

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO
5 13 15 20 45
Meganumber: 8
Jackpot: \$9 Million

FANTASY 5
0 0 29 31 33

DAILY 3
Daytime: 1 5 9
Evening: 3 9 2

DAILY DERBY
1st: 01 Gold Rush
2nd: 10 Solid Gold
3rd: 07 Eureka !

RACE TIME: 1.49.73
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NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

In February, the Missourian newspaper reported that Columbia resident Adam Ballard, 22, now in his second year in the Army, is overeating and under-exercising so as to gain weight rapidly and exceed the Army's body-fat requirement, which will force his discharge rather than his deployment to the Middle East war zone. According to The Columbian, 3,285 soldiers were discharged for excess body fat in 2004 (although not all were war-zone shirkers). Ballard said he had no qualms because recruiters had originally assured him a desk job.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 110th day of 2006.
There are 255 days left in the year.

- On April 20, 1999, the Columbine High School massacre took place in Littleton, Colo., as two students shot and killed 12 classmates and one teacher before taking their own lives.
- In 1889, Adolf Hitler was born in Braunau, Austria.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Taste. You cannot buy such a rare and wonderful thing. You can't send away for it in a catalogue. And I'm afraid it's becoming obsolete."

ROSALIND RUSSELL
AMERICAN ACTRESS (1911-1976)

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STATE

Apartments in West flat out expensive

BY MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP Business Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Apartment rents are increasing more rapidly in many of the West's major markets as the economy produces more jobs and rising interest rates prevent more people from buying homes, according to statistics being released Thursday.

The average apartment rent in March rose by at least 4 percent in nine of the 20 Western markets surveyed by RealFacts, a Novato, Calif.-based real estate research firm.

Rents rose fastest in San Bernardino and Riverside counties, an inland Southern California region that has become a refuge for people who can't afford to live in the Los Angeles metropolitan area — the West's most expensive rental market, according to RealFacts.

Apartments in San Bernardino and Riverside have climbed by 7.3 percent in the past year to an average of \$1,097 in March, RealFacts said. Renters paid an average of \$1,484 for an apartment in Los Angeles and Orange counties, a 6.7 percent increase from last year.

Southern California has ranked among the West's hottest rental markets for several years.

But landlords also appear to be gaining more leverage in once-slumping markets such as the San Francisco Bay area, where a revived high-tech industry and high-priced homes are fueling rental demand.

In the five-county Bay Area tracked by RealFacts, rents averaged \$1,374 in March, a 5 percent annual increase, while rents in Santa Clara County — Silicon Valley's hub — averaged \$1,359, a 5.8 percent increase.

Rent increases also are accelerating in Seattle and Nevada's major markets, RealFacts said.

Colorado emerged as one of the major exceptions to the general rental trends in the West. Average rents in Denver rose by less than 1 percent to an average of \$856 while rents in Colorado

See FLAT OUT PRICEY, page 11

Still waiting on justice

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON
Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN LA — Capital murder charges have yet to be filed against the two imprisoned gang members who are accused of randomly killing two men in Santa Monica nearly eight years ago.

Santa Monica Police detectives filed their cases against David

Robles and Jessie Garcia, both 29, with the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office last Friday, but formal charges have not been levied, said DA spokeswoman Jane Robison.

"The case is still under review, but it will be filed shortly," she said.

Robles and Garcia, cousins and noted gang members, are alleged to have fatally shot Michael Juarez,

27, and Anthony Juarez, 19, on Oct. 27, 1998. The Juarez brothers were visiting their cousin's business, Westside Clothing on Lincoln Boulevard, when masked gunmen stormed into the store and fired numerous rounds from an assault rifle and pair of handguns.

Robles and Garcia are expected

See MURDER CHARGES, page 10

An officer and a welderman



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Pier and Harbor Service Officer Matt Anderson gets set to cut through some half-inch iron chain with the use of his 'cutting torch' on the Santa Monica Pier. The chains will be used to anchor down buoys.

Those going the distance may get some relief

BY KEVIN HERRERA
Daily Press Staff Writer

THIRD STREET PROMENADE — When you gotta go, you gotta go.

But finding a clean, public restroom here can be difficult — some say impossible — which is why business owners and city officials are once again looking to provide

some relief.

This time around, that relief may come in the form of a new, centrally-located restroom facility, complete with ample bathroom stalls, baby-changing tables and an attendant to make sure urinals are pristine and soap dispensers full.

The idea was flushed out earlier this week during a meeting between

city officials and members of Bayside District Corp., a public-private management company that works in partnership with City Hall on issues impacting downtown.

Bayside members pushed for City Hall to consider creating the new bathroom facility in downtown

See GOTTA GO, page 8



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HOUSE CALLS AND SAME DAY APPOINTMENTS

Ever playful, Libra

 **ARIES (March 21-April 19)**
★★★★ You are in charge, and your decisions make a difference. Indulgent people -- or at least for the moment they are -- surround you. Decide when you need to put a halt to your lavish behavior. You can do it. Tonight: Find your pals.

 **TAURUS (April 20-May 20)**
★★★★ The Sun moves into your sign today, christening a month of more energy and power. Use this period to the max. Make the most of this trend. Schedule a mini-trip or a visit with someone at a distance. You'll love the change of pace. Tonight: Out and about.

 **GEMINI (May 21-June 20)**
★★★★ You can successfully deal with others as long as you close the door and focus on one person at a time. You might wind up going a bit overboard right now. Self-discipline is a must for the next month. Tonight: Break your patterns.

 **CANCER (June 21-July 22)**
★★★★ Others want to have control. Let them; you will get what you want anyway, and/or the end results will be right up your alley. You might be prone to some indulgence. Be a careful Crab. Tonight: Relate on a one-on-one level.

 **LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)**
★★★ You could be in the midst of tension, creating more situations. Consider how you can rise above them and not get triggered. Some thought could prevent regretful actions. Allow others more say. Get off your throne, King Lion. Tonight: Go along with another's wishes.

 **VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)**
★★★★ Your creativity mounts to a new level. Better yet, you seem to come up with ingenious yet practical and logical ideas. Your capacity to transform thoughts into concrete expressions scores high in whatever setting you are in. Tonight: Veg a little first.

 **LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)**
★★★★ Sometimes you need to consider more deeply the pros and cons of a personal matter. You stir up many feelings in your immediate circle. The benefits could be far greater than you are aware of or even thought possible! Tonight: Ever playful.

 **SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)**
★★★★ Your words help you create a lot more than you realize. Think positively, and you will see creativity, effectiveness and feelings intertwine. This braid spells success. Information and news head in your direction. Tonight: At home.

 **SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)**
★★★★ If you want to prevent a fire, get to the root of a smoldering issue or situation. You might be surprised at what is going on. Creative change is possible with insight. A discussion enlightens you to different styles. Tonight: Out and about.

 **CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)**
★★★★ Your personality dominates everything that happens. You might be surprised at what becomes possible with friends and a touch of imagination. Trust that someone means well, even if you might doubt it right now. Tonight: Your treat.

 **AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)**
★★★★ You might want to revise your thinking concerning certain key areas or people in your life. You know and understand a lot more than you realize. Start trusting your intuitive feelings. At the same time, allow for others' opinions. Tonight: You are the cat's meow.

 **PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)**
★★★★ Friends or associates point you in the proper direction. You know what works and what doesn't. Brainstorm about what is doable, and great ideas will show up. Use the daylight hours to the max, when your star power is high-er. Tonight: Take some time for yourself.

CIRCULATION AUDIT BY


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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Topanga to leave its mark on Earth Day

By Daily Press staff

A union of music, arts, science, healing and ceremony are to be celebrated at the Seventh Annual Topanga Earth Day this weekend. The theme of this year's festival will be "Only Our Foot Prints Left Behind," to be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, April 23, at the Topanga State Park Nature Center at Trippet Ranch, 20825 Entrada Rd. in Topanga. In an effort to help improve the environment, members of the public are invited to take part in the Topanga Creek cleanup from 9 a.m. until noon on Saturday, April 22, the day before the festival. Those who participate in the creek's cleanup will receive free admission to the Topanga Earth Day Festival to be held on Sunday. There will be a suggested admission fee for festival attendees who don't participate in the cleanup. The Topanga Earth Day Festival will begin with an opening ceremony by Edwin Lemus and Grupo Samai. Some of the activities will include a 10 a.m. yoga class led by Michelle Broussard and alternative energy demonstrations from the creative minds of Delmar Lathers and Ken Widen, who will exhibit "PedalPowered" fruit smoothies and solar ovens. There also will be a solar-powered sound system by Jon Sherman of Solar Sound. Musical offerings will include the Yuval Ron Ensemble, described as a "Musical United Nations," who will perform in a variety of sacred musical traditions.

See BRIEFS, page 11

CORRECTION — In an article in the April 18 edition, there was an error in an article regarding a pair of discovered dead bodies. One of the deceased men was homeless, the other was not.



