

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

7 13 15 28 31
Meganumber: 9
Jackpot: \$21 Million

FANTASY 5

7 11 18 24 29

DAILY 3

Daytime: 2 1 1
Evening: 7 9 7

DAILY DERBY

1st: 11 Money Bags
2nd: 09 Winning Spirit
3rd: 05 California Classic

RACE TIME: 1:41.70

NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

Porchia Bennett of Philadelphia was last visited by her father, Lester Trapp, when she was 1, then virtually abandoned by her drug-addicted mother, Tiffany Bennett, at age 2, to fall to the custody of Tiffany's drug-addicted sister and the sister's boyfriend, who lived in rat-infested squalor and who are now charged with killing Porchia at age 3 through starvation and physical abuse. In February, Trapp and his parents filed a lawsuit against the city of Philadelphia for failing to protect Porchia (with Tiffany also entitled to share the proceeds as Porchia's "beneficiary").

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 111th day of 2005.
There are 254 days left in the year.

On April 21, 1789, John Adams was sworn in as the first vice president of the United States.

In 1955, 50 years ago, the Jerome Lawrence-Robert Lee play "Inherit the Wind," loosely based on the Scopes trial of 1925, opened at the National Theatre in New York.

In 1960, Brazil inaugurated its new capital, Brasilia, transferring the seat of national government from Rio de Janeiro.

THOUGHT OF THE DAY

The only difference between a rut and a grave is the depth.

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Vandals court disaster on beach

BY KIM CALVERT

Special to the Daily Press

SM BEACH — Apparently, someone doesn't like volleyball.

"In all the years I've been coming down here, I've never seen anything like it," said Santa Monica resident David Heiser.

The 81-year-old retired school teacher, and longtime volleyball fan and player, was referring to the massive amount of broken glass in and around the four volleyball courts located next to the Back to the Beach restaurant at 444 Pacific Coast Highway this past weekend.

Heiser said he warned players — a regular group of about 16 people — to watch out as they arrived for their regular Sunday morning game.

The courts have been a target for vandalism in the past, but it

was limited primarily to cutting and tearing the net, or tearing down the sign-up sheet, according to Heiser.

"Someone seems to be very unhappy with their life," he said. "Whoever is doing this seems to have a problem with other people having fun."

Ed Silverstein, a Santa Monica resident, Daily Press columnist and regular player at the volleyball court said because of Heiser's warning, the teams decided to sift through the sand on the courts before starting their game.

"We were really upset to find so much glass," Silverstein said. "There was all kinds — window glass, bottle glass — and it all appeared to be very sharp and was buried in the sand on the courts with the sharpest edges pointing upwards."



Kim Calvert/Special to the Daily Press

The city's beach volleyball courts have been suspected targets of vandalism.

Silverstein said they also found new, five-inch nails, as well as other nails buried in the sand.

"It looked like it had been done

intentionally," Silverstein said. "Like some depraved person was trying to see someone get hurt."

He said the players often spot-

See ROTATE, page 6

Three cheers for sea floor

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

SM PIER — Time is running out for Santa Monicans to help decide whether the West Coast sea floor should be protected.

Actor Ted Danson, representatives from the environmental group Oceana and the fishing organization United Anglers announced on Wednesday their sustainable fishing plan to keep bottom trawling fishing within 200 miles of the Pacific Coast, except within specified coral areas.

Plan supporters argue bottom trawling fishing — a form of commercial fishing in which a large weighted net is dragged across the ocean floor — is causing immense damage to underwater habitats which will have long-term impacts on wildlife and the availability of fish for consumers to eat.

According to supporters, the federal government will be accepting public comment on its



Devon Meyers/Special to the Daily Press

Actor Ted Danson made an appearance on the Pier on Wednesday to lend support to a plan limiting the allowable coverage area of trawling fishermen.

SoCal renters stand apart in willingness to take a hike

BY MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Business Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Apartment rents are barely fluctuating in almost all of the West's major markets except Southern California, where the rapidly growing population is giving landlords more pricing power, according to a quarterly survey to be released Thursday.

As usual, California accounted for the only major Western markets where average apartments rented for more than \$1,000 a month as of March 31, said RealFacts, a Novato, Calif.-based real estate firm. RealFacts' findings cover 20 Western markets.

The Los Angeles metropolitan area — an expanse that includes Orange County — was the most expensive at \$1,397 per month, a 6 percent increase from the same time last year.

See RAISE THE ROOF, page 7

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You know that, Cancer

Santa Monica Daily Press



JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS The stars show the kind of day you'll have:
★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★-Average ★★-So-so ★-Difficult



ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★ You might want to evaluate more carefully a situation that impacts your life. More information helps you update procedures as well as your point of view. Open up to new possibilities. Emphasize what others think and share. Tonight: Sort through answers.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Use your imagination to the utmost. You find that a partner might have difficulty accepting your very different kind of thinking. Don't try to coax him or her; rather, honor this person's ideas. Still, look at what works for you. Tonight: Work as late as you need to.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★ Others can be downright difficult. Laughter takes you to a new level of understanding with key associates. Humor allows differences but also draws you closer to those around you. Add that creative touch. Tonight: Start thinking about the weekend.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ Speak to others and gain a deeper understanding. Though you need to revise your thinking about your daily life, you will open up to new possibilities. Build on a strong foundation. Honor your values. Tonight: Your home is your castle. You know that.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Deal with finances directly and don't push your limits. Any risk at all could be disastrous. Play the conservative, and you will be much happier. Discussions and inquiries confirm what you are thinking. Stay open. Tonight: Out and about.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★ You spin into the day a power to be dealt with. Listen to someone you care about, but don't necessarily take everything he or she says personally. Take inventory of your finances before you head out the door. Think before you leap. Tonight: Your treat.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★ Take your time interpreting what is happening with a friendship. You could be overly sensitive. Given time, you could work out the problem and feel better. Make a caring gesture later in the afternoon. Tonight: As you like.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★ You easily might take a financial risk with someone you care about. Review a situation carefully before you make a commitment of any kind. Consider taking a low profile, if possible. Take up the role of observer. Tonight: Get some extra R and R.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ Complete your dealings with a parent or someone you need to deal with. Pressure builds because of your own unwillingness to flex and adapt. Friends will warm up your day if you let go of a need to control. Tonight: Where the action is.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ Reach out for more information, especially if you are uncomfortable with a situation as it is. You gain by reading between the lines. Once you verify news and information, you can take a stand. Tonight: A must appearance.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★ You might not need to deal with someone directly in order to salvage your plans. Relate to key people on an individual level. Take the high road, even if you find yourself embroiled in a conflict. Tonight: Where you can listen to music.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★ Others have far more control than you. Why not let them do what they want? You cannot change anyone or anything. A partner or someone you look up to could be tough. Confess to a close loved one how you feel. Tonight: Be part of the team.



Santa Monica Daily Press

Published Monday through Saturday
Phone: (310) 458-PRESS (7737) • Fax: (310) 576-9913
1427 Third Street Promenade, Ste. #202 • Santa Monica, CA 90401 • www.smdp.com

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LOCAL



Healthy pursuit



Photo courtesy
Kids get a running start at last weekend's Saint John's Jimmy Stewart Relay Marathon. The 24th annual event, staged on Sunday at Griffith Park, benefits programs and services at Saint John's Health Center in Santa Monica.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Women get by with a little help from their friends

By Daily Press staff

With the help of local agencies and City Hall, several women have reached independence that might not have been possible otherwise.

