20 years, Shell said.

More than 1,000 firefighters were on the scene. Four had been treated for minor injuries.

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STATE



STATE BRIEFS

Sprawl is slowed to a crawl

By The Associated Press

VENTURA —Supervisors tightened development rules to protect thousands of acres between Santa Paula and Ventura from urban sprawl.

The ordinance approved Tuesday by the Board of Supervisors preserves 27,900 acres as greenbelts. County planning official Deborah Millais said the ordinance specifies the acreage involved and makes the law hard to undo.

To alter the new greenbelt ordinance, four of the five supervisors would have to agree and hold a public hearing.

In 2000, supervisors adopted a companion greenbelt that preserves 72,000 acres of citrus and avocado fields and open land between Fillmore and the Los Angeles County line.

“This says there is a strong commitment to our greenbelts,” Supervisor Kathy Long said.

Racial tensions to blame for melee

By The Associated Press

FONTANA —Racial tensions between blacks and Hispanics erupted in a lunchtime fist- and bottle-throwing melee between 30 students at A.B. Miller High School.

There were no serious injuries. Police officers used pepper spray to subdue one resistant student and a female student slapped on officer, interim school police Chief Joe McCann said.

The 4,300-student school was locked down after Tuesday’s brawl and some after-school activities were canceled. Police officers and parents watched as the campus emptied about 20 minutes before the regular afternoon dismissal time.

School police said the brawl began with a group of black and Hispanic students on the outdoor quad at lunch. Some students said they dodged flying bottles and food, while others said some students were punching each other.

School district superintendent Charles Milligan said about 30 people were involved in the fighting. It took about 10 minutes to break up the fight.

“It wasn’t a situation where the whole campus was in a riot,” he said.

Students told investigators racial tension between black and Hispanic students have escalated at the school.

At least 20 students were detained and McCann said most will be given citations for fighting and disturbing the peace. A similar fight involving blacks and Hispanics broke out in April 2004.

Appliance thieves didn’t see the big picture

By The Associated Press

EL MONTE —A dozen people arrested for an electronics heist allegedly stole more than \$574,000 in merchandise from a Howard’s TV & Appliance warehouse.

Most of those arrested were warehouse and delivery employees for the El Monte warehouse when the merchandise was stolen between September 2004 and January 2006, police Detective Brian Glick said.

Luis Humberto Guerrero, 36, and his wife, Magdalena, 27, of Los Angeles were arrested after police served a search warrant and recovered some of the stolen merchandise from their home, investigators said.

The arrest led police to 32 locations across Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Orange counties, where 10 more people were arrested, Glick said.

Also arrested were: Agustin Aquino, 27, of Huntington Park; Martin Hernandez, 19, of Los Angeles; Rosemead residents Jason Cisco, 27, Marco Aguilar, 19, and Victor Jauregui, 18; Victor Avalos and Adrian Lagunas, both 18, of Azusa; Manny Gurule, 28, of Compton; and Edilia Gonzalez, 25, and Danny Jacquez, 28, of El Monte.

Howard’s TV & Appliance general manager Judy Lawrence in La Habra refused to comment because of the ongoing investigation.

The votes are in, and they’re dandy

By The Associated Press

RIVERSIDE —Supervisors unanimously agreed to buy 3,700 new Sequoia touch-screen voting machines.

State law requires that touch-screen machines have paper printers attached so voters can view their ballots and the upgraded systems must be certified for the June primary election.

Opponents of the Sequoia machines, a group called Democracy for America, wanted the Board of Supervisors to consider systems other than the Sequoia machines, which are an upgraded version of those used in Riverside County since 2000.

The group claimed the Sequoia system is vulnerable to computer hackers and has an inadequate paper method for verifying votes. They also fear the Sequoia computer software is susceptible to glitches or other kinds of manipulation.

But Registrar Barbara Dunmore said the Sequoia machines were accurate and secure, leading to the 4-0 board vote on Tuesday.

“There’s not a product that I think is superior,” Supervisor Jeff Stone said. “We have been well-served by Sequoia. This is a very unique, innovative software.”

The new machines will cost the county \$5.4 million after receiving credits from Sequoia and some federal money. The machines will have printers attached that allow voters to view their ballots behind glass. San Bernardino County already is using the machines.



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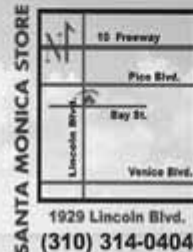
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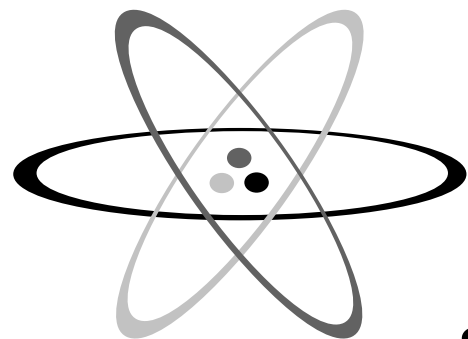
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Business



SANTA MONICA BUSINESS BRIEFS

Local architecture firm wins bid for college overhaul

By Daily Press staff

Santa Monica-based Widom Wein Cohen O'Leary Terasawa (WWCOT) has been named the architect for a new 85,000-square-foot student services complex on the campus of El Camino College in Torrance, announced Adrian Cohen, FAIA, principal-in-charge for the project.

The new facility will replace the existing student services building, which no longer meets the needs of the student population. Situated in the heart of the 126-acre campus, the new student services complex will be designed to compliment the college's predominantly mid-century era modern architecture, according to WWCOT design principal Andrea Cohen-Gehring.