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SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

CONDITIONS

DATA PROVIDED BY ONTHESNOW.COM

BEAR MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 24" - 48"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 27	LIFTS OPEN 5/12
CONDITIONS: Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Spring, Variable				

JUNE MOUNTAIN

CLOSED

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 204" - 228"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 150	LIFTS OPEN 26/28
CONDITIONS: Packed Powder, Machine Groomed				

MOUNTAIN HIGH

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 12" - 24"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 19	LIFTS OPEN 8/16
CONDITIONS: Spring				

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 15" - 32"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 4:30 pm	RUNS OPEN 26	LIFTS OPEN 4/4
CONDITIONS: Machine Groomed, Spring				

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 18" - 48"	LIFT HOURS 8:00 am - 4:30 pm	RUNS OPEN 26	LIFTS OPEN 7/14
CONDITIONS: Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Spring, Variable				

SNOW VALLEY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs) 0"	BASE DEPTH 18" - 48"	LIFT HOURS 8:30 am - 4:00 pm	RUNS OPEN 20	LIFTS OPEN 3/11
CONDITIONS: Machine Groomed, Hard Packed, Spring				

CONDITIONS

WATER TEMP: 55°

DATA PROVIDED BY WETSAND.COM

SWELL FORECAST (1-2 FT)

Today the Tasman SW will peak, but we're not expecting anything much better than what we'll be seeing on Wednesday: knee to waist mostly with some rogue set waves from time to time.

LONG RANGE SYNOPSIS

Some light NW Friday into weekend...

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA

MONDAY	LOW TIDE	6:41AM	-0.1FT	4:54PM	2.3FT
	HIGH TIDE	1:18PM	2.8FT	11:44PM	5.3FT
TUESDAY	LOW TIDE	7:45AM	0.0FT	5:01PM	2.6FT
	HIGH TIDE	3:12PM	2.7FT	N/A	N/A
WEDNESDAY	LOW TIDE	9:05AM	0.1FT	N/A	N/A
	HIGH TIDE	12:33AM	5.1FT	N/A	N/A
THURSDAY	LOW TIDE	10:26AM	0.0FT	9:15PM	3.2FT
	HIGH TIDE	1:48AM	4.8FT	6:33PM	3.3FT
FRIDAY	LOW TIDE	11:31AM	-0.2FT	N/A	N/A
	HIGH TIDE	3:32AM	4.6FT	6:46PM	3.7FT
SATURDAY	LOW TIDE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	HIGH TIDE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
SUNDAY	LOW TIDE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	HIGH TIDE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

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

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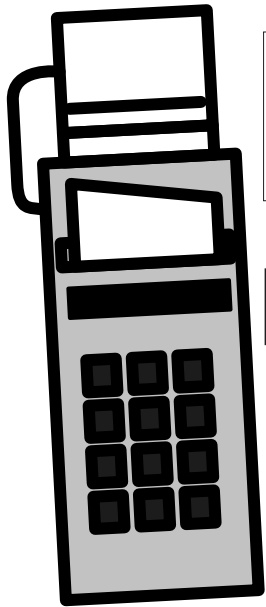
The City Council and city staff are getting ready to draft a budget for the coming fiscal year, which begins July 1. Residents are encouraged to submit budget requests for consideration through the city's Web site at www.santa-monica.org.

So this week Q-Line wants to know: "What special items do you think should be included in the city's budget for the upcoming year?"

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

Long shelf life doesn't do a library good

Editor:
Each time I call my local branch for a book, I can almost never get it. The books I request are not in the Santa Monica system. Then I call the Brentwood Branch of the Los Angeles Library to get the books I'm looking for, and they have the books. It's mindboggling that our city can "blow" almost \$80 million on a structure, and I can't get my books in my hometown.

Joyce Martino
Santa Monica

Policing makes for safer streets

Editor:
The board of directors of the Ocean Park Association wants to formally thank the Santa Monica Police Department and the officers of the motorcycle enforcement unit for their recent efforts to increase safety on Ocean Park Boulevard and Barnard Way. We realize that traffic enforcement officers rarely receive thanks for their critical work, yet their efforts help keep our streets safe for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. And as a result of the recent deployments in our neighborhood, Ocean Park's streets are safer for all of us.

Ocean Park Association
Santa Monica

Citizens critical of farmers' parking

Editor:
The Sunday farmers market on Main Street, originally conceived as a means to stimulate business along Main Street, has far exceeded its initial expectations for success and is now drawing visitors from places as far away from Ocean Park as the San Fernando Valley. We wholly support the presence of a farmers market in our neighborhood. However, the large number of drivers seeking to park in the area on Sundays has created serious impacts for both local residents and for businesses on Main Street. There is simply not enough parking on the residential streets adjacent to the Sunday market to accommodate the needs of residents, market visitors and Main Street establishments. As a consequence, vehicles spend a great deal of time circling residential streets in search of scarce parking spaces during the operation of the Main Street market. This unnecessary traffic is unsustainable, for it promotes wasteful use of gasoline and fouls the air with exhaust and brake dust. It is also contrary to the goals of the market, which seeks to sell locally grown and often organic produce, so as to reduce the consumption of fuel and the emission of pollutants. In addition, circling drivers and double-parked vehicles pose a threat to public safety, as they put pedestrians, especially children, at risk. Affordable measures are available to lessen this traffic:
1. Use of the beach lots for market parking: These lots are empty most Sunday mornings and don't even fill up until the afternoon on hot summer days.
2. Signs at the market and elsewhere in the neighborhood directing people to parking options other than residential streets.
3. Placing more bike racks at the farmers market. At a recent market the three available bike racks were full by 9 am.
4. Use of the parking lot at John Muir School and SMASH.
5. Installing diagonal parking on Main and Third Street to increase the number of available spaces. If necessary, the costs of this program could be covered by the use of parking meters, with cars with preferential parking permits being exempt.
6. Providing parking at the Civic Center, which is largely empty on Sundays, to market shoppers arriving via the 10 Freeway and a shuttle service to and from the market. The owners of the Victorian previously tried to utilize a zoo tram they acquired to shuttle market visitors from the beach lots, but their efforts ceased for reasons unknown to us. Perhaps this tram or an electric bus could be deployed as a Civic Center parking shuttle for the market.
7. Expanding the hours of operation of the Tide Shuttle to include Sunday mornings, and perhaps also Wednesday and Saturday mornings to service the city's two other markets.
8. Requiring payment for the metered spaces on Main Street starting at 9 a.m. instead of 1 p.m. on Sundays, which would increase the turnover of these spaces.
9. Closing a portion of Main Street to vehicular traffic, as is done for the downtown markets, and staging the market on the street, with vendors' booths placed in the middle facing retail establishments. We hope you will give our concerns your serious consideration and undertake some, if not all, of our proposed remedies to the deficit of parking for the Sunday market. If these measures are not possible, then perhaps it's time to consider relocating the market to some place such as the Crescent Bay Park with parking provided for a charge at the adjacent beach lot. Many thanks for your time and attention.

Ocean Park Association
Santa Monica

It's cheers and jeers for City Hall



EYE ON
THE CITY
BY ELIZABETH RIEL

Sometimes City Hall acts like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. On one day, our city's leaders take an unprecedented stand on behalf of our families and kids at the expense of developers. On another day, City Hall stonewalls our residents and shuts the community out in favor of developers. Residents had a good day last week when the City Council unanimously voted to require developers to pay fees to fund early childhood education, child care and public art projects. Under the proposal, developers, retailers and hotels would pay a fee per square foot for early childhood education and child care needs for Santa Monica's children. Retailers and hotels would pay less than developers. To fund public art projects, developers would pay a very small percentage of their permit fee. At first glance, it may seem odd to ask developers and business to participate in the welfare of Santa Monica's kids. But if people want to do business in Santa Monica and reap the benefits of our community, then it makes sense to have them contribute to the future well-being of our city. And there's no better investment than quality early childhood education and child care, which recent studies show have positive long-term impacts for children. Although these types of fees are certainly not unprecedented, Santa Monica's would be the highest in the state. That's why I'm somewhat shocked that they received the unanimous backing of the City Council, especially by those councilmembers who tend to back developers over residents). Of course, the fees have not yet been finalized, and there was grumbling from some councilmembers about how it would drive business away. Developers and businesses complain that it's too expensive here but they make a pretty good buck off our high land values and strong visitor and tourism industry. The number of visitors to Santa Monica has only increased over the years — from 3.8 million in 2000 to almost 4.8 million in 2004. And let's not forget that our city has something that most surrounding cities don't — a beautiful ocean and beach that will always keep land values high and attract visitors. Let's just hope that councilmembers will demonstrate the same kind of backbone and prudence in a few weeks when the fee

structure for early childhood education and public art will be finalized. For those councilmembers who have doubts about the fee or try to lower it, let's hope they remember that they are elected to serve the residents of Santa Monica, not the developers. On the flip side, City Hall showed its dark side when it turned on residents and refused to be forthcoming and open about Macerich's plans to redevelop Santa Monica Place.

Developers and businesses complain that it's too expensive here, but they make a pretty good buck off our high land values.

Last year, the Santa Monica Coalition for a Livable City (SMCLC) had to sue City Hall in order to gain access to a significant number of public documents regarding the redevelopment of Santa Monica Place. Those documents included e-mails between city officials and the developer; traffic studies and other environmental impacts; unadulterated results of telephone surveys; names and addresses of residents who attended the city workshops — even though the city had already released these to the developer — and lease information for Macy's and Robinson's May. After almost a year of litigation, the City Council recently voted to settle the case, release the remaining documents, and pay SMCLC's attorney's fees, totaling about \$36,000. The stonewalling occurred primarily from the City Attorney's office, even after at least one councilmember tried to intervene and shake the documents loose. It wasn't until a last-resort lawsuit by SMCLC that the city started to cooperate. Why shouldn't residents have the right to know what's going on with development in our own city? Why does it take a citizens' group and a lawsuit to ensure transparency in our government? This is a classic example of how our city is essentially run by unelected staff who make key decisions on a daily basis. Perhaps charter reform is in order? That really ought to bring out the Mr. Hydes in City Hall.