At the city of Santa Monica Housing Authority and St. Joseph Center's joint Fourth Annual Graduation and Awards Ceremony, "Turning the Tide of Opportunity," held on April 13 at the Ken Edwards Center, certificates were awarded to seven women who have successfully completed the Housing Authority's



Photo courtesy
(left to right) Rhonda Meister, SJC executive director; Kathy McTaggart, FSSP coordinating committee; Peter Mezza, city of Santa Monica, housing authority administrator; Leticia Garcia Greenman, SJC family services director; Julie Lansing, Santa Monica Housing Authority; Judy Alexander, SJC associate director; Kevin McCardle, SJC board member; Kristina Eppler, SJC family center manager.

See BRIEFS, page 8

CORRECTION — In the April 20 edition, the name of the band in the photo caption on page 3 was incorrect. The band's name is 'Count of Four.'



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SURF REPORT

On Thursday, expect some NW ground swell and some energy from a system in the western Pacific that traveled at a low latitude towards our region. Calculations are pointing to 16-second ground swell from about 290 degrees with size running waist- to possibly chest-high around west facing breaks, with the best size on Friday once this swell completely fills in.

Today the water is:

57°

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

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	11:37	0.5	11:42	3.1	3:05	4.1	7:25	3.7
SUNDAY	N/A	N/A	12:26	0.3	4:50	4.1	7:34	3.9
MONDAY	12:35	2.6	1:01	0.2	5:59	4.2	7:47	4.1
TUESDAY	1:12	2.0	1:30	1.0	6:49	4.4	8:01	4.1
WEDNESDAY	1:45	1.5	1:54	0.2	7:31	4.6	8:17	4.8
THURSDAY	2:11	0.9	2:17	0.4	8:10	4.6	8:35	5.2
FRIDAY	2:37	1.2	2:40	0.7	8:25	4.4	8:50	5.3

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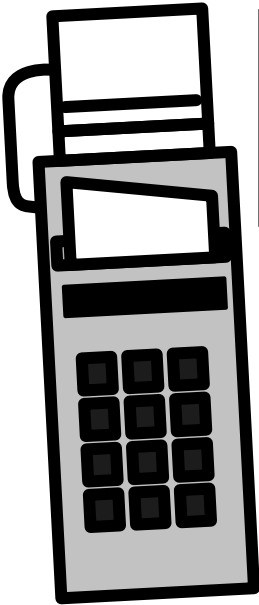
The Q Line

Stories of shootings and violence in schools nationwide have increased over the past few years, and last week's lockdown at Santa Monica High School due to dozens of students fighting brings the issue even closer to home

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "Do you think adequate security mea-

sures are in place in our schools? What changes, if any, would you suggest?"

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

Gay marriage is issue of acceptance, not politics

Editor:

I am writing in regards to Ms. Olinger's truly scary letter (SMDP, April 8, page 4). She certainly has the right to her opinions and the right to express them any way she chooses. I respect that right and claim it as my own as well.

She just furthers my belief that sometimes religion tends to separate us, while spirituality unites us. I feel that the very reverend pastor who presided over the marriage of two gay men is to be commended for truly doing God's work here. I'm sure he and his wife have heard things like Ms. Olinger's letter before. Perhaps things like this were said to them by the bigots who were up in arms over interracial marriages. The vocal objections to gay marriages are the same worn-out slogans that were used to decry interracial marriage — and are now being trotted out again.

And since gays don't choose their sexual orientation, but are born who they are, and if one believes in God, then God also created gays and as the old testament says, "... and all that God created was good."

Perhaps it was God's plan that creating gays and other people of diversity was to teach tolerance to those who choose bigotry.

Ms. Olinger goes on to say that she is "tired of watching people who interpret the scriptures as they want to in order to remain politically correct." I am also tired of people who interpret the scriptures to justify their fear and bigotry. And acknowledging gay people as God's children is not a political stance in my case, but rather the deep and sure knowledge that we are all equal and beloved in God's eyes.

And it's certainly not for her or anyone to say that the pastor was "very deceived and straight up wrong" and that he should apologize to his congregation and ask their forgiveness for "leading them astray." And this is supposed be in order for him to grow spiritually. According to who? Judge not that you shall not be judged. It is not for Ms. Olinger to judge his or anyone's path. Just keeping our own socks up should be a full-time job for anyone. It is her opinion that he is "straight up wrong," not a fact. No one is telling her how to live and believe (I hope) — and she should extend the same privilege and respect to others.

Ms. Olinger also stated that she hopes and prays that she as had an impact on someone. Well, her prayers were answered, but like some prayers, perhaps just not in the way she hoped.

Marilyn Brennan
Santa Monica

Deasy should begin by pointing finger at himself

Editor:

Thanks to the SMDP's phone verification procedure, we were made aware that there was a parent information meeting held at Santa Monica High School on April 18, at 7:30 p.m.

Upon arrival at the meeting, the parking lot was less than full and there were news vans in the lot closest to Barnum Hall, the venue at Samohi where the meeting was held.

Ilene Straus, the principal, opened the meeting by stating that it was not a community forum and was held for information purposes only. Dr. Straus proceeded to tell the audience that whatever we heard from our children and anyone else about the fighting on Friday, April 15, was rumor or innuendo. The information that the school administration was going to provide at the meeting was what happened. By saying this, Dr. Straus basically called my children and every other child that was there that day liars. When every kid tells the same story, we believe them.

Dr. Straus and Dr. Deasy (superintendent of schools) then proceeded to tell the audience that tolerance for others is taught at the dinner table and in our homes, and that the school can only do so much. There were several brave students that spoke up, one stating that she had received no information or education on tolerance. The other student speaking stated that the whole school knew there was going to be trouble, including the administrators, and no one did anything about it. Kudos to those courageous and outspoken kids that tell the truth.

A question was posed as to if outside kids/gang members came onto the campus. Deasy responded with something about parents not being allowed on campus without a pass — duh. The question wasn't about parents on campus, it was about outside kids. Deasy never answered the question and they quickly glided on to another hand in the air. When a parent asked about video cameras being installed on campus, (it was a simple yes or no answer), Deasy got all tied up and rambled on about budgets and May and finally got to the "no" answer.

Dr. Straus touched on the police presence, saying that Beverly Hills and Santa Monica departments responded. She left out Culver City. Reports stated that they were called also. Rumor has it that the kids that came on campus were from Culver City, but no one will admit it.

One parent asked why they weren't formally notified about the meeting.

Dr. Straus scrambled for answers, stating that they had sent e-mails and tried to call, but the calls didn't go through. I/we didn't receive either, and with two children at Samohi, somehow this is more than a glitch. She stated there is going to be an "investigation" as to why the notification system didn't work. She said that they posted a notice on the Samohi Web site and did their best to inform parents of the meeting. Considering less than 300 people showed up out of an estimated 7,000 parents, the turnout result speaks for itself. Now they can say they had a meeting and proceed with trying to sweep the whole incident under the carpet. It's not going to work for us, or for our kids. The kids are scared, and no one is doing anything to calm their fears, nothing at all.

The doctors went on to say that they had no reason to believe that the fighting

See LETTERS, page 6

White men can't jump, but they sure can shoot

NEWS ON THE EDGE

BY RON SCOTT SMITH



"John Bolton is the kind of man with whom I would want to stand at Armageddon, if it should be my lot to be on hand."

Who offered that heartfelt testimonial about the man who is about to become the United States' ambassador to the U.N.?

- (a) all of the below
- (b) none of the below
- (c) George W. Bush
- (d) Richard Cheney
- (e) Donald Rumsfeld
- (f) Jesse Helms

If you answered (a), your instincts may be right, but you're wrong. Only one had the nerve to actually say it, and it was (f), Jesse Helms, the late senator who made his living down there in the old south, spouting old school, black and white, good and evil hate-speak.