"The new complex will address the college's desire to centralize integrated student services and provide our students with a streamlined welcoming environment for services and activities," said El Camino College President Dr. Thomas M. Fallo. "Most of our student service functions are currently situated in a 55-year-old building that no longer meets our needs in providing customer service excellence to our students."

WWCOT's design will accommodate a full range of student services functions such as admissions and records, career counseling, job placement, financial aid, and academic and student affairs to be clustered on the northern end of the building. Food service, dining area, bookstore and multipurpose rooms will be featured in the new building.

Construction of the \$31 million facility, only the second significant new facility on campus in nearly 20 years, is expected to begin in 2008. Funding for the student services facility is being provided under Measure E, a recently passed \$394 million bond, the largest successful bond for a single campus community college district in California.

In addition to Cohen and Cohen Gehring, members of WWCOT project team include: Kaveh Amirdehfan, AIA, project manager; Gretchen Wahab, director of strategic planning and programming; and Ben Levin, AIA, interiors principal.

Recognized as one of the fastest-growing architectural firms in the nation, WWCOT is a more than 100-person firm with additional offices in Palm Springs, Riverside, Moorpark, and Shanghai, China. Since the firm's establishment in 1964, WWCOT has developed a long-standing reputation for implementing solutions that contribute to their clients' success. WWCOT provides a full spectrum of services that includes programming, strategic and master planning, architectural and interior design, architectural forensics, and construction support services for a wide range of healthcare, governmental, educational, senior living, multifamily residential and corporate clients.

Fund-raiser tapped to give RAND a hand

By Daily Press staff

Veteran fund-raising professional Elizabeth Stacey has joined the RAND Corp. as executive director of development.

"Elizabeth will be a trusted member of the senior team at RAND and will lead our efforts in raising philanthropic funds so RAND is able to address some of the world's most critical and urgent problems," said RAND president and CEO James A. Thomson.

Stacey most recently was chief consultant at Philanthropic Solutions, where she provided fund-raising counsel to a range of national and local nonprofit organizations.

Previously, Stacey was director of development at Mattel Children's Hospital at UCLA (2002-2004) and in 1998 founded the development program for the new California State University, Channel Islands. She also worked for 10 years at CARE, the international relief and development organization, where she was Western Regional Director.

Stacey earned her M.A. in political science from the University of California, Los Angeles. She holds credentials as a certified fund-raising executive and as a certified specialist in planned giving.

RAND is based in Santa Monica and maintains offices in the Washington, D.C. area and in Pittsburgh. RAND Europe is headquartered in Leiden in the Netherlands, and has offices in Germany and the United Kingdom. The RAND-Qatar Policy Institute is based in the capital of Qatar.

RAND assists public policymakers and private sector leaders by providing high-quality research and analysis of choices and developments in many areas, including health care, national security, homeland security, education and training, criminal and civil justice, labor and population, infrastructure, the environment, community development, business operations, international relations and regional studies.

From the diapers to the dorms



MARKET MATTERS

BY BRIAN HEPP

After nine months of receiving baby blankets from relatives and immersing yourself in endless pages of reading material, you've suddenly become a proud parent building a priceless bond with your child. Although ecstatic about your new adventures in parenting, it doesn't take long for you to realize that nothing could have prepared you for such an undertaking. Sleepless nights and diaper dollars are just the beginning.

After the shock fades and you begin to settle in as a new mom or dad, there are some things you can do to prepare for your financial future to make things easier on you and your child. Once the early years have passed and your family matures, universities from across the nation will be sending shiny pages of marketing material to your home. Even if all you can think about today is bottles and baby food, the days of college courtship will come quickly. And because it may be one of the biggest expenses you could ever face as a parent, it is important to start saving for it as soon as possible.

With the average public university today costing upwards of \$5,985 per year and private university tuitions costing around \$20,952 per year, you will need to be prepared. You also may want to expect hefty price increases. By the time your children are ready for college, these numbers are likely to have increased dramatically.

To soften the blow, you might want to consider investing in a 529-college savings plan. No matter what type of investments you choose, any earnings from the money you contribute to a 529 will accumulate tax-free until the time you withdraw it for college costs. Adding a further benefit, some states also offer state income tax deductions on these contributions. State tax treatment may vary and state tax deductions are limited only to residents of states that allow these benefits.

Although there are no income or age restrictions for participation in a 529 plan, there is a limit to the amount you can contribute before gift tax penalties apply. Couples can contribute up to \$120,000 (in 2006) in one year per child and single tax

payers can contribute up to \$60,000. It is important to remember that this amount is considered a five-year gift — \$12,000 per year — a portion of the contribution may be subject to estate tax recapture if the donor dies within five years of the gift. After making this gift, any additional gifting to the same beneficiary in 2006 or the next four years would be considered a reportable gift.

When it comes time for freshman moving day at the dorms, you will not only be thankful for your years of preparation, but you may also appreciate the withdrawal advantages of your 529. Distributions from 529 plans for qualified college expenses, including tuition, fees, books, supplies, and room and board, are federal income tax free and in some states exempt from income taxes as well. But it is important to note that if you do not use the assets in the 529 plan for qualified higher education expenses, earnings on such withdrawals are taxed at the recipient's rate plus a penalty of 10 percent on the earnings.

Another thing to remember is that there is a sunset provision that expires on Dec. 31, 2010, meaning that instead of tax free withdrawals, most qualified withdrawals will go back to being taxed on the earnings portion only, at the recipient's tax rate. Keep in mind, the value of your 529 plan investment will fluctuate. When you redeem your shares, they may be worth more or less than your original investment. There is no guarantee that the account will grow enough to cover higher education expenses.