(Elizabeth Riel is a Santa Monica resident. Write her at elizriel@yahoo.com.)

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COMMENTARY



GUEST COMMENTARY BY JOHN WHITEHEAD

Rising gas prices: How to fight back

I have a friend whose story should be shocking. Instead, it is quickly becoming the norm.

On her way home from work last Friday, she stopped at Sam's Club for groceries and gas. She ran inside and less than a half hour later was filling up at the pump. But it seems that she should have gotten the gas first because it had gone up 25 cents a gallon in the few minutes it took her to grab a few groceries.

As anyone who has to rely on an automobile for transportation knows, gasoline prices have soared in recent weeks. And some prognosticators are warning that by next summer, they could reach \$4 a gallon.

But rising gas prices affect us in many other ways. Since most American cities rely on cross-country truck delivery of food and other goods, when the price of gas goes up, so do the consumer's costs. And it's not just transportation and agriculture that are largely dependent on abundant, cheap oil. Modern medicine, water distribution and national defense are predominantly powered by oil and petroleum-derived chemicals.

Also, many of the consumer goods we buy are made with plastic, which is derived from oil. In addition, all electrical devices — including solar panels and windmills — make use of silver, copper and/or platinum, all of which are discovered, extracted, transported and fashioned using oil-powered machinery.

The U.S. government is blaming the steep gas prices on the war in Iraq, a limited supply of oil and blah, blah, blah. But absent last year's hurricane damage or oil shortage, we have to look elsewhere. The volatility of crude oil prices, which have doubled in the last two years, is supposedly the driving force behind the rise in gas prices. Economists fear the tenuous state of the market, acknowledging that there is no room for disaster or a mistake this year.

And the routine shutdown of some oil refineries to address maintenance and repairs that linger from hurricane damage or were postponed in the oil crisis after the hurricane could have a large effect on the supply needed in the busy summer months. Growing demand, high crude oil costs, requirements for low-sulfur gasoline and greater demand for corn-based ethanol as an additive are also expected to keep consumer prices for motor fuels high. The high prices, however, are not expected to dampen the demand during the April-September heavy driving season. Motorists are expected to use an average 9.4 million barrels of gasoline a day, or 1.5 percent

more than last summer.

With consumer driving habits unaltered and prices edging higher daily, the sluggish U.S. Congress has taken some action. The Senate Judiciary Committee recently introduced a bill that would increase competition in the oil and gas industries, therefore reducing the monopolies and large profit margins currently enjoyed by several giant companies.

But who is really to blame here? Chrysler's chief spokesman, Jason Vines, recently took a swipe at big oil, stating, "big oil would rather fill the pockets of its executives and shareholders rather than spend sufficient amounts to reduce the price of fuel, (therefore) letting consumers ... pick up the tab."

Referring to a recent Exxon Mobil ad that blamed auto companies for the rising price of gas, Vines said, "despite a documented history of blowing their exorbitant profits on outlandish executive salaries and stock buybacks, and hoarding their bounty by avoiding technologies, policies and legislation that would protect the population and environment and lower fuel costs, big oil insists on transferring all of that responsibility on the auto companies."

Nearly all American auto companies are losing money, while the oil giants are raking in record profits. The sharp rise in gas prices has severely lessened demand for the auto industry's most profitable vehicles such as SUVs. Now that the auto industry is taking a large hit with the ever-increasing prices, auto executives are ready to fight back against greedy oil giants.

Exxon Mobil leads the world's oil companies in profits but has also set a record for both quarterly profits and overall net income. Profits for the fourth quarter reached \$10.7 billion and yearly totals exceeded \$36 billion, up nearly 31 percent from the previous year.

What can be done? Big oil has us over a barrel, so to speak, but we can fight back. There is a movement slowly building to boycott big oil. To quote from a recent e-mail: "for the rest of the year, don't purchase any gasoline from the two biggest companies (which now are one), Exxon and Mobil. If they are not selling any gas, they will be inclined to reduce their prices. If they reduce their prices, the other companies will have to follow suit."

Sounds good to me. Join the resistance.

(Constitutional attorney and author John W. Whitehead is founder and president of The Rutherford Institute. He can be contacted at johnw@rutherford.org.)

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STATE BRIEFS

Supervisors ink deal for voting system

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — County supervisors voted to spend as much as \$45 million to upgrade a low-tech polling system that requires voters to mark ballots rather than adopt electronic voting machines, as other counties have done.

Sticking with the InkaVote system was less risky than progressing to another method, county registrar Conny McCormack told supervisors Tuesday before the decision. She advised delaying the acquisition of a new electronic system that would probably cost more than \$100 million until better systems and standards have been developed.

The InkaVote system requires voters to mark their ballots with a pen-like device, rather than using a touch-screen computer.

The current method has saved Los Angeles County from problems encountered by other counties that bought electronic systems, McCormack said.

Some of those systems proved unreliable or didn't meet stringent standards being adopted nationwide. The upgrade approved by supervisors was required under new federal standards to allow disabled voters to use the InkaVote system.

DA's son gets a hard taste of the law

By The Associated Press

FULLERTON — The son of Orange County District Attorney Tony Rackauckas was sentenced to 60 days in jail after pleading guilty to driving drunk with his 5-year-old daughter in the car.

Matthew Anthony Rackauckas, 37, of Corona drifted into an adjacent lane on a freeway in August and hit another vehicle, authorities said.

He smelled of alcohol and had trouble standing when he left his car to talk to the other motorist, authorities said.

California Highway Patrol officers arrested him for investigation of driving with a blood-alcohol level almost twice the legal limit.

Rackauckas, who had a prior drunk driving conviction in Riverside, initially pleaded not guilty to charges of driving while intoxicated and child endangerment.

But on Tuesday he admitted one count of drunk driving with the special allegations of having a minor in the car and a prior conviction.

The case was prosecuted by the state attorney general's office because of the potential conflict of interest involving his father.

Deputy Attorney General Melissa A. Mandel said the plea bargain offered to Rackauckas included five years probation, fees and penalties.

A judge agreed to stay his sentence while the county Probation Department determines whether he's eligible for home confinement.

Matthew Rackauckas is the second son of the district attorney to get in trouble with the law since he took office in 1998. Anthony C. Rackauckas pleaded guilty to drug possession charges in 2000 after officials found him asleep in the nude with about two grams of cocaine and a pipe in his truck.

Coachella Valley done with balancing act

By The Associated Press

DESERT HOT SPRINGS — City Council members narrowly voted not to endorse a plan to balance development and preservation in the Coachella Valley.

The council gave the Coachella Valley Association of Governments until May 9 to amend the plan that covers more than a million acres.

The Coachella Valley Multiple Species Habitat Conservation Plan would allow fees to be collected from new development to buy and preserve property in a reserve system that would support 27 species of plants and animals.

It would address development and preservation from the San Gorgonio Pass to the Salton Sea over most of the century.

Critics throughout the region are balking at the impact of the proposal on areas where projects are already in the works.

“It's necessary to send a strong message that they have to make some changes in order for us to change from a no vote to a yes,” Councilwoman Yvonne Parks said after Tuesday's 3-2 vote.

Last week, Cathedral City officials voted down the plan pending amendments. Officials in Indio also expressed concerns.

Opponents in Desert Hot Springs said they don't want to include land the city hopes will be the site of a College of the Desert campus.

The city is also concerned about the inclusion of county land it's working to annex where developers want to create a golf course designed by Phil Mickelson.

Booby-trapper can pencil in his future

By The Associated Press

POMONA, Calif. — An 18-year-old charged with rigging pens to explode at two high schools pleaded not guilty to nine felony counts.

Brian Rocha was arraigned Tuesday on three counts of explosion of a destructive device causing bodily injury and two counts of possession of a destructive device near a school, among other felony charges. Trial was scheduled for June 5.

Authorities said Rocha, who was expelled from Rosemead High School, booby-trapped pens to detonate when uncapped. The victims found pens on the ground in or near Rosemead and El Monte high schools.

A construction worker, a woman and student suffered minor burns and scratches on their hands and faces when the pens went off last year.

Rocha could face more than 25 years in prison if convicted on all charges.

STATE



Divisions emerging over immigration boycotts

BY PETER PRENGAMAN
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Organizers of the movement that has led hundreds of thousands of immigrants onto the nation's streets are divided over their next big protest — a May 1 boycott urging workers and students to stay home.

Boycott backers want to highlight the economic toll if constructions sites and restaurants are undermanned, crops untended and hotels uncleaned. They also hope empty classrooms will demonstrate that immigration reform is a major issue for future voters.

Doubters fear alienating federal lawmakers who are still wavering over how to reshape U.S. immigration policy.

Among them are figures from unions and religious and Hispanic groups who have mustered nationwide marches supporting a chance at U.S. citizenship for an estimated 11 million illegal immigrants. These leaders support a protest May 1 — but after school is out and businesses are closed.

If the split suppresses participation, even boycott backers acknowledge their movement will lose momentum.

"Our credibility as a community is on the line," said Armando Navarro, coordinator of the National Alliance for Human Rights, a Southern California organization pushing the boycott. "We've shown our power politically, but if we can't show it economically we are going to lose it."

Some organizers hope to see turnout so large that it will protect participants from retribution.

"If immigrants continue demonstrating in large numbers, are they going to fire all of them?" said Julita Rincon, 21, an illegal immigrant and University of Houston student who leads a student activist organization.