Now friends, if a reference from Jesse Helms is something you have to add to your resume' to lend credence to your application for this United Nations position, maybe you might want to reconsider your qualifications and not be interviewed.

Honestly, why would you even want the job to begin with? You said in 1994 about the organization you are about to join, "There's no such thing as the United Nations." That's right, you're about to become part of no such thing. And the next words out of John Bolton's mouth at that moment sliced through the rest of the world community like a jetliner into a skyscraper. "If the U.N. building in New York lost ten stories, it wouldn't make a bit of difference." In yet another twisted stroke of Bushamerican arrogance, this man stands poised to become the face of our nation in the body he so disdains.

Bolton, who rolls like a Sherman tank into that solitary institution whose purpose is to maintain some semblance of global order and decency, said this about global order and decency: "It is a big mistake for us to grant any validity to international law even when it may seem in our short-term interest to do so." Do you think they'll bake him a cake when he gets to New York?

They're not baking a lot of cakes around the globe for Paul Wolfowitz either, but he's now been summoned to crawl out of the White House woodwork to rule the World. That's slang for the World Bank, and it's a little like putting the wolf in charge of the henhouse, bad pun or not. Widely hailed as the war-mongering visionary of the neoconservative Bush camp, whose apparition of a conquered Iraq was perhaps the blueprint for that catastrophe, in 1992 Wolfowitz drafted a paper entitled "Defense Policy Guidance," that called for the preemptive strike against that sovereign nation in order to avert the spread of those phantom weapons of mass destruction, and to ensure "access to vital raw materials, primarily Persian Gulf oil," in his own



Tom DeLay: Armed and not so fabulous.

words.

Wolfowitz comes to his new position full of right statements, sounding a little like Mother Teresa, but you could almost see fingers crossed under the table as he said after his confirmation, "It is humbling to be entrusted with the leadership of this crucially important international institution. Helping the poorest of the world to lift themselves out of poverty is a noble mission and I believe deeply in that mission." Hopefully, he believes as deeply in this mission as he did in the Iraqi one.

Tom DeLay, majority leader of the United States House of Representatives, is cut from the Jesse Helms cloth, if ever from there one was cut. It now seems he's been grabbing money and free junkets at will from corporations in search of a governmental break throughout his career in public service, and now he's busted, but the Republican-ruled House gives him a pass. He's funneled over a half million dollars to his wife and daughter from his campaign coffers over the past couple elections and that's an awful lot of stamps to be licking.

DeLay was the prime mover in getting Congress to intervene in the whole sordid Schiavo affair, claiming God had called upon the right wing to clarify for all of us the absolute sanctity of every human life. He sounded awful God-like when he warned, "The time will come for the men responsible for this to answer for their behavior." Then he was keynote speaker at the annual convention of the National Rifle Association where he keynoted in good-old-boy-speak: "When a man is in trouble or in a good fight, you want to have your friends around, preferably armed. So I feel really good." Well that's mighty white of him.

I feel really good too tonight, Tom, knowing that in charge of it all, are you and your God-fearing gang of aging white southern guys, armed to the teeth, who, though challenged in the vertical leap department, nonetheless seem to reach heights in the spiritual realm the rest of us can only sit back and long for.

Relax, world, you're in good hands. Maybe they can't dance, but they can shoot the lights right out of the ballroom.

(E-mail Ron at edgeofthewest@aol.com.)

Business

Hands-off investing isn't a bad way to go

MARKET MATTERS

BY BRIAN HEPP

Like many Americans, you're probably well aware that your home is one of the biggest investments you have.

But if you're looking for other ways to take advantage of the real estate market, you may not have enough money on hand to buy a second home simply as an investment. While putting money into your own home helps to preserve its value, it also requires ongoing capital investments and does not provide a high level of liquidity. Fortunately for investors, there are other investment vehicles available to help you get into the real estate market without the responsibility of being the sole owner of the property.

Real estate investment trusts are companies that own a portfolio of real estate to earn cash flow for shareholders. Commonly known by their acronym, REITs (pronounced "reets"), these companies are usually publicly traded, so you can make a direct investment in them by buying their common shares like any other stock. REITs fall into one of two basic categories: equity REITs and mortgage REITs.

Equity REITs own real estate. Many of them buy, sell, own, manage, lease and maintain commercial real estate. Portions of the rents received from the properties owned by the REIT, and even capital gains from the sale of buildings for profit, can be a source of income to shareholders owning stock in the REIT. Mortgage REITs, on the other hand, specialize in lending money to real estate owners — both commercial and residential. Interest income from these mortgage interests gets passed on to investors owning stock in a mortgage REIT.

To give you a better idea of the advantages of investing in REITs, let's take an even closer look at how one works. The goal of an equity REIT is to maximize both rental income and income from the portfolio of real estate that it owns, while at the same time minimizing real estate and business expenses, thus generating a

positive cash flow. To maintain REIT status, these companies must pay their investors at least 90 percent of the taxable net income generated by their portfolios in the form of dividends. What's more, at least 75 percent of a company's gross income must originate from real estate investments, either in the form of rental income from equity ownership or interest income from mortgages. Simply stated, a REIT serves as a conduit through which income is passed — in the form of dividends — from a real estate portfolio to shareholders.

Now that you know a little more about what they are and how they work, here are a few tips for successful investing in REITs:

For starters, you want to focus on those companies that have proven management teams. One of the critical factors in the performance of a REIT is a management team that can operate the real estate in its portfolio in such a way as to enhance shareholder value.

In addition, you want to target REITs that have visible, more predictable growth prospects. Companies that have historically delivered developments on time and on budget — and also have a significant pipeline to fund future growth — would fit into this category.

Keep in mind that REITs may be less liquid and contain a higher risk of loss of principal than other forms of publicly traded equity investments, and may be more appropriate for individuals willing to assume a higher degree of risk for the opportunity of potentially greater returns.

Still, as you can see, REITs can offer an opportunity to invest in the real estate market without having to deal with the hands on operations. Depending on your own risk tolerance and time horizon — among other factors — REITs could be worthy of additional consideration. If you think you might be interested in adding them to your portfolio, a financial consultant can help you find specific investments that may be right for you.

(Brian Hepp is a financial consultant at A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc. Member SIPC. Hepp can be reached at (310) 453-0077, or at brian.hepp@agedwards.com. A.G. Edwards is a full-service retail brokerage firm in Santa Monica.)

There's nothing small about small businesses

GUEST COMMENTARY

BY PAUL J. SARVADI

It all starts with two words: "What if?" And develops from there. Entrepreneurs have a persistent need to create, to nurture, to grow. Call it a compulsion or a calling. Either way, having your own business is one big adventure.

Owning a business, like owning a home, is part of our national fabric. A look at the numbers clearly shows the magnitude of the small business community's contribution to our economy. Simply put, small business is good for America.

Its sheer size is remarkable: Small businesses — generally defined as those with fewer than 500 employees — comprise the third-largest economy in the world behind the total U.S. economy and that of Japan. For the past two decades, small companies have created three-fourths of net new jobs. And they are unmatched in productivity and efficiency, producing half of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product with 44 percent of the nation's payroll.

Small companies provide services and products with fewer people and resources than big businesses, and they can take products to market more swiftly. And because small businesses often know their customers personally, they understand consumer attitudes and can respond quickly to market conditions.

But just getting an enterprise off the ground requires ingenuity and creativity. Consider that 70 percent of all small businesses are started with less than \$20,000 in capital. In addition, small companies are the source of 55 percent of all innovation, which is what helps an organization not only to survive, but also to thrive.

