



BAD DAY FOR BALDWIN
ENTERTAINMENT P10

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

MEGA MILLIONS
1 20 32 37 39
Meganumber: 9
Jackpot: \$30M

Super LOTTO
13 24 31 33 39
Meganumber: 27
Jackpot: \$16M

Fantasy 5 4 6 16 35 38

DAILY 3 MIDDAY: 0 6 8
EVENING: 3 5 1

DAILY DERBY
1st: 09 Winning Spirit
2nd: 08 Gorgeous George
3rd: 02 Lucky Star
RACE TIME: 1:41.73

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

In February, two girls (aged 12 and 13) ran away from home in Cleveland, headed by bus for Minneapolis, along with Bambi, one girl's family dog (represented to the driver as a "guide dog"). However, the girls overfed Bambi on junk food, and the dog became so flatulent as to cause a commotion on the bus, which eventually drew police officers, who then discovered the girls were runaways.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 118th day of 2006.
There are 247 days left in the year.

- On April 28, 1945, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, were executed by Italian partisans as they attempted to flee the country.
- In 1758, the fifth president of the United States, James Monroe, was born in Westmoreland County, Va.
- In 1788, Maryland became the seventh state to ratify the U.S. Constitution.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"If youth only had a chance
or old age any brains."

STEPHEN LEACOCK
CANADIAN HUMORIST-EDUCATOR (1869-1944)

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School board not yet ready to close doors

BY KEVIN HERRERA
Daily Press Staff Writer

SMMUSD HDQTRS. — Both the public and employees of the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District will be granted another opportunity to meet face-to-face with the search firm charged with finding the next superintendent of schools.

During a special meeting Wednesday, school board members acknowledged there was not sufficient notification by the district for a series of similar community meetings held earlier this week.

Therefore, the board approved a new round of discussions for May 10 with Hazard, Young, Attea & Associates, Ltd., an Illinois-based search firm hired by the district for \$35,000 to recruit a replacement for John Deasy, the district's former superintendent. Former assistant superintendent Mike Matthews is serving as interim superintendent, and has expressed interest in the district's top job.

The superintendent is in charge of overseeing the day-to-day operations at the district, which serves roughly 12,500 students at 19 schools in Santa Monica and Malibu.

"We (the school board) decided to hold additional meetings because those we held earlier this week were immediately after spring break and we were concerned that there wasn't proper notification so people could plan in time to be at the meetings," said Kathy Wisnicki, vice president of the school board. "We wanted to make sure we are erring on the side of over-inclusiveness in this process."

Critics of the district said notification of the meetings was not posted on the district's Web site until the day before they were to begin.

Wisnicki said she approved of a press release announcing the meetings on April 7, the day before spring break began. She said it was sent out to local media, various committees, city staff and the community at large. The meetings were also discussed at the school board meeting on April 6, she added.

See **SUPER SEARCH**, page 7



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

MADE IN THE SHADE: A bicyclist joins a row of cars on Thursday under the canopy of Eucalyptus trees on 7th Street.

Risking life and limb

To protect the public from falling limbs, city plans to take down dangerous trees

BY KEVIN HERRERA
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITYWIDE — In efforts to get at the root of the problem, City Hall has plans to remove 77 aging and damaged Eucalyptus trees that have been rated hazardous because of their tendency to shed dead limbs, possibly causing injuries to pedestrians.

Another 440 Eucalyptus trees

will be trimmed to avoid potential limb failure at a cost of close to \$175,000, said Walter Warriner, City Hall's community forest and public landscape superintendent.

Removing the trees will cost an estimated \$80,000, with another \$20,000 going towards replacement trees. Pruning costs are expected to hit \$65,000, with another \$8,000 for the maintenance of the new

trees, Warriner said.

City Hall plans to hold a news conference on May 5 at Reed Park to officially announce to the public the replacement and pruning project, which is expected to take between four and six months to complete.

Trees removed will be replaced with smaller species of Eucalyptus, or in some cases, the species of tree that dominates the surroundings area, Warriner said.

"We know we have an aging forest and we are looking towards

See **LIFE AND LIMB**, page 6

Black and Big Blue: City pays out \$175K

BY KEVIN HERRERA
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — The City Council has agreed to pay \$175,000 for medical expenses and other damages incurred in two separate accidents involving passengers on its Big Blue Buses.

The council approved the payments Tuesday, along with an agreement to pay up to \$75,000 for

the construction of a driveway for a home at 161 Ocean Park Blvd., at the site of an old rail line.

'A FAVORABLE RESULT'

A jury recently awarded Betty Robinson \$100,000 after she fell on a Big Blue Bus and hit her head on Nov. 29, 2004. Three weeks later, the then 80-year-old Robinson fell while walking and broke her hip, which required sur-

gery, according to Deputy City Attorney Debra Kanoff.

Robinson's attorney claims she suffered brain damage when she fell on the bus, which affected her balance, causing her to fall and injure her hip.