Boycott opponents argue that skipping work and school could sour mainstream support and even get thousands of immigrants fired.

"If they lost their jobs, there would be nothing we could do," said Ana Maria Archila, executive director of the Latin American Integration Center. Her New York City group plans alternative May 1 activities, such as persuading businesses to close for 30 minutes in honor of immigrants.

Sporadic but mostly mild criticism of

the boycott began soon after organizers announced it in early March. But skepticism has been intensifying and Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony, an outspoken supporter of illegal immigrants, discouraged it during Easter Mass.

"Go to work. Go to school," said Mahony. "And then join thousands of us at a major rally afterward."

Leaders of the Service Employees International Union, which has gotten thousands to rallies and helped with crowd control, said they can't endorse a boycott because of collective bargaining agreements. And some feel it's premature, anyway.

Before leaving town two weeks ago, the Senate nearly voted on immigration legislation that included a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, noted Jaime Contreras, a union spokesman and chairman of an influential immigration group in Washington, D.C.

"You are using the last weapon in your arsenal now?" asked Contreras. If senators move toward more punitive legislation, "then what are you going to do?"

And effective boycotts aren't easy to organize. A one-day boycott to protest the 2003 repeal of a California law letting undocumented immigrants get drivers licenses had sporadic participation and didn't change public policy.

Boycott supporters say they're working to mend divisions.

Still, strains are showing. In Los Angeles, the March 25th Coalition — named for the day 500,000 people rallied here — sent a mass e-mail clarifying who was authorized to speak for the group after a few loosely affiliated organizations questioned the boycott.

Boycott supporters also have criticized the disengagement of Spanish-language deejays such as El Piolin, a nationally syndicated morning show host.

El Piolin, whose real name is Eduardo Sotelo and whose nickname means "Tweety Bird," was one of a handful of Los Angeles-based deejays who supercharged turnout March 25. Since then, he's been more reserved in his calls to activism — and openly opposes students skipping school May 1.

"We have to demonstrate that we came here to succeed," said Sotelo. "There are different ways to show we love the United States, we just have to make sure we don't damage anyone."

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California schools caught in squeeze between laws

BY MARTHA MENDOZA
AP National Writer

STANFORD, Calif. — Troy Henderson leans close to his paper, composing letters with all the academic intensity of a first grader. He notices he’s being watched by the school principal and sets down his pencil.

“Hello Mr. Prehn,” he says, smiling broadly.

“Hello Troy,” responds Gary Prehn. “How’s your father? Did you know I used to teach him?”

Escondido Elementary School principal Gary Prehn knows all of his 480 students, he really knows them, their names, their strengths, their weaknesses, their parents, their interests. He sends them each birthday greetings. He knows who is excellent with a hula hoop, who is struggling to write essays.

But he refuses to count them.

“Our mission here is to educate children to the best of our ability, and that’s where I spend my time and energy. Not getting into the political games of the No

Child Left Behind Act,” he said.

Despite student performance that is well above California’s average, Escondido has been caught in a nuance of the federal law that puts major funding and a well-earned reputation at risk.

Overall, California’s schools lag behind most of the nation on almost every measurement of student achievement, funding, teacher qualifications and school facilities, according to a 2005 RAND Corporation analysis. Last year, 3,618 of California’s 9,223 schools failed to meet at least one of the No Child Left Behind standards.

Those strict mandates, now entering their fifth year, have been widely criticized in California. Education Secretary Jack O’Connell argues the state’s own school rating system, the 1999 Academic Performance Indicator, should be allowed to replace the federal law.

“Without this change, we will continue to experience the confusing and frustrating situation where one day a school is lauded for its performance gains and then on the next day condemned as a failure,” O’Connell said.

Hold that thought: Officials eye restrooms for Third St.

GOTTA GO, from page 1

parking structure No. 4, which will undergo a seismic retrofitting and slight remodel in January that will include the creation of a trash bin room, equipped with a “mister” and grease trap to keep offensive odors from wafting into the adjacent alley, city officials said.

The remodel will allow for a new bathroom of roughly 20 square feet, according to preliminary drawings by City Hall’s design team, but members of Bayside are hoping some handicapped parking spaces can be relocated to make room for a larger restroom for both men and women.

“Unsupervised restrooms have caused problems for years, and on top of that they’re hard to locate,” Bayside board member Barbara Bryan said during a meeting of the organization’s land and asset committee, which supports a new restroom facility in the parking structure. The structure is located behind the Promenade on Second Street, just south of Arizona Avenue.

“By having one large, centrally located restroom with an attendant, we can make it easier for folks to find it, and easier to monitor and keep clean,” Bryan added. “I see (the retrofitting of structure four) as a golden opportunity that should not be wasted.”

The debate about the lack of bathrooms downtown has dragged on for several years as city officials grapple with where to put them and the costs associated with purchasing or leasing property to build them.

“The current layout of restrooms in the old parking structures is not ideal and I think they are frequently not kept up as well as we would like them to be because so many people use them and some don’t treat them so nicely,” said Councilman Richard Bloom. “This has been something we have discussed a number of times over the years, and hopefully, we will be addressing it soon in a very meaningful way.”

Meanwhile, tourists and other visitors to the Promenade have often found them-

selves “holding it” while in search of a bathroom.

Currently, there are six public restrooms located around the Promenade, one in each of the parking structures. Five are open, said Kathleen Rawson, the executive director of Bayside.

The restroom in parking structure No. 5 was damaged in a fire more than a year ago and has since been closed.

There also are restrooms in Santa Monica Place which are heavily used, along with bathrooms in restaurants or private businesses, and retail stores. But many have found that some stores do not have bathrooms for customers, leaving some to wander, frantically looking for a place to answer nature’s call.

“Restrooms are a serious concern because if Santa Monica Place closes its doors, we could lose access to those restrooms and that would put us in a terrible situation,” Rawson said of the imminent redevelopment of the mall.

It is too early in the process to determine what the desired restroom facility would cost or how it would be paid for.

“It’s really all speculation at this point,” Rawson said.

City Hall could pick up the tab, or businesses in the Bayside District could pay for it out of assessments collected annually by the organization.

Don’t expect the bathroom to rival New York City’s Bryant Park restroom facility, which underwent a \$200,000 renovation that helped it earn an award for America’s best bathroom in 2002. The bathroom caught the fancy of many downtown property and business owners at a recent meeting when the amenity was presented as an example in the discussion of what new assessments could buy.

“We’re not talking about gold-plated fixtures or an attendant to hand out mints,” Rawson said. “We are just looking for a bathroom that meets the needs of visitors that is clean and easy to locate. I think that’s all people are looking for.”



‘Columbine Story’ is one survivor’s means of putting the past behind

BY ROBERT WELLER
Associated Press Writer

LITTLETON, Colo. — Striking with raven hair, 16-year-old sophomore Marjorie Lindholm was a cheerleader with a 3-plus grade-point average. She wanted to be a doctor back then, back when she was just a student at Columbine High School.

When the slaughter started seven years ago Thursday, Lindholm ended up locked in a classroom with other students and one of her teachers, Dave Sanders. She was there for four hours while 12 classmates were gunned down by suicidal teens Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold. She watched Sanders bleed to death from his wounds.

Now 24, Lindholm believes she is only now starting to heal from the deadliest school shooting in the nation’s history. Writing a book with her mother helped.

“I’m back in school,” Lindholm says of her studies at Arapahoe Community College. “I’m on the dean’s list. But I am doing it online. It feels better. That was the biggest thing I ever had to get over in my life. And I am starting to get over it.”

Many survivors have moved on, but healing has been difficult for others. Sean Graves was shot four times and paralyzed from the waist down. Mark Taylor was hit by

more than a dozen bullets and his father left the family in 2001 after 34 years of marriage. Anne Marie Hochhalter’s mother killed herself 18 months after the massacre.

Brooks Brown, a friend of the two killers, was outside the school smoking a cigarette when the shooting began. He was briefly named a suspect by authorities, outraging family members who had tried to warn sheriff’s deputies that Harris had threatened Brown and was building bombs.

“It made it exponentially worse to be told you’re a murderer,” Brown says. “But it was kind of a blessing too because I had to deal with it immediately. Now I am doing great. I am busy doing all kinds of video work” as a small company called Zodiac Productions.

“It tends to get a little easier each year,” says Angela Adkins, Sanders’ daughter. “I work so much I don’t have time to stop and think about it.”

Angela and husband Chet own a tattoo parlor and try to keep up with her 3-year-old son, Damien.

“I lost my dad but I cannot even imagine being one of those kids in that school and watching it happen,” she says.

Dawn Anna, mother of victim Lauren Townsend, made an Emmy-nominated movie with Lifetime Television. Brian Rohrbough, whose son, Daniel, was killed, has adopted two Ukrainian infants with his wife. Tom and Linda Mauser, who also lost a son named Daniel, adopted a Chinese infant. Rohrbough continues to fight for the release of information about the massacre, and Mauser battles on for gun control.

Columbine Principal Frank DeAngelis went through a divorce after throwing himself into his work, but is now engaged to his high school sweetheart.

For Lindholm, healing has come through sharing her memories of April 20, 1999.

“Within seconds, the whole building began to shake, and I heard the unmistakable sound of gunshots and extremely loud screaming. The gunfire was so loud that it didn’t seem like normal guns could make that much noise,” she writes in “A Columbine Survivor’s Story.”