Entrepreneurs who have started their

own enterprise know firsthand that you can't do it halfway and succeed. You're either in the game making it happen or you're in the stands watching. That's what's so exciting about being an entrepreneur — great rewards are in store for those who give it their all. But it involves some bold steps, including:

- Taking risk. Risk-taking is built on a belief in yourself and your capabilities. It requires the drive to overcome and achieve your goals in spite of obstacles or failures.

- Taking initiative. Some people may be willing to take the risk, but there's more involved than desire. It takes getting out of the starting gate. It's about doing things instead of waiting for them to happen.

- Taking responsibility. Having your own small business can be a lonely place when you have to make tough decisions. The good news is that you don't bear just the responsibility. You get to take credit and share the success.

Business ownership isn't for the faint of heart. Entrepreneurs take a huge leap of faith and rarely look back, despite the odds. But at the end of the day, they will be the first to say it's worth it. In fact, according to the Wells Fargo Small Business Index, 81 percent of small business owners said they would do it all over again if given the chance.

Large corporations typically generate more headlines and enjoy more visibility. But consider where we would be — or conversely, where we wouldn't be — if it weren't for those entrepreneurs who are in the small-business trenches day in and day out. They are the ones fueling the nation's economic engine and making their communities better places to live. And they deserve our enthusiastic support and thanks.

(Paul J. Sarvadi is chairman and chief executive officer of Administaff (NYSE: ASF), the nation's leading professional employer organization.)

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Volleyball players wary of what lies beneath

ROTATE, from page 1

ted debris like wood splinters and trash, especially near the restrooms, but nothing like the glass and nails uncovered on Sunday.

On Monday, no glass and nails were apparent on the sand court. However, what appeared to be human toilet waste was dumped in the center of the southeast court.

Heiser said he had seen the human refuse on the courts on Sunday, as well.

"That's what it looked like to me and to the others too," he said. "Somebody's hitting us."

Jose Oronoz, acting beach crew leader for the city of Santa Monica, said the city

had not received any complaints about the condition of the area.

"We've seen a lot of debris on our beaches because of the storms," Oronoz said, "but nothing like what the volleyball players described."

Oronoz said crews were cleaning up beaches from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m. and no one had reported any problems with broken glass or nails.

"We rake and clean daily," he said. "We do that area at least twice a week and our night crews clean the restrooms every evening."

Wayne Schumaker, division chief for beaches and harbors for Los Angeles County — whose jurisdiction covers San Pedro to Ventura County, with the excep-

tion of Santa Monica — said the winter storms have washed up "an unbelievable amount of debris" which could be responsible for the problem reported by the volleyball players.

"It's a problem all along the California coast," Schumaker said. "Since currents run from north to south, we're getting debris from hundreds of miles away. There are things you wouldn't expect to ever find on a beach and it's going to take a long time to clean it up."

Heiser, who goes to the volleyball courts almost every day, said there was no way that the ocean could have washed the glass and nails onto the courts.

"The glass I found — the nails — were

too far up," Heiser said. "The courts are on the east side of the bike path. The ocean never comes up that far."

Elaine Polachek, open space manager for the city of Santa Monica, said she had asked the beach supervisor to keep a close watch on the area and if any further incidents occurred, urged people to call the Santa Monica Police Department.

Heiser said he didn't call the Santa Monica Police Department about the problem because the police already had their plates full trying to maintain some kind of sanity in the city.

"I think those of us that are fortunate to be able to use the courts should try to take care of it ourselves," Heiser said.

Groups urge government to establish limits for bottom-feeders

TRAWLING, from page 1

ocean floor fishing policy up until May 11, at which time it will be decided whether or not the initiative has ample support to be put into action.

The plan will require bottom trawling fishing boats to stay within the areas they currently fish to prevent further destruction to the ocean floor. They said this will also ensure a robust fishing industry for the future.

"When you stand here and see the ocean is so beautiful, it's hard to imagine something underlying could be wrong,"

Danson told an audience of about 50 at the end of the Santa Monica Pier. "Right now, bottom trawl nets can go anywhere they want, destroying the ocean habitat and having a huge impact on fishermen."

"We're asking trawling fleets to stay within the footprint they have already made, an area twice the size of the U.S."

Danson said the fish available to eat on an annual basis are becoming fewer and smaller, largely due to the bottom trawlers' impact on the ocean floor — the foundation of the fish food chain.

Meanwhile, the plan also calls for stepped-up efforts to protect some coral habitats along the coast, such as the

Cowcod Conservation Area off the coast of Los Angeles, Monterey Bay and the Catalina Islands.

Jim Ayers, Director of Oceana for the North Pacific, said Danson has helped raise \$300,000 for his group's research efforts. Ayers said Oceana's goal has been to determine how protection from bottom trawling fishing can occur while minimizing impacts to fishermen.

The plan to keep bottom trawling fishing within its current radius would include those portions of the Pacific Coast southward from the Columbia River to the tip of Southern California, according to Ayers. He said Oceana estimates that of

For more information on efforts to stop bottom-trawl fishing, visit the Web site at www.savecorals.com.

the \$37 million generated in revenue each year by bottom trawling fishing on the West Coast, the plans to protect the coral areas would only have a \$3 million impact on the fishing business.

Danson and Ayers said the fact the United Anglers endorsed the sustainable fishing plan showed there was a broad range of support for it, but Ayers said some big fishing companies have not been so inclined.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LETTERS, from page 4

was gang related and said that the students involved were suspended for five days (that's not the zero tolerance policy that we signed, but whatever). The doctors stated that there would be police presence for the next few days. I/we didn't get chosen to ask a question, which would have been, "when the fighting kids come back from suspension, and the police have been dismissed, what happens then?" Monday isn't looking good the way we see it.

In closing, Roy Romer, the LA Unified superintendent was on the news this morning regarding the continuing violence at Jefferson High School. He said "we obviously have a problem." His first solution for Jefferson High School is to have one entrance and exit. He is also going to put more adults on campus to supervise. What a great place to start. The parent community of Samohi deserves answers and a plan like this from our overpaid administrators who can't put out an adequate meeting notice, let alone keep our kids safe.

Why can't SMMUSD officials admit that there is a violence problem, and that they have no idea how to respond. The first step to solving a problem is acknowledging it exists. Stop covering up and start stepping up. I would like my children to be able to finish the school year safely, securely and without anymore missed time.

Lori Emerson
Santa Monica

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Santa Monica Daily Press

LOCAL



Influx of new residents a boon for landlords

RAISE THE ROOF, from page 1

Those prices have prompted many Southern Californians to move inland. That phenomenon has helped turn Riverside and San Bernardino counties — a region nicknamed the “Inland Empire” — into the West’s hottest rental market. Apartment rents there have climbed 6.6 percent during the past year to an average of \$1,022 per month, RealFacts said.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, apartment rents averaged under \$700 in four of the 20 Western markets covered by RealFacts: Tucson, Ariz. at \$626; Albuquerque, N.M. at \$651; Salt Lake

City at \$667; and Boise, Idaho at \$699.

Southern California landlords are benefiting from an influx of new residents in the area. The U.S. Census Bureau says the five counties in and around Los Angeles added 260,002 people last year, a phenomenon that helped fill apartments. Apartment occupancy rates through Southern California are hovering around 95 percent, giving landlords more leverage to raise rents.

Even in Southern California, apartment rents are increasing at a dramatically slower pace than house prices. Mid-priced home in Southern California sold for \$439,000 last month, a 19 percent increase from last year, according to

DataQuick Information Systems, a La Jolla, Calif.-based real estate research firm. The typical mortgage payment for a Southern California house stands at \$1,983 per month, DataQuick said.