"It was a favorable result," Kanoff said of the jury's award. "When you have an 80-year-old

See **BIG BLUE BUS**, page 12

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SAT DINNER	5:00PM-10:00PM	

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SAT 5.13

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Santa Monica Daily Press

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

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



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Trying to grasp all the subtle implications of what a friend says and thinks could be exhausting. Still, know that you are not working with clear information. Avoid making yourself vulnerable in key areas. Tonight: Kick up your heels. It's the weekend.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Though the planets certainly shine on you, there is still an element of confusion that dominates the present scenario. Someone's opinion could be vague or strange in some way. Don't obsess. Tonight: Act like the world is your oyster. It is.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Knowing when to gracefully back off could make this a better-than-anticipated day. Cocoon. Do your own thing. A discreet meeting or discussion might need some time to come full circle. You will want to get more facts. Tonight: Get all the sleep you can.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ You could be turning in every which direction. Others want you, and let you know it. On some level, it's your pleasure to be so helpful. Be careful with someone who is vague about his or her finances or commitment. Tonight: Greet the weekend with celebration.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Stand up for what you believe in and what you want. Others might not intend to sabotage you. What really might be going on is that people are just confused. Accept differences and accept that you are a groundbreaker. Be the natural leader that you are. Tonight: On top of life.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ If you find that something isn't working, call in the experts. You have what it takes to find solutions and open up to different ideas. The more people you contact, the better your odds are for resolution. Tonight: Out where there is music.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ You might be euphoric about what is going on around you. Enjoy. Still, understand that your perspective could be very different in a few days. Enjoy the nostalgia and what filters through your door. Tonight: Dinner with a special friend.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Others make the choices. You can either buck the trend or go along for the ride. A more easygoing attitude will make you much happier in the long run. Know when you have had enough or need to pull back. Tonight: Among your friends.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Investigate what you feel/think before you make it fact. You'll empower a situation through this process. Emphasize your daily routine. Relate to those in your day-to-day life more completely. Tonight: Don't push.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Allow your creativity to flourish. Think positively and approach your life in a more dynamic way. A child or loved one responds to your vivacious attitude. Let good feelings flow. Careful with spending. Tonight: Play the weekend in.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ You might not grasp all the pros and cons of a personal or domestic matter. As a result, you could be a bit uncomfortable. Sort through what you know for fact and what is in your imagination. Tonight: Relax at home.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Your instincts play into a situation. Communication could be vague but inspiring. You might not be hearing everything that someone is saying. Reach out for a brother, sister or cousin you haven't spoken to in a while. Tonight: Out and about.

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LOCAL



Applying themselves



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Santa Monica High School students fill out applications on Wednesday for summer seasonal and permanent jobs during the community job fair sponsored by the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, the City of Santa Monica and the JVS West Hollywood Work Source Center.

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Local journal to be read across Los Angeles

By Daily Press staff

Those who value good writing will have a chance to have it read to them, during readings of Santa Monica College's national arts literary journal.

The spring issue of the Santa Monica Review has been released, and a public reading will be held May 3 at 5 p.m. at the University of California at Irvine Bookstore. The free event will feature readings by current and past contributors. Appearing at UC Irvine will be Leslie Brody, Gary Amdahl and Trinie Dalton.

Featuring fiction and essays by both new and established writers, the journal also will be available at the SMC booth at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books from April 29 to 30 at UCLA.

Review Editor Andrew Tonkovich said free samples of the literary publication will be distributed at the event.

Tonkovich said the latest issue features its usual mix of cutting-edge literary fiction and nonfiction. Essays include a meditation on personal and political identity by writer Leslie Brody (Red Star Sister) and Christopher Buckley's (Fall From Grace) reminiscence of his childhood in Santa Barbara movie houses. Andrea Cumbo Dowdy offers a dark appreciation of her woodworker father and Canadian poet Mark Smith considers the lives and deaths of three men who helped raise him. National Public Radio's longtime book reviewer Alan Cheuse (Listening to the Page) shares his thoughts on Point of View.

Fiction offerings include short stories by local writers Jorge Saralegui, Kate Milliken and Alisa Slaughter and another story by Flannery O'Connor Award winner Gary Fincke (Sorry I Worried You).

The issue includes a funny, digressive, wry short story from frequent Review

See BRIEFS, page 7

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SNOW AND SURF REPORTS

SNOW CONDITIONS

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BEAR MOUNTAIN

CLOSED

JUNE MOUNTAIN

CLOSED

MAMMOTH MOUNTAIN

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
1"	192" - 216"	8:30 AM - 4:30 PM	100	16/28

CONDITIONS: MACHINE GROOMED, SPRING

MOUNTAIN HIGH

CLOSED

MT. BALDY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	12" - 24"	8:00 AM - 4:30 PM	20	3/4

CONDITIONS: MACHINE GROOMED, SPRING

SNOW SUMMIT

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	12" - 36"	9:00 AM - 4:30 PM	26	6/14

CONDITIONS: MACHINE GROOMED, HARD PACKED, SPRING, VARIABLE

SNOW VALLEY

NEW SNOW (24 Hrs)	BASE DEPTH	LIFT HOURS	RUNS OPEN	LIFTS OPEN
0"	8" - 36"	8:30 AM - 4:00 PM	14	3/11

CONDITIONS: MACHINE GROOMED, SPRING

SURF CONDITIONS

WATER TEMP: 58°

SWELL FORECAST (3-4 FT)
TODAY THE NW SHOULD ALL BUT COMPLETELY DISAPPEAR, CONDITIONS SHOULD START TO IMPROVE, AND THE SW SWELL THAT'S IN THE BACKGROUND TODAY WILL COME TO ITS PEAK.