“There were so many sounds, glass breaking, gunfire, explosions. My mind could only wonder what was going on outside the door. I could feel my body jolt with each shot.”

About 20 students and teachers sheltered in the science classroom, two doors down from the library, the main killing field.

Sanders, her typing teacher, was brought into the room, with gunshot wounds to his neck and upper back. Students covered him in a blanket, and took pictures of his family out of his wallet and showed them to him, hoping to keep him conscious.

“I can’t breathe and I’m not going to make it,” he said, according to Lindholm’s recollection.

Lindholm, fearing she would die, too, chastised herself for sneaking out of the house that morning wearing a tank top so her dad couldn’t order a more modest attire. She had wanted to impress a boy.

“I’ve heard that a person’s life flashes before their eyes when they are about to die. I always thought that was a tired cliché, but it really does happen,” she wrote.

The rescue was as terrifying as the wait. “Suddenly, we heard screaming from the adjacent science room. Men dressed in black and carrying guns rushed into our room and began screaming at us,” she wrote. It was a SWAT team and they were led out at gunpoint.”

Lindholm and her mother, Peggy, began writing the book from journals kept by the daughter. The 102-page work was published last year by Regenold Publishing of Littleton.

Much of the book focuses on her life before and after Columbine, but it does include description of that awful day.

“When I got her back that night she had totally shut down,” says Peggy Lindholm, a licensed counselor. “She was a different person. Marjorie just kept having nightmares. She suffered so much.”

Added her younger brother, David: “For a couple of years she got real distant. She was uncomfortable and didn’t want to talk about it.”

Like all the Columbine survivors, Marjorie was offered counseling but it fell flat.

“They kept asking me all these questions about Columbine and I felt like I was being questioned more than helped. So I didn’t go back,” she says. “I just didn’t want to talk about it anymore.”

Conservative religious group airing anti-preschool spots

BY JULIET WILLIAMS
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — A California affiliate of the conservative Christian group Focus on the Family has begun airing radio ads opposing a June ballot initiative that would raise taxes on the wealthiest Californians to pay for universal preschool.

The California Family Council began running the commercials against Proposition 82 at the beginning of April on KKLA, a Los Angeles Christian talk radio station, said the council’s spokeswoman, Lynne Fishel. The ads have run during James Dobson’s nationally syndicated radio show Focus on the Family, but the station has discretion about when to play them, she said.

Dobson is the founder and chairman of Focus on the Family, based in Colorado Springs, Colo., which claims its publications and broadcasts reach more than 200 million people worldwide.

The one-minute spots, narrated by council president Ron Prentice, say the Preschool for All Initiative sponsored by Hollywood director Rob Reiner would set up a costly state-run preschool system for all 4-year-olds that would yield few benefits.

“Child development experts agree: the best place for a 4-year-old child is in a healthy home environment. Instead, Proposition 82 will increase the state’s influence over children and families,” Prentice says on the spot.

The initiative is one of two measures on California’s June 6 primary election ballot. It would levy a 1.7 percent tax on individuals who earn more than \$400,000 a year or couples who earn more than \$800,000, raising an estimated \$2.4 billion in its first year.

Supporters say the program would offer high-quality, voluntary preschool programs with trained teachers. Proposition 82 spokesman Nathan James said most of the groups opposing the measure object to any new funding for public schools and have not presented alternatives.

“They are not opposing it on the policy grounds that they say they are, but because they are opposed to increasing any new funding for public education,” James said. “Their agenda is all about supporting cuts in education that hurt kids.”

Fishel said the California Family Council does not oppose more public funding for education, but rather considers individual spending proposals on their merit. She said Reiner’s preschool initiative is not an effective use of taxpayer money.

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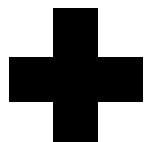
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DA says Juarez case still under review

MURDER CHARGES, from page 1

to face two counts of first-degree murder with special circumstances; two counts of attempted murder; four counts of personal use of a firearm; four counts of participating in a street gang and committing the crime in furtherance of the gang.

They are both currently serving time in state prison. Robles, also known as "Puppet," is currently serving an eight-year sentence in Corcoran State Prison. He was convicted of voluntary manslaughter in February 2001. Garcia, also known as "Psycho," was convicted of carjacking and assault with a deadly weapon with a firearm causing great bodily injury in May 1999. He is currently in Ironwood State Prison.

Robles' criminal past includes attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon and weapons violations. Garcia's criminal past includes burglary, auto theft and narcotics violations.

Evidence recovered at the crime scene was processed with current DNA technology. The DNA evidence was sent to the California Department of Justice, Bureau of Forensics Services DNA Laboratory and entered into their databank of known offenders. The samples submitted were matched with Robles and Garcia, according to SMPD Lt. Frank Fabrega.

Once the DA's office files the pending charges, Robles and Garcia would then be taken to the Santa Monica Jail, where they would be booked and then arraigned in Los Angeles Superior Court, at which time they would enter their pleas. The charges could be filed this week or early next week, Robison said.

Meanwhile, the victims' father is anxious to see justice. Bill Juarez has been waiting for movement on the case for seven and a half years.

"I'm glad this part of the story is over and I'm waiting for the other half of the book," he said. "The sooner the better."

Juarez said he'll attend the court proceedings and the trial despite how emotionally difficult it might be.

"Forgiveness is mine to give because of God," he said. "What I hope is that he forgives and their families get some relief ... Maybe these guys have turned out to be role models and anybody who follows in their path, that is where they are going to be."

Juarez has relied on his family for strength, which includes eight children and seven grandchildren. They gathered this past Easter to celebrate the break in the case and finding some sense of closure, at least with this chapter in their nightmare.

"I take nothing for granted at this point," he said. "Whatever time I have to spend with those I love, I will. I'm not tak-

"I'm glad this part of the story is over and I'm waiting for the other half of the book. The sooner the better."

BILL JUAREZ
Victim's father

ing that chance."

Juarez, who lives in Cayucos, Calif., said it's been difficult over the years because each time a conversation ensues on the street with someone he knows, the issue of his murdered sons and the unsolved case becomes a topic.

"It always made me think that maybe (the police) aren't doing enough," said Juarez, adding he is grateful for the SMPD's diligent work and ongoing investigation.

SMPD Chief James T. Butts Jr. and Mayor Bob Holbrook called Juarez on Friday to relay the news to him.

"I didn't hear a lot because my mind kept saying 'they caught them,'" Juarez said. "(Butts and Holbrook) promised to be with the case since the beginning."

It hasn't been easy for the Juarez family, but it appears that they have moved on with their lives since losing Michael and Anthony. Michael Juarez's daughter, who was 3 years old at the time of her father's

death, is now 10 and excelling in school and her piano playing despite having little stability. Her mother, Michael Juarez's wife, turned to drugs and has been in and out of jail since his death, according to Bill Juarez. But now, she has graduated from cosmetology school and is doing well, he added.

Living in his father's triplex in Cayucos with his wife and daughter at the time of the shooting, Michael Juarez owned and operated a landscaping business. His younger brother Anthony lived next door with his girlfriend and was going to college with the hopes of earning a degree in business administration and landscape architecture. His plan was to help Michael Juarez run the landscaping business.

In light of the break in the case, Bill Juarez still wishes that someone who knew those responsible for his sons' deaths would have come forward over the years.

"Those people should have done something," he said. "They couldn't find it in their heart to come forward to help ease the pain."

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Going West, young man? Better take your wallet

The Associated Press

Average rents in major Western markets:
Metropolitan area: average March 31 rent, percent change from previous year.
Los Angeles/Orange counties: \$1,484, +6.7 percent
Ventura County, Calif.: \$1,380, +5.3 percent
San Francisco/Oakland: \$1,374, +5.0 percent
San Jose, Calif.: \$1,359, +5.8 percent
San Diego: \$1,261, +3.1 percent
San Bernardino/Riverside counties: \$1,097, +7.3 percent
Solano County, Calif.: \$1,089, +2.4 percent
Sacramento, Calif.: \$929, +1.4 percent
Seattle: \$922, +5.4 percent
Denver: \$856, +0.7 percent
Las Vegas: \$834, +6.0 percent
Reno, Nev.: \$827, +4.7 percent
Portland: \$757, +2.9 percent
Phoenix: \$772, +6.3 percent
Fresno, Calif.: \$747, +3.5 percent
Colorado Springs, Colo.: \$711, -0.8 percent
Boise, Idaho: \$710, +1.6 percent
Salt Lake City: \$683, +2.4 percent
Albuquerque, N.M.: \$673, +3.4 percent
Tucson, Ariz.: \$626, unchanged.

Interest rates aid landlords

FLAT OUT PRICEY, from page 1

Springs dipped by nearly 1 percent to \$711.

Tucson, Ariz., offered the West's least expensive apartment rents at \$626 in March, unchanged from a year ago.

The recent rent increases in the San Francisco Bay area underscored a significant shift in the region's economy and real estate market.

The dot-com bust of 2000 and 2001 resulted in mass layoffs that prompted many people to either leave the Bay Area or share homes with friends or family.

That trend drove up apartment vacancies and forced landlords to lower their rents by hundreds of dollars. In Santa Clara County, for instance, plunged 35 percent from a March 2001 peak of \$1,965 to \$1,277 at the end of 2004.

Although it hasn't returned to the boom times, the region's high-tech sector has been steadily adding more jobs — a phenomenon that is helping apartment landlords fill their units.