Being able to help your child invest in their education is one of the greatest gifts you could ever give them, but in order to promote further independence and growth, allow them to contribute to your years of preparation by saving some money too. While college may provide them with a wealth of knowledge and experience, managing the money from their summer jobs may teach them about the monetary responsibility essential for a strong financial future.

(Brian Hepp is a financial consultant for Santa Monica-based A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc. Member SIPC. He can be reached at (310) 453-0077 or at brian.hepp@agedwards.com. A.G. Edwards is a full-service retail brokerage firm that offers a complete spectrum of financial products and services, including stocks, bonds and mutual funds, financial retirement planning and tax-advantage investments.)

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IRS has finally muscled majority to file online

BY EILEEN PUTMAN

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON —Gone are the days when tax time meant tiny-print tax forms spread out on the dining room table for days, followed by months of watching the mail for that distinctively bland government refund check.

Thanks to home computers, tax preparation and electronic filing have never been easier. Refunds come quickly, and waiting for them can involve little more than occasionally checking the IRS Web site.

The Internal Revenue Service began a big push for electronic filing several years ago and has finally muscled a majority of taxpayers in that direction. For 2005, the IRS says 68.5 million individual returns —more than half —were filed electronically, 11.3 percent more than in the previous year. Many were e-filed by tax professionals, but about 17 million came directly from home computers, up 17 percent over the prior year.

Judging by tax software sales, millions more Americans prepared their taxes on home computers or online but did not file electronically for one reason or another. In any case, it's clear that computerized tax preparation has taken hold.

"Doing taxes by hand manually is like churning your own butter," said Julie Miller, a spokeswoman for Intuit, maker of TurboTax, a home-computer tax program.

Tax software is a hot market. Intuit says TurboTax accounted for more than \$570 million of the company's \$2 billion in revenues in its 2005 fiscal year and is driving the company's growth. Intuit's chief competitor, H&R Block's Tax Cut, doesn't release sales figures but says its business is also booming.

The popularity of home tax software is a far cry from its early days, when many returns were disqualified from e-filing at the last minute and software often had maddening glitches and a cumbersome interview process.

Both Tax Cut and TurboTax are now fairly robust platforms, able to handle more complex tax situations like rental incomes, capital gains and small businesses.

"They get better every year," said Claude Renshaw, accounting professor at Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Ind. Renshaw uses such software for his own taxes and that of clients. "They're very user-friendly."

They're also fairly inexpensive. Either program can be had, on average, for between \$30 and \$40 —depending on whether features like state, business and estimated taxes are included —and less for a simple return or one done online.

That compares with an average of about \$150 for a tax return prepared at one of H&R Block's 12,000 offices. Taxpayers with complex finances and tax planning needs typically pay more to use a personal tax preparer, no matter where they go.

Tax prep expenses, including books and software, are deductible for the year in which the purchases were made, so save those bills and product receipts.

As part of its push to e-filing, the IRS has a "Free File" program that allows taxpayers with adjusted gross incomes of \$50,000 or less to prepare and e-file taxes

for free through participating online preparers. To get the free service, taxpayers must access a vendor through the IRS Web site at <http://www.irs.gov>.

The IRS says e-filing speeds refunds, reduces tax errors and saves the agency money. The agency approves the software used for tax prep and e-filing and says the process is secure and private. Federal rules prohibit participating companies from using tax return data for unauthorized purposes.

But with the tax code notoriously complex —and tweaked each year by Congress —could taxpayers miss out on tax savings by using home tax software, rather than a tax professional? Perhaps.

"If a person is not completely familiar with tax law, I recommend they talk to a professional," says Renshaw, drawing an analogy to specialized medical needs. "If you have a headache or a cold you can probably treat it yourself, but once you pass a certain point and treatment isn't working, you have to see a doctor."

Still, both Tax Cut and TurboTax update their software with any last-minute changes by Congress and the IRS. The programs themselves can be purchased online as a download or at a retail office supply store in a box with CD-ROM.

Their colorful graphics are easy on the eyes, and each product now offers an enhanced deduction feature that tells users how much to allow as the fair market value for noncash charitable donations like clothing, toys, books and household items.

Both programs can import tax data from last year's return, certain accounting programs and some employers. They eliminate most math errors —the program does the computation —and check for other problems that can cause tax errors or flag a return for auditing. They also offer tax advice.

This year, consumers are less likely to see all those rebate forms tumble out of the software box. Tax Cut still offers an electronic filing rebate, but TurboTax has dropped rebates in favor of a "refund bonus" program. Customers who e-file can, for a one-time fee, use tax refund money to purchase gift cards from dozens of vendors, ranging from Blockbuster to JC Penney. The vendors add a bonus amount to the cards as incentives.

When returns are filed electronically, the IRS sends an e-mail within 48 hours confirming it has been accepted. If the taxpayer provided bank account and routing numbers, a refund is deposited directly in as few as 10 days, compared with the six to eight weeks it takes to get a refund check when paper tax forms are filed by mail.

Using the "Where's My Refund?" feature on the IRS Web site, taxpayers can track their returns and refunds every step of the way.

One feature that's not available this year is TeleFile, which allowed taxpayers to file over the telephone Form 1040EZ, extension Form 4868 and employer's quarterly federal tax return Form 941. Only 3.3 million filers used this feature last year, and the IRS decided that the costs of maintaining it and the growth of other electronic filing options made TeleFile an unnecessary expense.

Taxpayers can e-file forms 941 and 4868, and most 1040EZ filers can use Free File.