Apartment rents looked like an even bigger bargain in San Francisco Bay area, where home prices increased by 20 percent during the past year. In March, a mid-priced Bay Area home sold for \$568,000. That left Bay Area’s typical monthly mortgage payment at \$2,566, a 25 percent increase from \$2,052 a year ago.

In contrast, Bay Area apartment renters are paying just about the same amount as they did last year. In the five-county San

Francisco metro area, March rents averaged \$1,307, a \$3 drop from last year. In Santa Clara County — the heart of Silicon Valley — renters are paying \$1,280, just \$1 more than last year.

The unusually wide gap between apartment rents and home values is making some economists nervous because they believe it’s a sign housing prices are reaching unsustainable heights.

More apartment landlords appear to be mulling ways to capitalize on the rapid run-up in home prices. In the last year, 110 of the 11,000 apartment complexes tracked by RealFacts have been converted to condominiums.

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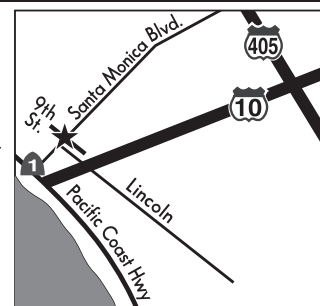
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LOCAL  **STATE**



STATE BRIEFS

Pilots were blinded by the light
By The Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS — A man was cited for allegedly shining a high-powered light at a Mercy Air helicopter ambulance.

Mercy Air pilots complained to the Federal Aviation Administration and the FBI about someone repeatedly shining a bright light at their helicopter, blinding the fliers when they were over the Newbury Park area of west Thousand Oaks.

When a Mercy Air helicopter was targeted by the bright light on Sunday, an FBI helicopter that had been flying behind the Mercy Air craft then shone a bright beam down to identify the source of the light, the Ventura County Sheriff's Department said.

James Jimenez, 47, of Newbury Park was cited for allegedly interfering with the operation of an aircraft, a misdemeanor that could lead to a \$1,000 fine and a year in jail. Senior Deputy Richard Godfrey said Jimenez was ordered to appear in court May 17.

Teachers more than happy to take a hike
By The Associated Press

LONG BEACH — Teachers are getting their first pay hike in two years.

The school board unanimously approved the \$7 million package Tuesday that boosts the pay of Long Beach Unified School District teachers anywhere from 1.11 percent to 2.56 percent, retroactive to July 1, 2004.

"I still think we need to work on salary, but it's a step in the right direction," said Tony Diaz, president of the Teachers Association of Long Beach.

The starting annual pay for a teacher with a bachelor's degree would increase from \$42,148 to \$43,227, according to the union. The average district teacher now makes about \$51,600.

The contract also gives teachers with doctorates a \$1,000 bonus each year beginning this month.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

five-year "Family Self-Sufficiency Program" (FSSP) and are on their way to achieving economic independence.

"The Family Self-Sufficiency Program is extremely important to the city of Santa Monica," said Peter Mezza, Santa Monica Housing Authority administrator, "because it shows the federal government, the citizens of Santa Monica, and local decision-makers that with the right kind of assistance, people can become as successful as they want to be."

Requirements for graduation from the program are one year off public assistance, employment, and consistent case management.

A project of the city of Santa Monica Housing Authority, FSSP is a partnership of many Westside agencies, organizations and businesses. St. Joseph Center is responsible for case management.

"The FSSP helps Santa Monica families receiving Section 8 rental assistance to rise above the need to depend on public assistance and to contribute back to the community that has helped them through difficult times," said Kristina Eppler, SJC family center manager.

As clients gain employment and increase their income, their share of their rent also increases. As an incentive for participants to achieve financial stability, the Santa Monica Housing Authority matches the increased amount of income and places it into an escrow account that is released to the client upon graduation. The money can then be used for a variety of purposes, including education, a down payment on a house, or seed money to start a business.

"One graduate obtained a degree in accounting and now works as an auditor for the federal government; one obtained a real estate license and now works in the entertainment industry; and one completed SJC's Culinary Training Program and now works for the Los Angeles Unified School District," said Julie Lansing, FSSP coordinator for the Santa Monica Housing Authority. "Collectively the seven graduates saved a total of over \$61,000 in their FSSP rental escrow accounts, which they get to keep now that they have graduated."

Five volunteers from the Los Angeles Junior League's "Done in a Day" project, chaired by Nikki Abish, acted as ushers and provided decorations, a cake, and craft projects for the small children in attendance.

On May 7, St. Joseph Center will hold its annual Dinner Dance and Auctions to raise funds for the support of its 10 programs on seven sites in Venice, Santa Monica, and West Los Angeles to provide emergency services, child care, case management, job training, and senior services to more than 7,000 homeless and low-income men, women, and children each year. For more information call (310) 396-6468, ext. 328 or visit www.stjosephctr.org.

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STATE

Jackson prosecution plans to rest next week

BY LINDA DEUTSCH
AP Special Correspondent

SANTA MARIA — The mother of Michael Jackson's accuser ended a contentious five days on the stand Tuesday, insisting she never solicited money from any celebrities including Jay Leno and that a lawsuit she filed against a department store was intended to obtain an apology rather than a payoff.

The defense, however, suggested that she manipulated pictures of herself with bruises in an effort to obtain millions in the department store lawsuit and ultimately won a settlement of some \$150,000.

The mother maintained she never asked comedian George Lopez for money, nor did she approach Jay Leno.

"I have never spoken to Jay Leno," she said, and insisted she knew nothing about her son possibly having called Leno, who has been named as a potential witness.

Leno's role was mentioned in opening statements in which defense attorney Thomas Mesereau Jr. said the "Tonight Show" host became alarmed when he was called repeatedly by the family and reported them to authorities.

The end of the mother's testimony brought an announcement from District Attorney Tom Sneddon that he plans to wrap up his case against Jackson next week.

Asked about the status of the case as he left court, Jackson simply said, "I think it's going well, thank you."

Jackson, 46, is accused of molesting a

then-13-year-old cancer patient in February or March 2003, giving him alcohol and conspiring to hold his family captive to get them to rebut the TV documentary "Living With Michael Jackson," in which he said he let children sleep in his bed but that it was innocent and non-sexual.

Prosecutors also called the accuser's grandmother and an administrator of the accuser's middle school.

The grandmother testified in Spanish that her home was besieged by strangers after the documentary aired.

"Many people came to the door of my house ... I was almost like a prisoner," she said.

She also said that at one point a man threw rocks at the bedroom window of the accuser's sister and fled, and that she received messages from Jackson associates asking her grandchildren to answer the phone.

The prosecution contends that associates of Jackson were harassing the accuser's family in an effort to get them to return to his Neverland ranch to make a video rebutting the documentary's allegations.

The defense had no questions for the grandmother.

Michael Davy, the school administrator, testified that Jackson associate Vincent Amen — named in the case as an unindicted alleged co-conspirator — used a note and identification from the mother to withdraw the accuser and his brother from school for three weeks correspond-

ing to the alleged captivity.

The defense used Davy's appearance to re-establish that the accuser had been a consistent disciplinary problem at the school well before the period in which he was allegedly molested.

Before leaving the stand, the accuser's mother underwent final inquiries by Mesereau about her family's dealings with celebrities and involvement in the department store lawsuit, which claimed that security guards beat family members in 1998 after the boy who is now Jackson's accuser left a store with clothes that had not been paid for.