Until recently, the lowest mortgage rates in more than a decade had enabled many apartment renters to buy homes for the first time. Now that rates are climbing again, it's becoming more difficult to qualify for a home loan, forcing more people to continue renting.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

Yuan Miao will give a ceremonial "blessing." Suzanne Teng, Gilbert Levy and friends will offer mystical journeys to guests.

Other musical performances will include Berry Oakley, Jr., the guitarist and son of the original Allman Brothers Blues band bass player, who will be joined by Barry Newton on upright bass and "soul sista" Stephanie Lallouz. Together they will attempt to touch the musical hearts of the audience. Tim O'Gara and Brendon O'Halloran will then help the audience discover and dance to the beat of Topanga.

Gaia Mama will provide chanting, Tibetan bowls and healing overtones.

There will be additional performances by Super Broke Brass and Tin Ensemble, Dan Ponke, the Cosmic Dream Tribe and a "Dynamic Healing Meditation with Saul David Raye and Lola Babylon.

A hand drumming workshop will be led by Alex Spurkel, and the drums will be provided by Bang a Drum.

Recycled materials sculptures by artists Marc Herbst and Dennis King will be on exhibit. Star Oakland will host face and body painting. Information booths on outdoor activities will be provided by REI with activities and games for all ages.

Proceeds from the Topanga Earth Day Festival will benefit local community groups working to educate, preserve and restore the natural environment. This year's beneficiaries will be the Turtle Project and Stream Team and the Center for Land Base Learning.



Photo courtesy

The Cosmic Dream Tribe (above) and Steph and Berry will be two of the several musical guests performing during the Topanga Earth Day event on Sunday.



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Business

Control spending and increase savings



MARKET MATTERS
BY BRIAN HEPP

It's no secret that personal credit card debt is currently at an all-time high, and it keeps growing every day. And it probably won't come as a shock that the personal savings rate in the United States, coincidentally, is at its lowest level since the Great Depression. Although some forms of debt may be necessary, allowing your debt to get out of control can rob you of valuable savings opportunities. Reining in credit card and other types of debt will allow you to focus your efforts on establishing and growing your financial nest egg.

As consumers today, we have many alternatives available to us to buy now and

pay later. But while those offers may be tempting, we could learn a valuable lesson from previous generations who didn't have access to some of these things. Saving money first is not only a good idea for avoiding going into debt for larger purchases, it's also a good habit to get into for our finances in general.

Developing disciplined investment habits isn't always easy, at least at first, but there are several things you can do to improve your savings routine. One of the easiest ways to establish a systematic savings plan is by taking advantage of the convenience of electronic funds transfer (EFT). You may be familiar with this type of service if you currently receive or make electronic deposits to your bank account. This service is also available from other financial services firms, and paying yourself first by using an EFT system can help you get in the habit of saving.

Direct deposit allows you the opportunity to deposit all or part of your paycheck

into the account of your choice, so you could choose to set aside a certain portion of your pay to go directly to a savings account as opposed to your checking account. Another way to take advantage of EFT is to set up an automatic monthly deposit. This is a simple, disciplined way to add to your savings, authorizing a specific amount to be transferred from one of your accounts to another (i.e. from checking to a savings or investment account).

Many times people feel that if they can't put away a considerable amount of money each month, then a savings program just won't be worth it. In reality, you can accumulate funds and reach your investment goals by investing even just a modest amount — but the key is to be consistent. If you think such a simple strategy won't make a significant difference, consider the following example.

Let's say you decide to save just \$50 per month in your savings plan. After 10 years, you would have saved a total of

\$6,000. However, if you had invested that money in a basic account that earned a six percent rate of return, the value of your account after 10 years would be more than \$8,000.

As you can tell from this example, saving just a small amount can pay dividends and get your finances on the right track. Avoiding debt in all forms may be a difficult proposition, but if you can keep it to a minimum and focus your efforts on simple savings strategies, your financial situation will be in better shape for it.

(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.)

Investing in health care produces ailing returns



THE WEEKLY RECKONING
BY BILL BONNER

Two Swiss economists took it upon themselves to study how professionals charge for their services. They were interested in how doctors and mechanics, for example, earned their money. These pros have a unique advantage over other service providers. Their clients think they need something from them but they don't know what it is. Not surprisingly, a mechanic who specializes in exhaust systems will find they need a new muffler. A doctor who operates on the brain will tend to want to open up their crania. Not surprisingly, too, the better informed the client, the less the intervention. Doctors, for example, went under the knife less often than other patients. And lawyers' wives had the fewest hysterectomies.

Doctors, mechanics — and to some extent, stockbrokers — offer what econo-

mists refer to as "credence goods," or faith-based services. The client trusts the service provider to tell him what he needs. The less he knows about the subject, the more he tends to "need." The article in the Economist did not say so, but we will venture a guess: He will "need" even more if the costs are borne by someone else.

A lumpen American believes his needs are as endless as his faith. Dollars? Give him more! Defense? He can't get enough of it. Education? "The more you get, the better off you are," he says. Health care? He actually believes that the more he consumes the products of the health care industry, the healthier he will be. He must think that the creator made him with defects, which would only be corrected by the intervention of

the 21st health care establishment.

Maybe his sawbones and pill pushers could improve on millions of years of evolutionary development. That is the humbug promise of modern life — of all the world improvers — of technology and democracy, isn't it? That a pill will make us healthier than nature intended; that a surgeon will make us handsomer; that a big screen TV will make us happier than a little one; that Wall Street can make us richer; that universities can make us smarter, and the Pentagon will make us safer?

Who wouldn't believe it? And yet, the gods must laugh. For in every industry and every business — in every life — they've already planted the weeds of corruption, creeping into every little crack and cranny, silently invading every empty space until the promises are choked off. The pills make us sick. The big screen bores us. The surgeon makes us look like a clown, a fool or a ghost. We spend years in school and know less than when we went in. The central bank that was supposed to protect our money destroys it, and the government that is supposed to protect us ends up turn-

ing the whole world against us.

We don't know what the average man thinks, but we have thoughts of our own. We wonder what portion of the billions and billions of dollars spent on health care actually make people healthier. After the billions spent on lawyers, administrators, insurance agents, form processors, meetings, drug mongering, edifices, unnecessary lawyer-proofing procedures, regulatory chicanery and incompetence, puerile testing, patching up the reckless and the criminal in emergency wards. After giving medical umbrellas to people without the sense to come in out of the rain, and trying to keep St. Peter at bay for days, weeks or years with life-support systems and death-defying medical stunts — how much is left? Not much. That is our guess.

Health care — like education, hangings, paper money, pornography, and democracy — reaches its point of diminishing returns quickly. Too much, and you are going backwards.

(For more insight and analysis, visit www.dailyreckoning.com.)

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SANTA MONICA BUSINESS BRIEFS

Improving golf games by taking to the great indoors

By Daily Press staff

Most golfers know the frustrations of trying to improve their game. Despite all of the new technology, the average score has only dropped one stroke per round in the last 12 years.

Finally, there is an alternative at “The Club,” located in Santa Monica, where owners offer what they describe as a sensible solution to the golfing dilemma. Having worked with high-level athletes for the last 20 years, Dr. Reichardt, the founder of www.Golf-Health.com, has created a new model for more simple, effective golf teaching, he said.

The upscale facility is the first PGA-recognized indoor golf teaching facility on the West Coast. PGA teaching professionals utilize a combination of cutting-edge technologies to facilitate students’ learning. Hi-tech computers and advances in the analysis of human learning are being combined to shorten the learning curve.

Anybody who has been around golf knows that quick fix lessons do not work. Improving your game requires a clear plan, dedication and practice, as research by the National Golf Foundation has shown. The same research also proved that structured programs and protocols truly improve the students’ learning and comprehension, and therefore stimulates their motivation.

In the Santa Monica facility, each student’s swing, equipment, mind and body are assessed and measured. Goals are then prioritized and addressed, and a customized program is established to address each student’s specific needs.

Since every golfer is treated as an individual, The Club owners say they can address almost any golfing need, from beginner to the scratch golfer.

Services at “The Club” range from custom club fitting, golf lessons, rehabilitation exercises and stretching. Students have increased their club head speed by as much as 15 percent in one lesson. After having finished the first round of instruction, students are re-evaluated and their improvement is charted. By being able to actually track a student’s improvement, instructors are able to raise the student’s commitment and motivation to the game.

As part of our community outreach program, The Club is currently offering the following classes:

■ Introduction to Golf: This class is one hour per week and goes for four weeks. The class is designed for beginning golfers to remove the entry barriers to the sport.

■ Kids Golf: Get the little ones started.

■ Golf-Stretch: This one hour open class is held Monday evenings, and no golf experience is required.

Historic hotel wants to do lunch

By Daily Press staff

California cuisine by the sea never tasted so good.

So says The Georgian Hotel, operated by Huntington Beach-based Broughton Hospitality Group, which has announced the expansion of its food and beverage operation to include lunch, which is being served daily from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

The new lunch menu features light coastal California dishes. Lunch at the Georgian is served on the veranda which offers guests, locals and tourists views of the Pacific Ocean and Santa Monica Bay.

The lunch menu will feature a number of appetizers and entrees, along with several homemade side orders. Menu items will include brie and mango quesadilla, green goddess shrimp and avocado salad and red snapper linguini.

In addition to the lunch menu, the Georgian unveiled its new signature cocktail, the Georgini, an Art Deco twist on the classic martini.