IRS makes it easier for filers to procrastinate

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Dread doing those taxes? This year, the IRS made it easier to procrastinate.

The filing deadline is two days later than usual — Monday, April 17, because April 15, the normal deadline, is a Saturday. The Internal Revenue Service has also made it easier to get an automatic six-month extension beyond that.

Before, obtaining a six-month filing extension was a two-step process. Taxpayers filed one form to get an automatic four-month extension to Aug. 15, and a second form to obtain an additional extension, usually two more months. But the second extension wasn't automatic — taxpayers had to give a reason for the additional delay and the IRS could always deny the request.

In a cost-savings move, the IRS eliminated or consolidated deadline-extension forms. Now, taxpayers receive an automatic six-month extension to Oct. 16, 2006, by filing a single form, Form 4868. They don't have to provide a reason or even a signature, only file the form by April 17.

Businesses seeking the automatic six-month extension file Form 7004. Before, only corporations could get an automatic six-month extension; now, most non-corporate business taxpayers, including partnerships and trusts, can use this option.

The IRS warns, however, that a filing extension doesn't extend the deadline for paying taxes. If you don't pay the taxes you owe by the regular filing deadline — April 17 — you will owe interest and perhaps a late payment penalty.

Online feature makes it easy to track refunds

By The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — How soon will your tax refund arrive? You can start tracking your refund seven days after filing electronically, four to six weeks after filing a paper return. Here's how:

Go to the Internal Revenue Service Web site at <http://www.irs.gov> and enter "Where's My Refund?" in the search box at the top right of the page.

You'll be taken to a secure site to enter your Social Security number or IRS individual taxpayer identification number, filing status and the exact refund amount shown on the tax return.

Within a few seconds, the IRS will let you know whether your tax return has been received and processed and whether a refund has been issued, either in the form of a government check mailed to your home or a direct deposit to your bank account using the account information you provided on your tax return.

If you prefer a lower-tech approach, call the IRS' Automated Refund Service at 1-800-829-4477.

If eight weeks have elapsed since you filed your taxes and you have not received your refund, call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040.



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Graffiti being as hate crime

SAMOHI, from page 1

fiti. "We here at Santa Monica High School, and in the district, do not tolerate racist behavior ... We have reported this as a hate crime to the police and we are taking this very, very seriously."

School officials said it may have been the work of gang members who don't attend the school.

There are serious consequences for the person or persons responsible, particularly if they are a student, district officials said. They could be suspended, expelled and could be convicted of a hate crime. Their parents could also be responsible for paying restitution to the district.

While the graffiti was removed Friday, students arriving for class were able to read the hateful messages because school officials didn't have enough paint to cover them up, Straus said.

Many students were hurt, angry and fearful that the graffiti could increase racial tension on campus and spark another brawl like the one in April in which six students were suspended, including one who was intoxicated, according to a report by school officials.

"On Friday, there were a lot of cops here looking out," said Crystal, an African-American 11th grader at Samohi who didn't want to give her last name for fear of being targeted by those involved with the graffiti. "There were a lot of

Latinos here, some who didn't look like they even go to school here. It was pretty tense, like there was going to be a fight."

Another student, who would only identify himself as Marcus, said he has noticed some tension, but only between a few groups of students.

"You just keep to yourself, hang with your friends and don't cause any problems and you'll be fine," he said. "I'm a little worried, you know, looking over my back sometimes if I'm alone, but I'm not scared to go to school or anything."

Parents said the graffiti is only the latest racially-charged event to occur at Samohi. Racism has been a problem festering in the district and at the high school for decades, and nothing seems to have been done to combat it, parents contend.

"We need to stop talking and do something," said Crystal Quine, a mother of two Samohi students. "Don't spend another \$30,000 on a freaking survey. Do something about it. I'm tired of this."

CONFLICT A SYMPTOM OF SOCIETY

Schools Superintendent John Deasy said the district is working aggressively on easing the concerns of parents and students, pointing to mediation sessions that are taking place at the campus, as well as the hiring of six community outreach specialists.

"The district has done tremendous work trying to deal with very real issues in

our society," he said. "We are doing everything in our power to support kids and build a tolerant culture inside and outside of our schools. But these are very real societal problems and they are worries in our society. Kids do get affected by that and may bring those attitudes to school, and we work with them on that."

School board member Oscar De La Torre said the tension local schools and other districts across the county are experiencing is a product of the large number of blacks and Latinos who are incarcerated in racially-segregated jails.

Some parents said the graffiti could be in response to a recent race riot at the North County Correctional Facility in Castaic last weekend.

"The prison culture is spilling over into our streets and our schools. It's all connected," De La Torre said. "There are some people and some institutions in our society who perpetuate racial segregation, division and racial hatred. Prisons are a breeding ground for this and we want to make sure our schools do not emulate that."

After the fight in April of last year, a community group calling itself the Unity Coalition devised a 10-point plan to help create racial harmony within the school district. The coalition called for mediation sessions, counseling, culturally-relevant curriculum and the hiring of faculty that represents the racial makeup of the school.

The coalition presented the plan informally to district officials, who told the coalition that eight of the 10 ideas were already part of district policy, said Jules

Bagneris, the moderator for the coalition.

"We took that as our plan was adopted. Now it looks like its time to take action," Bagneris said. "The superintendent and school board members told us they had measures in place, but from what I can see, their approach is unrealistic. The district is bankrupt when it comes to this. They just don't know how to deal with violence on campus."

Bagneris said he will recommend to the coalition that it push for Straus to be removed as principal from Samohi and be replaced with someone who "is qualified to work with a campus of this size and with a multi-cultural environment."