The woman said she was never informed that fundraisers were held for her son at a Hollywood comedy club and didn't know that donations were being made when she opened a special bank account for his benefit.

She said she had no idea why money was being put in the account and that all of it was being handled by a husband she has since divorced.

"You had no idea why anyone put money in it. You just withdrew it?" asked Mesereau.

"I did what (my husband) told me," the woman said.

"And you had no idea that Chris Tucker was going to wire money in to that account," asked the lawyer, referring to the comedian who became a benefactor of the family.

"This is correct," she answered.

The attorney asked if she was aware that comedians held a benefit for her son

at the Laugh Factory in Hollywood while the boy sat in the lobby collecting money.

She said she knew nothing about it.

"And do you remember using money donated for (him) on cosmetic surgery?" asked Mesereau.

"No," said the woman. "I used a credit card."

She was asked if she knew that comedian Louise Palanker had given the family \$20,000 to build a germ-free room for her son, and she said she knew nothing about it other than that she endorsed a check for \$10,000 and gave it to her husband.

Palanker has testified she gave the money to the family and that she recommended a contractor who prepared the room but was never paid by the family.

Mesereau also challenged the authenticity of photographs introduced by the prosecution on Monday showing the mother with bruises all over her body, allegedly from being beaten by the store guards.

Mesereau noted that a mug shot taken of her on the day of the incident showed no bruises on her face.

"I was wearing makeup," she said.

But other pictures used in the lawsuit showed her face scraped and bruised and her body blotched with black and blue marks.

Mesereau suggested the marks may have been from a domestic violence incident and noted that the woman did not file suit until a year after the department store episode.



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STATE



Schwarzenegger told to ratchet down rhetoric

BY BETH FOUHY
AP Political Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger raised eyebrows in a speech to national newspaper publishers this week with strong comments on immigration, saying the current policy on preventing illegal immigrants from crossing the border is too "lax."

"It's a federal issue, and the only thing that I can say and add to this is really, close the borders," Schwarzenegger said. "Close the borders in California and all across Mexico and in the United States. Because I think it is just unfair to have all those people coming across, have the borders open the way it is, and have this kind of lax situation."

The Republican governor also suggested exploring several policy proposals aimed at addressing the immigration crisis, including President Bush's proposed guest worker program and legislation sponsored by Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward M. Kennedy, D-Mass., to pave the way for undocumented workers already living in the United States to attain legal status.

"This is a very important debate. I think it's necessary that we solve the problems rather than try to run the other way. It's a hot issue," Schwarzenegger said.

Schwarzenegger's remarks were later clarified by his spokeswoman, Margita Thompson, who said the governor supports greater security along the nation's borders but was not calling for the borders to be completely closed.

"The governor has talked before about the need to ensure that immigrants are put on a path toward fully participating in California's economy," Thompson said. "But he feels they need to enter the country the right way, and must not undermine important security issues. He feels that the border needs to be secure."

It's not the first time Schwarzenegger, who emigrated to the United States from Austria as a young man, has become entangled in the emotional debate surrounding illegal immigration. During the recall election, Schwarzenegger was repeatedly asked to explain why he had voted for Proposition 187, a 1994 ballot measure to deny many basic services to illegal immigrants. And

shortly after entering office, he derailed a law passed and signed by former Democratic Gov. Gray Davis that would have allowed illegal immigrants to apply for drivers licenses.

In February, Schwarzenegger endorsed Congressional legislation authorizing the construction of a fence along California's border with Mexico. The proposal has sparked opposition from the state's Coastal Commission, as well as many environmentalists and Democrats.

In a statement, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, D-Los Angeles, said Schwarzenegger's comments reflected badly on the state's "productive" relationship with Mexico.

"The Governor should ratchet down his rhetoric and retreat from this narrow-minded approach to immigration policy," Nunez said. "Closing our borders to commerce and culture is an idea that comes from political extremists, not rational policy-makers."

STATE BRIEFS

Preschool provider peeters out

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — The San Fernando Valley's largest preschool provider, serving about 1,435 children, will shut down its 26 centers June 30.

The county Office of Education, which last month canceled its Early Head Start and Head Start contracts with the Latin American Civic Association, decided Tuesday to deny the association's appeal to keep the centers open.

The group lost its \$10.7 million in funding when the county ruled the agency was poorly managed and failed to complete required child health care exams. The association argued the county had failed to provide adequate notice of the deficiencies.

The association said it would appeal the ruling to the Administration for Children and Families, the federal agency that administers Head Start programs.

Orange County back in black

By The Associated Press

SANTA ANA — A refinancing plan will shave \$400 million in debt and pay off Orange County's bankruptcy bill a decade early.

The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday took advantage of low interest rates to refinance nearly \$800 million in debt left over from the 1994 bankruptcy. The county's investment pool suffered \$1.6 billion in losses after the then-county treasurer's investments collapsed.

County government issued bonds to repay investors and took on the debt, which costs county coffers nearly \$90 million each year. By refinancing, the debt will be paid by 2016.

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NATIONAL

Rivals foaming at the mouth in efforts to be best barista

BY ALLISON LINN

AP Business Writer

SEATTLE — In the end, maybe it came down to the milk. Troels Overdal Poulsen carried 12 liters of fresh, whole milk all the way from his native Denmark to Seattle in the quest for the perfect cup of cappuccino, and it paid off. Poulsen eclipsed five other finalists from as far away as New Zealand and Japan on Monday to win the sixth annual World Barista Championship.

The battle to be the best barista is a surprisingly grueling affair, with would-be champions — often working with trainers — spending months choosing everything from cups to coffee beans, and perfecting an original "signature" drink.

Poulsen and the others then competed in a speedy against-the-clock competition that requires each barista to make four espressos, four cappuccinos and four original "signature" drinks in just 15 minutes. (Baristas also are allowed 15 minutes to set up and clean up, and are judged in part on cleanliness.)

Competitors faced a panel of four dispassionate "sensory judges," who showed little sympathy as the eager espresso experts served the various drinks along with detailed explanations of everything from bean choice to frothing philosophy.

The six baristas also tried to woo judges with flowers, candles and mood music, but the techniques seemed to do little. The judges smelled, sipped and slurped tiny tastes of each drink before making notes on tightly

guarded clipboards.

Meanwhile, another two "technical" judges hovered around the competitors, looking for things like good hygiene and coffee grinder technique, while a seventh overall judge was there to resolve any disputes.

Poulsen's signature drink, called ESB for "enhanced sensory balance," mixed pepper, espresso and lavender.

It wasn't the only strange mix of the day. Carl Sara of New Zealand mixed egg whites, cinnamon and mandarin rind into his espresso, then served the concoction on a tray smoking with dry ice.

Poulsen, who drinks four or five espresso drinks a day, had an edge coming in — his Copenhagen coffee shop has already produced two other world champions. Poulsen said he felt the key to his success was listening closely to his peers.

He wins a variety of espresso-making equipment for his efforts.

Hiroyuki Kadowaki of Japan won second place, Salvatore Piccolo of Canada came in third, Sara placed fourth, Jonina Tryggvadottir of Iceland placed fifth and sixth place went to Gunnhilde Seljenes of Norway.

The six finalists were selected from a field of 39, each a national champion at home.

The contest took place in Seattle, a city known for being serious about its coffee. But local favorite Phuong Tran was booted in the semifinals, dashing hopes of a U.S. winner.

Poulsen savored the victory in the U.S. capital of coffee. "It couldn't be better," he said.

Senator says to deputize citizens for border patrol

BY LARA JAKES JORDAN

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — A Republican senator said Wednesday the government should consider deputizing private citizens to help secure U.S. borders.

Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., said the U.S. Border Patrol also should look to local law enforcement and state officials for help along the most porous parts of the U.S.-Mexico line.

"I wonder sometimes if maybe we're not looking too much to a federal solution," Allard told Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff.

"I happen to believe that those people down along the

border that formed the Minutemen organization have some real concerns," Allard said.

Hundreds of civilian volunteers this month are monitoring a 23-mile stretch of the Arizona border. The volunteers, some of whom are armed, alert authorities when they spot people illegally crossing the border. The volunteers are not allowed to detain anyone.

Immigration advocates and Border Patrol officials have raised concerns about the volunteers. President Bush has said that he is opposed to "vigilantes" and that the Border Patrol should enforce the border.

More than half of the 1.1 million illegal immigrants apprehended in the United States last year entered at the Arizona border.

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NATIONAL



Few answers found six years after Columbine

BY CATHERINE TSAI
Associated Press Writer

LITTLETON, Colo. — Under gray skies and a light drizzle, Cindy Thirouin and her two children placed red roses on 13 crosses Wednesday to honor the memory of her stepfather, teacher Dave Sanders, and 12 students shot and killed at Columbine High School six years ago.

Thirouin said she took her children, Tiffany and Tyler, to the grassy oval memorial at Chapel Hill cemetery not to mourn their grandfather but to celebrate his life. They sometimes laughed as they walked among the 5-foot-tall crosses.

"After six years, it's getting easier, and it's time to move on," she said.

No formal observances were planned on the sixth anniversary of the day Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris attacked the high school in south suburban Denver with

bombs and gunfire. It was the worst school shooting in the nation's history.

Friends and families of the victims stopped at the Chapel Hill memorial in pairs or small groups, pausing among the crosses and 13 memorial trees, all blossoming with white flowers. Two of the victims are buried there.

Darrell and Sandy Scott dropped off a basket of pink flowers tied with a shiny pink ribbon next to the grave of their daughter Rachel, one of the 12 students killed.

Family friend Paul Jackson of Dallas came to spend the anniversary with the Scotts "just to have a moment of closeness with people who were directly involved is a special moment."

Jackson and other friends hugged the couple beside Rachel's marker.

Sharon Scholle wiped away tears as she left the cemetery with her husband, Frank. They knew the families of slain students Steven Curnow and Lauren Townsend but

hadn't been to the memorial before.

"We just remember the day very well," Sharon Scholle said. "We think about it every (anniversary)."

Columbine teachers gathered at the school Wednesday for a quiet remembrance. The campus was closed to outsiders and students were given the day off, although the building was open to victims' families. Teachers reported for an in-service day and had breakfast together.

Some teachers gathered in the library, where many of the victims died, for a moment of silence in memory of the victims. Principal Frank DeAngelis read aloud the victims' names.

Of the roughly 140 teachers and staff who taught at Columbine at the time of the shootings, about 30 remain. DeAngelis was principal then, as well. Jefferson County Schools spokesman Rick Kaufman said school officials were hoping for as normal a day as possible.

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INTERNATIONAL

Iraqi president says dozens of bodies found

BY SAMEER N. YACOUB

Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — The bodies of more than 50 people have been recovered from the Tigris River and have been identified, President Jalal Talabani said Wednesday. He said the bodies were believed to have been those of hostages seized in a region south of Baghdad earlier this month.

Another 19 Iraqis were shot to death and left lined up against a bloodstained wall in a soccer stadium in the town of Haditha, about 140 miles northwest of Baghdad, an Iraqi reporter and residents said.

Talabani did not specify when or where the bodies were recovered from the Tigris. He gave the information

in response to a question about the search for hostages reportedly seized from the area around Madain, 14 miles south of Baghdad.

Shiite leaders and government officials claimed last week that Sunni militants had abducted as many as 100 Shiite residents from the area and were threatening to kill them unless all Shiites left. When Iraqi forces moved into the town of about 1,000 families over the weekend, they found no captives, and residents said they had seen no evidence anyone had been seized.

"Terrorists committed crimes there. It is not true to say there were no hostages. There were. They were killed, and they threw the bodies into the Tigris," Talabani said. "We have the full names of those who were killed and those criminals who committed these

crimes."

In Haditha, taxi drivers Rauf Salih and Ousama Halim said they rushed to the stadium after hearing gunshots and found the bodies lined up against a wall. The reporter and other residents counted 19 bodies and said all appeared to have been shot.

Residents said they believed the victims were soldiers abducted by insurgents as they headed home for a holiday marking the birthday of the prophet Muhammad.

The reporter did not see any military identification documents on the bodies and it was not possible to verify the claim, which may have been based on a previous incidents, including one in October when insurgents ambushed and executed about 50 unarmed Iraqi soldiers as they were heading home from a U.S. military training camp northeast of Baghdad.

U.S. and Iraqi military forces had no report of any killings at the stadium. Militant violence has surged in the past week, especially in Baghdad, with explosions often going off one after another in the morning.

The first car bomb exploded near a U.S. convoy in an area of western Baghdad where the notorious Abu Ghraib prison is located, setting an oil tanker on fire, said police Maj. Moussa Abdulkarim. Two Iraqis were killed and five wounded, said Hussam Abdulrazaq, an official at the nearby al-Yarmouk Hospital. The U.S. military had no immediate information on the incident.

The two other car bombs exploded in southern Baghdad. One missed a police convoy but hit a civilian car, killing two Iraqis and wounding four, said police Capt. Falah al-Muhamadwai. The other exploded in a parking lot near Bilat al-Shuhada police station in Dora area, wounding four civilians, said police Lt. Hassan Falah.

In Sadr city, a poor section of eastern Baghdad, gunmen in a speeding car fired on policeman Ali Talib as he walked toward his car, killing him, said Col. Hussein Abdulwahid of the local police force. In another part of east Baghdad, gunmen attacked a Health Ministry car, killing the driver and wounding an unidentified passenger, said police Col. Hassan Jaloub.

South of the city, one policeman was killed and two were seriously wounded when their patrol was hit by a roadside bomb in the town of Mowailha, said police Capt. Muthana AL-Furati.

On Tuesday night, an attack by a suicide car bomber near an American patrol in southern Baghdad killed two U.S. soldiers and wounded four, said Lt. Col. Clifford Kent, a spokesman for America's 3rd Infantry Division. Seven Iraqi civilians also were wounded, an official at Al-Yarmouk Hospital said.

In the southern city of Basra, Abdulal al-Batat, a former aide to Saddam Hussein's half brother, Sabawi Ibrahim-Hassan, was killed Tuesday by gunmen outside his home, said police Lt. Col. Karim al-Zaydi.

Al-Hassan, who was suspected of financing insurgents after U.S. troops ousted Saddam in 2003, was captured in Syria and turned over to Iraqi authorities in February.

Al-Qaida in Iraq, the nation's most feared terror group, claimed responsibility for Tuesday's worst attack, a suicide bombing near an army recruitment center in Baghdad that police said killed at least six Iraqis and wounded 44.

The weeklong surge in violence comes as Shiite and Kurdish leaders try to form a Cabinet that will also include members of Iraq's Sunni minority, believed to form the backbone of the insurgency. Talibani told reporters that officials hope to announce the new government Thursday.

On Tuesday, the U.S. military said it regretted an incident in which a Shiite legislator linked to a radical anti-American cleric was briefly held at a checkpoint by American soldiers.

Fattah al-Sheik tearfully told parliament he had been handcuffed and humiliated at a U.S. checkpoint on his way to work. He claimed an American soldier kicked his car, mocked the legislature, handcuffed him and held him by the neck. The assembly demanded a U.S. apology and prosecution of the soldier involved.