The hotel also has added a dessert menu which will be available to guests into the evening, both for room service and veranda dining. Desserts include gourmet cheesecakes, carrot cake, ice creams and sorbets, as well as a fruit-filled puff pastry creation.

The Georgian Hotel was built in 1933 as a seaside getaway for the exclusive Hollywood set. Refurbished in 2000, the hotel features 56 guest rooms and 28 suites, most with ocean views, decorated in a warm Art Deco design. The Georgian, located at 1415 Ocean Ave., overlooks Palisades Park. The Georgian Hotel is a member of Historic Hotels of America.

Broughton Hospitality Group is a hospitality management, consulting and development organization that owns and manages a portfolio of top-quality hotel properties throughout California and Mexico.

New CEO named for AIDS foundation

By Daily Press staff

The board of directors of the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation voted unanimously to appoint Pamela Barnes as president and chief executive officer. Barnes has been chief operating officer of the foundation since November 2004 and has been interim CEO since November 2005. The appointment of Barnes, who has guided the foundation through a period of rapid growth and change, puts the organization in a strong position to capitalize on its recent momentum and advance its mission to eradicate pediatric AIDS and provide care for children and families around the world living with HIV/AIDS. Barnes also will serve on the foundation’s board of directors.

As COO of the foundation, Barnes was an important influence during a tremendous period of growth. She will now focus her energy on strengthening the foundation’s unique combination of research, implementation and advocacy on behalf of children in the United States and around the world.

Since 2000, the foundation has reached 1.7 million women with services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV and in the past two years has served 40,000 children and adults with life-saving care and antiretroviral treatment. Barnes also will help drive the foundation’s ongoing advocacy efforts to improve children’s health.

“I am honored and most appreciative of the opportunity to lead a Foundation that gives a much-needed voice to children and families affected by HIV/AIDS,” Barnes said. “We are pointed in the right direction thanks to our committed staff, and now it’s time to work even harder — from the research lab to the most remote village of Africa — so that every child has the chance to grow up healthy.”

In addition to her work with the foundation, Barnes has more than 12 years of non-profit management experience, including a senior management position at the International Trachoma Initiative, an organization dedicated to eliminating the leading cause of preventable blindness in the world. Her experience in global health was bolstered by a mid-career stint as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay where she and her husband Tim worked to secure funding for a library and a high school, and helped set up the first public water system, in Rojas Silva, Paraguay. Ms. Barnes was also a senior executive at Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic in New York. Prior to her non-profit work, Ms. Barnes worked for more than 20 years in investments and corporate finance at GTE and RCA in New York. Ms. Barnes is a graduate of Marymount College and earned an MBA in finance from Fordham University.

Founded in Santa Monica, the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation is the worldwide leader in the fight against pediatric AIDS and other serious and life-threatening diseases affecting children. Our innovative research programs, collaborative training initiatives, advocacy efforts, and rapidly expanding international programs are bringing dramatic changes to the lives of children worldwide.

Restaurants may help reduce dependence on foreign oil with wastes

BY WILLIAM MCCALL

AP Business Writer

VANCOUVER, Wash. — Its first nickname was “R2D2” after the “Star Wars” robot. Now they just call it “the dog” when it’s time to drain the grease at Burgerville USA.

“The dog” is a small, stainless steel tank and pump combination on wheels that the Northwest restaurant chain has pioneered to channel used cooking oil to a biodiesel producer.

“It’s the wave of the future,” said Chris Wurtz, a Burgerville manager who demonstrated “the dog” at a new restaurant at the junction of Interstate 5 and Interstate 205 in Vancouver, just north of Portland, Ore.

With the price of crude oil soaring, the restaurant industry — already the nation’s largest single employer — could make a serious contribution to the fuel supply if most of its waste cooking oil can be recycled as biodiesel, according to industry and renewable fuel experts.

“It really does hold long-term benefits, not only for the restaurant industry, but for the environment on a national basis,” said Hudson Riehle, senior vice president of research for the National Restaurant Association.

At the Burgerville restaurant, Wurtz towed “the dog” to the deep fryer, opened a steel cabinet door, turned a valve and started the oil flowing into the low-slung tank. When he had a big sample, he towed the pump to the back of the restaurant to transfer the old oil into a tall, stainless steel holding tank.

The big tank is fitted with a hose coupling that feeds through the back wall, where a truck from MRP Services, a family-owned plumbing and drain service company, can drive up, connect another hose, and drain the tank.

MRP, in turn, takes the oil to SeQuential Biofuels in Portland, where it is converted to biodiesel.

The arrangement saves Burgerville the cost of hauling away the grease, but it is expected to eventually bring in additional revenue as biodiesel producers develop a competitive market.

“It’s a win-win situation for both the restaurant operator, who now has another viable option for the disposal of old oil, as well as the general public, who benefit from energy conservation and energy source options,” Riehle said.

Used vegetable oil has been either waste or the stuff that restaurants had to pay to haul off to a rendering company that could transform it into raw material for pet food, soaps or cosmetics.

Rising fuel prices, however, are pushing a switch to converting the used cooking oil into renewable biodiesel fuel as a routine part of the restaurant business.

“For us it’s a straightforward proposition,” said Jeff Harvey, chief operating officer of The Holland Inc., parent company of the chain of 39 Burgerville restaurants.

“Waste oil is the largest byproduct of our business, and we use that byproduct to make something of value and contribute back to local communities,” Harvey said.

Burgerville restaurants now produce about 7,500 gallons of oil a month that can be turned into 6,400 gallons of biodiesel, company officials said.

The conversion reduces the need for relying on distant refineries and avoids much of the cost of transport because biodiesel can be produced locally, as other potential biodiesel users and producers have discovered — including Salem, Ore.-based Kettle Foods Inc., which makes potato chips.

“We power three company vehicles, Volkswagen Beetles, with diesel engines we call ‘biobeetles’ — our own little fleet,” said Jim Green, Kettle Foods spokesman.

“We’ve gotten real good in reusing our oil and not having as much waste, but all of our waste does go to be processed into biodiesel,” Green said.



Udall global warming bill irks enviros

BY JENNIFER TALHELM

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Tom Udall offered a plan last month that he hoped would be moderate enough to move Congress to act on greenhouse gases. But his proposal hit a roadblock — the environmentalists who usually are among his biggest fans.

The New Mexico Democrat teamed up with Republican Rep. Tom Petri of Wisconsin on legislation that gradually imposes restrictions on the heat-trapping pollution many scientists believe is warming the earth.

Udall said he was frustrated waiting for Congress to act. He wanted to offer a proposal that would be more acceptable to the energy industry and end the stalemate in Congress.

“We’ve got to try and ... encapsulate ideas in a bill that’s going to move this,” Udall told The Associated Press. “There’s a real urgency. All of these (climate change) scientists are talking about urgency, urgency.”

But his plan is far less stringent than some backed by

environmentalists, and within days, a half-dozen groups — including the National Environmental Trust and the Sierra Club — took their concerns to his office.

They won’t discuss specifics. But Gregory Green, the trust’s representative in New Mexico, said the environmentalists are “cautiously optimistic we can get some changes and be able to support the bill.”

Udall’s experience illustrates the difficulties of trying to regulate global warming. Lawmakers with far more clout than a Democratic House member have failed to make progress on the issue.

Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., last year failed to gain approval for a bill calling for strict mandatory reductions.

While environmentalists say the problem is urgent, many on the industry side of the debate believe the economic effect of regulating emissions could be disastrous if not done carefully.

Even major utilities committed to reducing emissions still depend on burning coal, one of the primary sources of global warming pollutants.

“To get a bill to pass — it would take a heavy-duty collaborative effort,” said Frank Maisano, a utility industry spokesman. “Unfortunately, to this date, because this is such a hard-to-touch issue, we never have been able to

address it in a meaningful way.”

New Mexico Sens. Pete Domenici and Jeff Bingaman, respectively the GOP chairman and top Democrat on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, have taken a more deliberative approach, trying to get all sides to talk about the issue. They held a conference earlier this month in which they invited industry and environmentalists discuss what they wanted to see in a climate change bill.

Both senators agree Congress needs to start considering the issue, and Bingaman has pushed for action. But they said it’s unlikely a bill could pass this year.

Udall said his bill addresses many of the concerns raised during the conference.

Among other things, it sets in advance a baseline for the amount of emissions that industry can produce. The levels would be tied to progress that developing countries are making toward reducing greenhouse gases.

By using the marketplace, the system would gradually encourage industries to reduce their greenhouse gases and challenge them to develop new, cleaner technologies, Udall argues.

But environmentalists have supported plans that set a specific cap on emissions levels and a deadline to achieve improvement.

BUSINESS

Grease is the word

WASTE NOT, from page 13

Carlo Luri, biofuels manager for Bently Agrowdynamics in Minden, Nev., said that each American uses about 10 gallons of cooking oil a year. He said recapturing just half that amount of oil could trim conventional diesel fuel consumption by 1 percent to 2 percent nationally, along with cutting down on pollution. Diesel fuel accounts for about 24 percent of oil refinery production nationally, according to the American Petroleum Institute.

Luri said there also is an economic incentive to recycle old cooking oil because it generally is cheaper than “virgin” vegetable oil produced directly from crops such as soybeans.

In California, the Orange County Sanitation District is taking the recycling process a step further by recovering grease from sewer systems and traps.

But the district would like to develop a system that keeps the grease out of the sewer system altogether.

“We look at it like renewable fuel, if we can get it out of the sewer and get it into the market,” said Nick Arhontes, the engineer who directs regional services for the Southern California agency that already uses biodiesel in its trucks.