At the end of the PTSA meeting, Straus said she would continue to follow district policy, but did say she would be in contact with parents who have suggestions on how to enhance race relations.

De La Torre suggested a relatively easy, but effective first step: Paint a mural that promotes unity.

"Why not put a mural (at the site of the graffiti) to replace the negativity with something positive," he said. "This is something the students have been talking about and I think we should move on it quickly to show some action."

In the meantime, parents of minority students are left with what they feel are empty promises that things will get better.

"All the school wants to do is keep up appearances," said Carol Zeitlin, a parent of an African-American student. "They want to promote this image that everything is fine and dandy here. Obviously, it's not."

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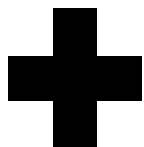
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Social Security death benefit could be buried under Bush

BY DAVID ESPO

AP Special Correspondent

WASHINGTON — If President Bush gets his way, the venerable \$255 Social Security death benefit will fade into history. And 16- and 17-year-old high school dropouts will lose their monthly survivor payments.

Not, however, if Democrats get their way.

"The Republican Congress has given a whole new meaning to the term 'women and children first,'" Illinois Rep. Rahm Emanuel, chairman of the House Democratic campaign committee, said Tuesday.

"There they go again," said New York Sen. Chuck Schumer, who heads the party's Senate campaign effort. "They can't resist trying to cut Social Security, and to cut a survivor, a widow or widower's benefits, it just shows how warped the priorities are in this budget."

White House officials defended the proposals, included in the budget that Bush submitted to Congress on Tuesday and estimated to trim costs by \$3.4 billion over the next decade.

"Children who have lost a parent need every assistance and encouragement we can provide, and everything the federal government can do to encourage them to stay in school and get an education makes it that much more likely that they can succeed," said Scott Milburn, a spokesman at the Office of Management and Budget.

"Linking benefits to school attendance provides that encouragement and is, in fact, currently the rule for 19-year-olds. We think more children can be helped by lowering that age to 16," he said.

Congressional aides said Jo Anne Barnhart, the Social Security Commissioner, had told them during a closed-door briefing on Monday that the \$255 one-time death benefit has become an administrative burden, since it is not paid in all cases.

Mark Lassiter, a spokesman at the Social Security Administration, said the benefit "bears no relation to

what a person's funeral expenses are or to any of workers' earnings levels. We believe that eliminating it is not going to cause an appreciable financial hardship to a survivor."

Lassiter said the benefit is paid in cases in which a surviving spouse was living with the deceased at the time of his or her death. It is also available in some cases for a surviving spouse who lived apart and for some surviving children.

Administration officials said the payment began as a burial benefit in 1939 to assist families with funeral expenses. The amount was set at \$255 in 1952 and, until 1981, the payment was made directly to funeral homes, they said.

Bush's budget includes a proposal to change the calculation made for Social Security disability payments for people who also receive worker compensation benefits.

In addition, it calls for the Social Security Administration to implement a new system to obtain accurate information about the state and local pensions paid to retirees who also qualify for federal retirement benefits.

Together, the proposals relating to disability payments and state and local retirees would save an estimated \$2.8 billion over the next decade, according to administration estimates.

Unlike a year ago, Social Security did not figure prominently in Bush's legislative agenda. Then, fresh off a re-election campaign, he urged lawmakers to overhaul the program to create personal savings accounts while cutting back on future benefits for workers who are younger than 55.

Democrats rallied in opposition, and Republicans shrank from the political challenge of remaking a program that provides benefits to millions of elderly voters.

The budget the president submitted to lawmakers this week renews his call for the changes. This time, there is no evidence he intends to push for their enactment.

State tax burdens jump across the country

BY STEPHEN OHLEMACHER

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — If it seems like your taxes have been going up, they probably have — at least at the state level.

State taxpayer burdens increased by an average of 41 percent from 1994 to 2004, according to newly released data from the Census Bureau. Only one state, Alaska, saw the amount it collects per person decline.

Even when the numbers are adjusted for inflation, the individual tax burdens increase in 43 states.

Hawaiians last year paid the most to state government — \$3,050 per person on average. Texans paid the least — an average of \$1,368.

Rising education and Medicaid costs have fueled spending growth, which has led to higher taxes, analysts said.

"Medicaid has been the fastest growing program in state budgets going back to 2000," said Arturo Perez, a fiscal analyst at the National Council of State Legislatures.

Medicaid is the state-federal health insurance program for the poor. In an effort to stem rising costs, Congress passed legislation last week allowing states to charge about 13 million Medicaid beneficiaries new or increased co-payments and premiums.

The big range in state taxes reflects the variety of government revenue systems throughout the country. The numbers do not include local taxes, which in many states generate most of the money for schools. They also do not

include federal taxes.

Wyoming, Connecticut, Minnesota and Delaware round out the top five states in tax receipts per person. South Dakota, Colorado, New Hampshire and Alabama round out the bottom five.

New Hampshire had the biggest increase from 1994 to 2004, with the state tax burden more than doubling. But at \$1,544 per person, it remained among the lowest in the country.

Alaska, which gets much of its revenue from oil production, saw its state tax receipts drop 1 percent, to \$2,035 per person. Oil revenue helped Alaska spend \$12,294 per person in 2004, far more than any other state.

States, on average, get nearly half their tax revenues from sales taxes. They get a third from personal income taxes and 5 percent from corporate income taxes.

Education is the biggest budget item, consuming an average of 31 percent of state spending. Public welfare comes in second at 24 percent. Highways account for 6 percent of state spending and police protection just 1 percent.