A U.S. military statement said its initial investigation indicated that al-Sheik got into an altercation with a coalition translator at the checkpoint. U.S. soldiers tried to separate them and "briefly held on to the legislator," while preventing another member of al-Sheik's party from getting out of his car.

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INTERNATIONAL



Benedict XVI sets out to reunify Christians

BY NICOLE WINFIELD

Associated Press Writer

VATICAN CITY — Pope Benedict XVI pledged Wednesday to work to unify all Christians and reach out to other religions as he outlined his goals and made clear he would follow in the footsteps of his predecessor, Pope John Paul II.

Benedict, the former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, listed top priorities of his papacy in a message read in Latin to cardinals gathered in the Sistine Chapel for the first Mass celebrated by the 265th leader of the Roman Catholic Church.

He said his “primary task” would be to work to reunify all Christians and that sentiment alone was not enough. “Concrete acts that enter souls and move consciences are needed,” he said.

The new pope said he wanted to continue “an open and sincere dialogue” with other religions and would do everything in his power to improve the ecumenical cause.

The message was clearly designed to show that Benedict was intent on following many of the groundbreaking paths charted by John Paul, who had made reaching out to other religions and trying to heal the 1,000-year-old schism in Christianity a hallmark of his pontificate.

Joy over the selection of a new pope was mixed with worries that Benedict could polarize a global church, whose challenges include growing secularism in rich countries and inroads by evangelical groups in regions such as Latin America.

Benedict referred to his predecessor several times in his message, including John Paul’s final wishes that he hoped new generations would draw on the work of the Second Vatican Council, the 1962-65 meeting that modernized the church.

“I too ... want to affirm with decisive willingness to follow in the commitment of carrying out the Second Vatican Council, in the wake of my predecessors and in faithful continuity with the 2,000-year-old tradition of the church,” Benedict said.

John Paul supported council reforms but cracked down on what both men considered excesses spawned by the changes, including calls for priests to be allowed to marry and admission of women into the priesthood.

The hard-line enforcer of church orthodoxy under John Paul for almost 25 years, Benedict had gone into the two-day conclave as a favorite. He was elected Tuesday as the oldest pontiff in 275 years and the first Germanic pope in almost a millennium.

A cheering crowd of more than 100,000 welcomed Benedict when he stepped onto the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica as dusk fell Tuesday and gave his first blessing as pope. By contrast, St. Peter’s Square was nearly empty early Wednesday, although by the end of the Mass a few hundred had gathered to watch on giant TV screens.

“We greet our Pope Benedict XVI,” read a poster toted by teens from a high school in Handrup, Germany, who were in the square when his black Mercedes convertible, its top up and Vatican flags flying, zipped into and out of his former offices at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Later, Benedict broke the seals of the papal apartment and greeted colleagues and signed papers at his desk. He decided to continue staying at the Vatican hotel where he has been sequestered since the conclave began, spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said. He did not say when Benedict would move into the papal apartments.

He ate lunch Wednesday with colleagues and said he would meet Friday with cardinals and hold a news conference Sunday, Navarro-Valls said. His inauguration ceremony on Sunday would be followed on Monday by an audience with official delegations on Monday, the spokesman added.

Ratzinger selected a name rich in European tradition — the first Pope Benedict, who ruled from 575-579, was declared the patron saint of Europe because of his involvement in forming Christian Europe. Vatican watchers said Ratzinger’s selection of the name indicated he would emphasize the need to consolidate Europe’s Christian roots.

Amid the joy, there also was disappointment Wednesday from some who viewed him as an obstacle to necessary change in the church.

“This election creates as much hope as fear,” said

Belgium’s Deputy Prime Minister Laurette Onkelinx, who is responsible for government relations with religious communities.

“The fear is because of the past of the new pope — great defender of religious doctrine and a great conservative. One can fear he will not respond to the need for openness of the church,” she said in an interview with Le Soir newspaper, insisting she was speaking in a personal capacity.

American cardinals said Benedict had been unfairly caricatured as an unfeeling conservative, describing him instead as a caring, brilliant churchman who listens to those with opposing views.

“I think he’ll play well as soon as people come to know him,” said New York Cardinal Edward Egan.

“This is a very unprepossessing, humble, and if I may say, lovely gentleman.”

The pope’s participation in the Nazi Party as a youth rang alarms in Israel. “White smoke, black past,” said the headline in the mass circulation Yediot Ahronot. “From the Nazi youth movement to the Vatican.”

The young Ratzinger was enrolled in Hitler Youth, and was later drafted into the army.

“He was 18 years old when the war ended so everything that he had to do with the Nazi regime was as a very young man,” said Moshe Zimmerman, a professor of German history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, he said. “I don’t believe that there is any room for doubt that (the pope) of today is very different than the days he belonged in the Hitler Youth.”

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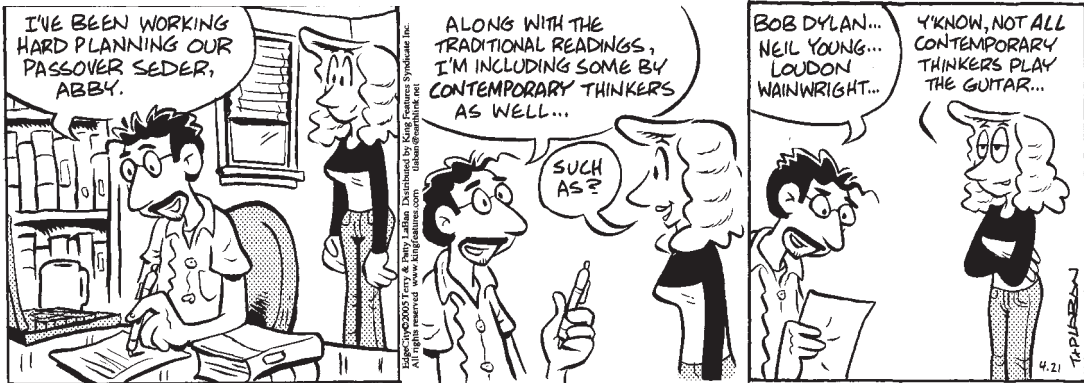


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ACROSS

- 1 Back muscles, for short
- 5 Became depleted
- 11 Language test
- 12 Relaxed
- 13 Do secretarial work
- 14 Was generous
- 15 Cry during a duel
- 17 St. kin
- 18 More recent
- 22 "Sea-scape" playwright
- 24 Let fall loosely
- 25 Corp. VIP
- 26 Went ahead
- 27 Bea Arthur series
- 30 Flat-nosed dogs
- 32 Door sign
- 33 Pig-poke link
- 34 Premium channels
- 38 Sullen
- 41 Cajole
- 42 Out of bed
- 43 Albacore

- 44 Picks an entrée
- 45 Bud holder

DOWN

- 1 Hay setting
- 2 La Scala highlight
- 3 Discuss
- 4 Coat part
- 5 Foolhardy
- 6 Convenient
- 7 Less messy
- 8 Crew item
- 9 Purpose
- 10 Cartoonist Key
- 16 Course start

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Yesterday's answer

- 19 Aborigine's excursion
- 20 Fencer's sword
- 21 Ohio team
- 22 Pinnacle
- 23 Not too fatty
- 28 Kick off the throne
- 29 Pencil part
- 30 Snap law
- 31 Makes
- 35 Longings
- 36 Bowling spot
- 37 Final, e.g.
- 38 Chair-man of note
- 39 Hockey great
- 40 Free

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