“It goes beyond restaurants to school cafeterias, jail cafeterias, hospitals — to get them to have their fats, oils and greases collected and get them into some alternative use,” Arhontes said.

Kelly King, vice president of Pacific Biodiesel Inc. in Hawaii, said the company founded 10 years ago by her husband, Robert King, now converts most of the waste cooking oil collected around the island state.

The couple began on the island of Maui, where Robert King had the contract to maintain generators at the central landfill. He teamed up with University of Idaho researcher Daryl Reece to recycle discarded cooking oil into biodiesel in order to reduce the impact on the environment.

Kelly King noted that Hawaii has already reached the goal of providing 2 percent of the total diesel consumption that Luri said could be reached nationally. Now the challenge is to find more renewable fuel sources.

“We’re already there with used cooking oil,” King said. “We need to come up with another oil seed crop to seriously displace diesel fuel.”

Processing used cooking oil into fuel offers a grassroots alternative to produce biodiesel at the neighborhood and even household level, using readily available equipment such as an old water heater, said Lyle Rudensey, co-founder of The Breathable Bus Coalition and a member of the NW Biodiesel Network.

Rudensey, also known as “BioLyle,” holds biodiesel workshops in the Seattle area.

“Bring your own water heater, and we’ll show you the plumbing and how it works,” he said.

Tiny reactor could make farms self-sufficient

BY WILLIAM MCCALL

AP Business Writer

PORTLAND, Ore. —A tiny chemical reactor that can convert vegetable oil directly into biodiesel could help farmers turn some of their crops into homegrown fuel to operate agricultural equipment instead of relying on costly imported oil.

“This is all about producing energy in such a way that it liberates people,” said Goran Jovanovic, a chemical engineering professor at Oregon State University who developed the microreactor.

The device — about the size of a credit card — pumps vegetable oil and alcohol through tiny parallel channels, each smaller than a human hair, to convert the oil into biodiesel almost instantly.

By comparison, it takes more than a day to produce biodiesel with current technology.

Conventional production involves dissolving a catalyst, such as sodium hydroxide, in alcohol, then stirring it into vegetable oil in large vats for about two hours. The mixture then sits for 12 to 24 hours while a chemical reaction forms biodiesel along with glycerin, a byproduct.

The glycerin is separated and can be used to make other products, such as soaps, but it still contains the chemical catalyst, which must be neutralized and removed using hydrochloric acid, a long and costly process.

The microreactor under development by the university and the Oregon Nanoscience and Microtechnologies Institute eliminates the mixing, the standing time and maybe even the need for a catalyst.

“If we’re successful with this, nobody will ever make biodiesel any other way,” Jovanovic said.

The device is small, but it can be stacked in banks to increase production levels to the volume required for commercial use, he said.

Biodiesel production on the farm also could reduce distribution costs by eliminating the need for tanker truck fuel delivery, part of the growing effort to meet fuel demand locally — instead of relying on distant refineries and tanker transport.

“Distributed energy production means you can use local resources — farmers can produce all the energy they need from what they grow on their own farms,” Jovanovic said.

Chinese president sees Windows of opportunity

BY ALLISON LINN

AP Business Writer

SEATTLE — After a swanky dinner with the world’s richest man, Chinese President Hu Jintao turns his attention to America’s largest exporter, whose sales to China could help ease tensions over a growing trade gap.

Hu, who dined Tuesday night at the home of Microsoft Corp. Chairman Bill Gates, was invited to tour Boeing Co.’s Everett plant on Wednesday, just days after Chinese officials confirmed a commitment to order 80 Boeing 737 jets in a deal valued at \$5.2 billion at list prices. The order has yet to be finalized, and airlines typically negotiate discounts.

Boeing sees China as one of its most important future markets, estimating that the country will require 2,600 new airplanes over the next 20 years.

The big Boeing deal is one of several purchases the Chinese made recently as officials try to ease tensions over the massive trade gap between the two nations. It’s one of several issues President Bush is expected to raise when Hu heads to Washington, D.C., later in his four-day U.S. tour.

Hu’s Thursday summit with Bush is expected to cover a broad agenda, from China’s much-criticized currency and other trade policies, to its aggressive search for oil

and its positions on the developing nuclear programs in Iran and North Korea.

Touring Microsoft’s suburban Redmond campus earlier Tuesday, Hu said he admired what Gates had achieved. He also sought to reassure Gates that China is serious about protecting intellectual property rights, a key concern for the company as it battles widespread piracy of its Windows operating system there.

“Because you, Mr. Bill Gates, are a friend of China, I’m a friend of Microsoft,” Hu said through a translator. “Also, I am dealing with the operating system produced by Microsoft every day,” he added, to laughter.

Gates responded: “Thank you, it’s a fantastic relationship,” and then quipped: “And if you ever need advice on how to use Windows, I’ll be glad to help.”

In a whirlwind visit, Hu — accompanied by Gates, company CEO Steve Ballmer and an entourage of Chinese dignitaries — saw some business technology demonstrations and toured Microsoft’s Home of the Future, which features experimental technology.

Hu began his American visit Tuesday in Everett, about 30 miles north of Seattle, where he was greeted by a local kung fu club and a handful of ribbon dancers from a Seattle elementary school. He also met government and business leaders, including Gov. Chris Gregoire and Starbucks Corp. Chairman Howard Schultz.

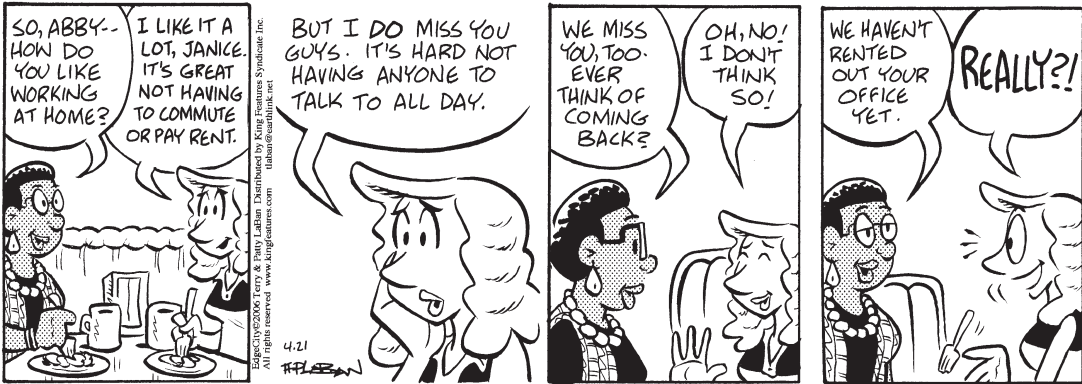


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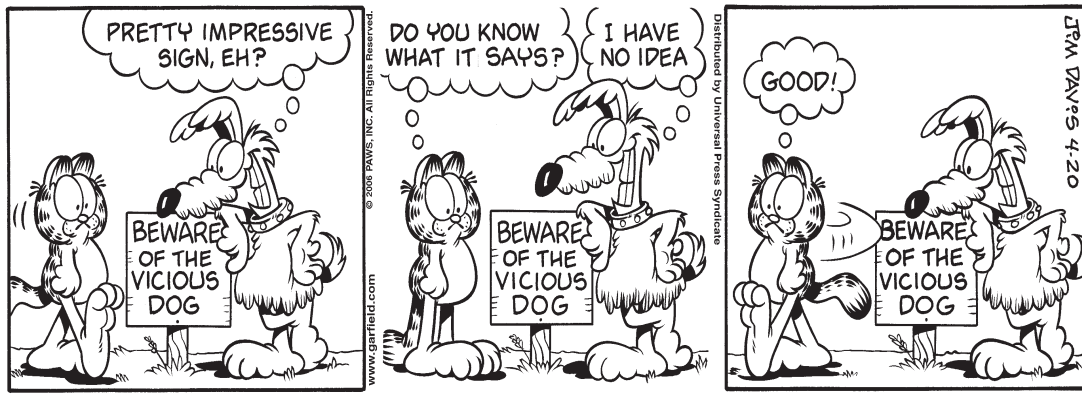
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 - 34 Resolve pencil end
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 - 21 Sources of prosperity
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 - 24 New Mexico city
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 - 27 Weasel's kin
 - 29 Muralist Rivera
 - 30 Nary a soul
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 - 32 T-bone, e.g.
 - 36 Have a late meal

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LUZ OSPITIA, Sadly on April 17th 2006 passed away.

Luz Ospitia was a resident of Santa Monica for over 50 years. Her sense of community and giving put her on a professional path which included the City of Santa Monica, Community Corporation, Wise Senior Services, Political Campaigns, Community Interests, Clubs, Social Benefits and Spiritual Affiliation. Within all of these endeavors there was always one common thread, that was to help her fellow man. She is survived by her Son George, Daughter Anna, Daughter Lois and Daughter in Law Suzanne. She is deeply loved and will be greatly missed.

Memorial Services for Luz Ospitia will be held Sunday April 23rd, 2006 at 10:30 a.m. Iglesia Bautista Barrington at 1903 S Barrington Ave in Los Angeles, CA

Funeral Services for Luz Ospitia Set for Monday April 24th, 2006 at 09:00 a.m. Woodlawn Cemetery at 14th and Pico in Santa Monica, CA. You may contact Gates, Kingsley & Gates Moeller Murphy Directors (310) 395-9988

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