Many states raised taxes early in the decade because of budget shortfalls caused by the economic slowdown. Many of those states now have budget surpluses, leading some, including Hawaii, to debate tax cuts.

"Many states are having an unexpected surplus of revenue, and that is because of economic growth," said Stephen Slivinski, director of budget studies at the Cato Institute. "It's mainly because their estimates on economic growth were very low."

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NATIONAL



Alaska looking to change its image as a freeloader

BY MATT VOLZ

Associated Press Writer

JUNEAU, Alaska — It's known as The Last Frontier. But lately, Alaska is worried the rest of America sees it as the Freeloading Frontier.

Gov. Frank Murkowski says it is time for an image makeover. He wants the state to hire a public relations firm to change the perception of Alaska and its people as greedy for federal dollars and all too willing to plunder the environment for profit.

Ultimately, he wants to sway public opinion in favor of opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.

Most Alaska politicians favor drilling in the refuge, which would fill the state's coffers like the trans-Alaska oil pipeline has done for decades. But environmentalists have fought back for a quarter-century, and in December the state was thwarted again in Congress.

Alaska suffered another setback a few months ago during the furor over \$450 million Congress appropriated for two "Bridges to Nowhere" that became symbols of wasteful spending. Late-night comics mocked Alaska, and a columnist at The Washington Post jokingly recommended the United States sell Alaska back to Russia.

In reaction, Murkowski announced during his State of the State Address in January a plan to counter misperceptions about Alaska.

"Alaska does not just take. We give, and we have the capacity to give much, much more — if permitted to do so," he said.

Alaska is one of the top recipients of federal largesse. In 2003, the latest year for which figures are available, Alaska received \$1.89 in federal spending for every \$1 the state paid in taxes to Washington, according to the Tax Foundation, a nonpartisan research organization. The state ranked second, behind New Mexico. Alaska ranked highest in per-capita dollars received from the federal government that year, the group reported.

Alaska villagers say climate change is prompting communities to adapt

BY DAN JOLING

Associated Press Writer

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Firebreaks protecting homes were never part of the traditional culture in Huslia, an Athabascan village on the Koyukuk River. But forest fires are burning hotter and more frequently, and the village has had to adapt, said William Derendoff, 61, the traditional chief.

Derendoff and other village leaders told of how climate change is hitting their rural communities Tuesday at an Alaska Forum on the Environment.

"These changes are going to impact Native people probably more than any other group," said Larry Merculieff, an Aleut who grew up in the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea. "The villages have to start thinking about it now."

Some changes have been spectacular. Edwin Weyiouanna of the Inupiat Eskimo village of Shishmaref told how his entire community of 600, in the Chukchi Sea just north of the Bering Strait, is being forced to move.

No longer protected by early winter sea ice or ground that's permanently frozen,

At the same time, Alaska residents pay no state income tax, and only a few cities have a sales tax. In fact, every year, practically every man, woman and child in Alaska receives a share of the state's oil wealth just for living here. Last year's dividend check was for \$845.76.

Ketchikan commercial fisherman Fred Athorp, 68, recalled the remarks some Florida lobstermen made to him a few years ago. "They said, 'We aren't in Alaska, where we drive down to our boats in our Rolls-Royces,'" Athorp said. "There's quite a few misconceptions."

As for why Alaska gets so much money from Washington, the congressional delegation and state leaders say it is because Alaska is a young state that lacks the infrastructure and services the rest of the nation has.

Critics say the real reason is that Alaska's congressional delegation, led by former Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Sen. Ted Stevens and Rep. Don Young, is remarkably adroit at bringing home the pork.

John Katz, an aide to the governor, said the public does not realize how much Alaska — bought in 1867 for around 2 cents an acre by Abraham Lincoln's secretary of state, William Seward — contributes in oil, gas, minerals and other resources.

The North Slope pumped out an average of 916,000 barrels of oil a day last year. Fishermen pulled 5.4 billion pounds of fish from Alaska's waters in 2004. The state played host to 1.4 million tourists that year. The Red Dog Mine is the largest zinc mining operation in the world, and gold mining is undergoing a resurgence.

"I think it's a brilliant idea, a master stroke on the part of the governor," said Rob Allyn, president of the Dallas public relations firm Allyn & Co., which lists heads of state and foreign political parties among its clients. "The image problems Alaska faces, and the global misconceptions of Alaska, are as great today as when Alaska was mislabeled Seward's Folly."

the barrier island community has been pounded and eroded by storms. Villagers in 2002 voted to relocate to the mainland and hope to obtain federal money to make the move.

Changes at Huslia are more subtle. Hotter summers have stressed area spruce forests, making them susceptible to forest fires.

"A lot of the spruce trees are kind of brown, not green," Derendoff said. "When we have a fire, it really goes."

A 30-acre fire last summer threatened the village. Though trees and brush were cleared from around the landfill, a flame from burning trash lit caribou moss and fire spread to forest.

"Fortunately, we caught it in time," he said.

Fire danger is not the only change.

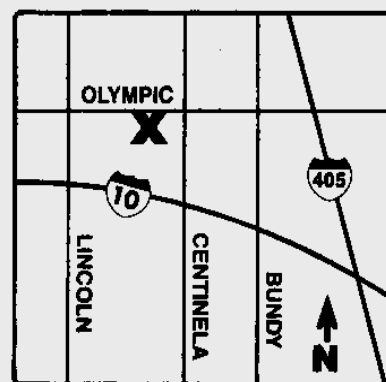
As in Shishmaref, permafrost — ground that stays below freezing for a minimum of two years — has melted and no longer provides a barrier against Koyukuk River erosion, Derendoff said.

Lakes that traditionally flooded with river water no longer are doing so, Derendoff said, changing where villagers fish.

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NATIONAL

Air Guard, active airmen take to skies together

BY AUDREY MCAVOY

Associated Press Writer

HICKAM AIR FORCE BASE, Hawaii — As a commercial pilot, Mike Compton ferries passengers around the islands for Hawaiian Airlines. But when he dons a Hawaii Air National Guard flight suit, he flies cargo planes to Iraq.

The military will be tapping Air Guard crew members like Compton, a colonel, as it launches new partnerships integrating the Air Guard and active duty Air Force.

Starting Wednesday, pilots from the Hawaii Air National Guard and active duty airmen will fly C-17 cargo planes side-by-side. Guard maintenance crews will fix the jets right next to their active duty counterparts.

The arrangement — one of the first like it in the nation — comes as the military strives to squeeze the most out of its defense budget by maximizing use of its Air Guard. As the Pentagon spreads the concept to other states, the way the two sides integrate in Hawaii may serve as a template for other Guard units around the country.

“Our strengths of the active duty and the Guard complement each other,” said Compton, who is helping coordinate the integration for the Guard.

The experiment will publicly launch this week when the first of eight C-17 jets

assigned to Hickam Air Force Base arrives from California. Two pilots — one active duty and the other Hawaii Air Guard — will fly the cargo plane to its new home.

Commanders — both active duty and Guard — agree that one of the chief benefits of the sharing will be the extra staff the Guard will provide the Air Force at a low cost.

Compton says Air Guard crews require about one-third the funds of active duty troops because they have civilian jobs and are not on a full-time military payroll. Still, they fly and service planes for the Air Force about five to seven days per month and another two weeks each year. And when the Air Force needs them for a longer commitment, they can be summoned for duty.

Also, many Guard pilots and maintenance crews work for commercial airlines and so have little trouble keeping their skills up-to-date.

“With the Guard and reserve you get quite a bit of capability for a fairly cheap price,” said Col. William J. Changose, the commander of the active duty 15th Airlift Wing at Hickam. “Day-to-day the U.S. taxpayer is paying almost nothing, but when I need them, we can call them up.”

The two sides already have started integrating at Hickam.

Maintenance crews from the two units

have set up shop inside the same building so they can work seamlessly. When the C-17s arrive, the active airmen and Guard will share the planes, hangers, and a high-tech C-17 flight simulator.

Airmen from the Air Force and the Guard also have a common dining room, Compton said, “because people who eat together, drink together, work together better.”

Brig. Gen. Peter S. Pawling, commander of the Hawaii Air National Guard’s 154th Wing, said he doesn’t expect his airmen to have to commit more time to their Guard duties when they join up with Changose’s 15th Airlift Wing.

He noted Guardsmen and women are juggling their military service with their regular lives as mothers, fathers and their civilian jobs as school teachers, firefighters, and commercial pilots.

“We have to be careful how we balance that out,” Pawling said.

Other active duty-Air Guard combinations already have been cropping up around the nation.

The Virginia Air National Guard began jointly flying and maintaining a fleet of F-22 Raptor fighter jets with active duty airmen late last year at Langley Air Force Base in Virginia.

In Vermont, active duty military mechanics have joined a Vermont Air National Guard fighter wing.

James Carafano, senior fellow at the

Guard, regular military working hand-in-hand

By The Associated Press

TEAMING UP: National Guard units and the regular military are working together in the homeland as well as on foreign battlefields.

THE LATEST MATCH: Starting this week, the Hawaii Air National Guard will fly and maintain newly based C-17 cargo planes alongside active duty airmen.

IT’S ALREADY WORKING: The Virginia Air National Guard flies and maintains F-22 Raptors with active duty airmen, and Air Force mechanics work with a Guard unit in Vermont.

Heritage Foundation, a Washington, D.C. think tank, said the setup gives the Air Force greater flexibility and would likely improve the service’s readiness for contingencies.

“When you go on the battlefield, nobody asks to say, ‘Hey are you active or reserve or Guard or whatever?’” Carafano said. “You want that kind of seamless integration. And so the more you have that in peacetime, the more effective it is in wartime as well.”



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By The Associated Press

He spoke only to confirm his name and address, and appeared disoriented during the hearing Wednesday at Ealing Magistrates' Court in west London, glancing frequently toward supporters in the public gallery. They burst into applause when it became clear Doherty would not be going to jail.

Fiennes, 43, and Annis, 61, met while starring in a 1995 stage production of "Hamlet," in which Fiennes played the title role and Annis

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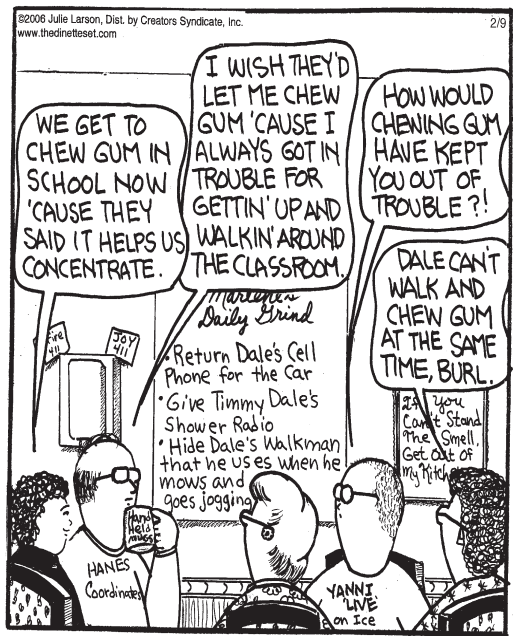
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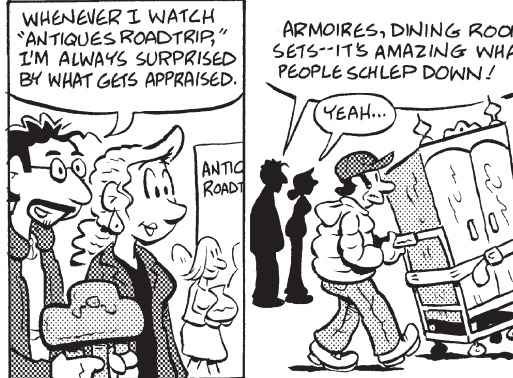


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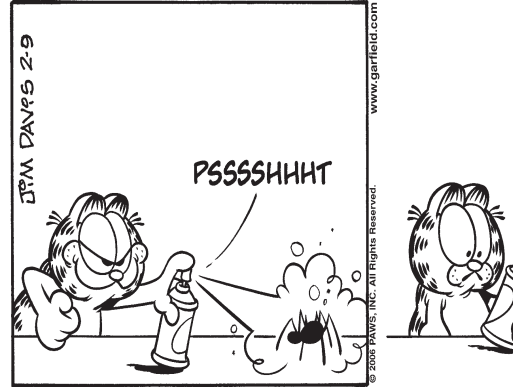
The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



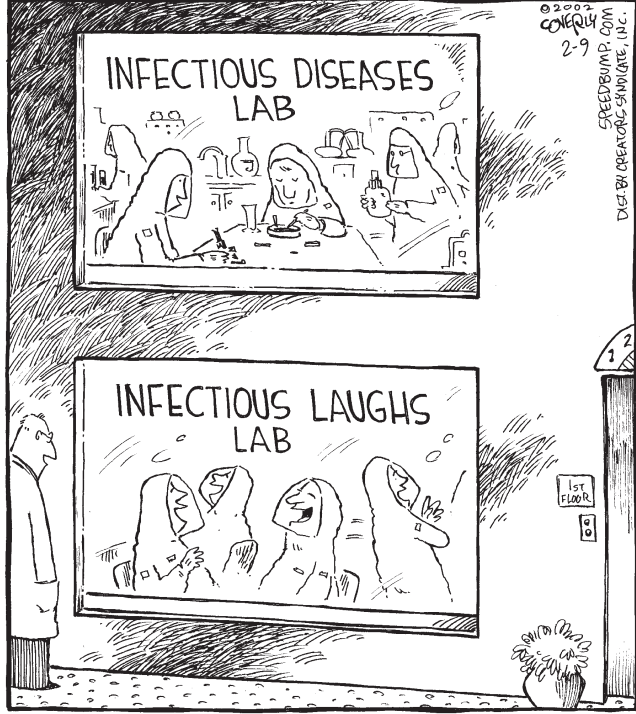
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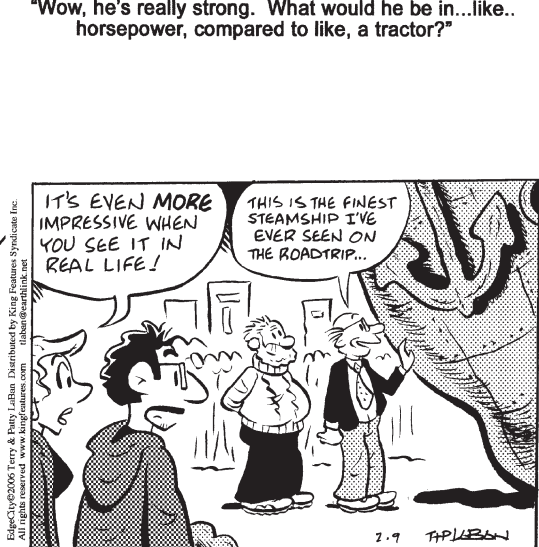
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 - 18 "Raging Bull" star
 - 20 Road hazard
 - 21 Close
 - 23 Fishing aid
 - 24 Walking aid
 - 26 Omelet makeup
 - 28 Cal. heading
 - 29 Reasonable
 - 31 Outdated
 - 32 "Constant Craving" singer
 - 36 Kid's racer
 - 39 Pasture sound
 - 40 — firma
 - 41 Moscow setting
 - 43 Wading bird

- 44 Odorless gas
- 45 Security problems
- 46 Statutes

DOWN

- 1 Boston entree
- 2 Protective layer
- 3 "Cosmos" writer
- 4 Metal source
- 5 Yarn
- 6 Inter —
- 7 Taking in
- 8 Persuades
- 9 Afternoon service
- 11 Yarns
- 17 Gear part

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Yesterday's answer

- 19 Travel stop
- 22 "Purple Haze" musician
- 24 Dean's place
- 25 Spain neighbor
- 27 Hair goo
- 28 Zero of film
- 30 Alias, for short
- 33 Iowa community
- 34 Not in any way
- 35 Hired thugs
- 37 Difficult trip
- 38 Jazz lovers
- 42 Penn. neighbor

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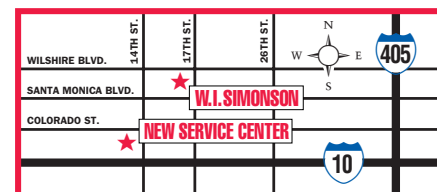
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