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SIGNIFICANT SW BEING TRACKED FOR THE 5TH...

TIDE FORECAST FOR SANTA MONICA

	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
LOW TIDE	N/A	12:32AM	1:26AM	2:15AM	3:01AM	3:47AM	4:33AM
HIGH TIDE	5:06AM	6:19PM	7:21AM	8:16AM	9:08AM	10:00AM	10:53AM
	N/A	1.9FT	1.1FT	0.2FT	-0.5FT	1.0FT	-1.2FT
	4.68FT	4.8FT	4.9FT	4.9FT	4.7FT	4.4FT	4.0FT
	12:21PM	1:03PM	1:40PM	2:51PM	2:49PM	3:21PM	3:54PM
	7:08PM	7:34PM	8:02PM	8:32PM	9:03PM	9:36PM	N/A
	4.2FT	4.8FT	5.3FT	5.9FT	6.3FT	6.4FT	N/A

The Q Line

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With summer fast approaching, the cost of filling up one's tank at the local service station continues to climb. One recent study says retail gas prices across the country have jumped an average of 25 cents in the past two weeks alone. Auto club AAA estimates that prices are 31 cents higher now than at the same time just one year ago.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know: **To what lengths will you go to save money when filling up your tanks — long lines, other neighborhoods, shun the car altogether?**

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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EDITORIAL

Let's all follow the money trail



The powers-that-be in City Hall have finally decided that accountability is needed when it comes to providing services to the homeless population.

It's about time.

After 20 years of using taxpayer money to fund a host of service providers and social programs aimed at getting homeless people back to self-sufficiency, City Hall wants an outside assessment of how effective their respective efforts have been. It is unbelievable that this kind of evaluation has not been done already, following two decades of work and tens of millions of dollars spent on the homeless problem. The lack of an independent evaluation is even more ridiculous given the fact that homelessness has been the No. 1 concern among residents for at least the past five years, according to City Hall surveys. We would argue further, that it has been a top issue among Santa Monica residents since the late 1980s when the delivery system was first established.

We applaud the City Council in its decision earlier this week to spend \$126,000 to hire an outside social policy research organization to conduct an independent evaluation of the local government's homeless delivery system.

However, there are many caveats that need to be made regarding this evaluation, which we feel should be conducted more like an independent audit. The researchers need to be extremely cautious when evaluating the information given them. We need a truly independent assessment, but wonder how that can occur given the close relationship that city staff and social service providers have with each other.

The research firm, The Urban Institute, has elected to first interview city staff and those who manage the nine agencies that City Hall funds. The researchers also are relying upon those agencies and government-paid staff to provide them with numbers as to how much money is spent, how many people have gone through the system, and who it has helped. We find it questionable that the very people being evaluated are the ones who are meeting privately with the researchers and giving them the bulk of the information.

We certainly hope that the researchers take into account that many of these staffers in the private and public sectors are very close and might protect one another so they can keep their programs afloat.

Santa Monica's "Continuum of Care" for the homeless, which takes in \$2 million in funding annually from City Hall, is really a multi-million business. As long as it exists, hundreds of people are employed, many of whom have nice, high-paying salaries with excellent benefits provided by the government and nonprofit organizations. And let's not forget all of the consultants who benefit from such homelessness problems. It's really a win-win situation for social service providers and government workers. They get paid well, have job security and feel good about themselves for helping people. And so do the politicians.

If this is going to be a truly independent study, the research firm must look elsewhere for answers and also rely on interviews with homeless people who have used the system, as well as members of the community, law enforcement and emergency personnel. It will be absolutely essential to get views from the numerous factions within Santa Monica to see where there are commonalities and differences of opinion in terms of how we fund, manage and provide services to the homeless.

That is not to say we don't have faith in The Urban Institute, which is the firm that was hired by City Hall. It is a reputable company that was established in 1968 after President Lyndon Johnson forged a committee to examine ways to address social problems, such as homelessness and unemployment.

We need to maximize this opportunity so we can have an accurate assessment of how effective our money is spent. The goal here is to get a realistic idea of what is working and what is not so we can utilize our resources efficiently. That way, we will be able to capitalize on what programs are successful and which ones should be eliminated. The public can no longer accept programs and agencies that do nothing more than enable homeless people to stay on the streets in Santa Monica.

If the study doesn't show the true successes and failures of Santa Monica's system, it was an additional waste of time and money. And when the study is completed, if policy makers don't follow through and actually implement the recommendations handed down by the research firm, then they have failed.

And if the community doesn't closely watch the process to ensure that it is independent and free of conflicts, what was the point to begin with?

GUEST COMMENTARY BY ALEX EPSTEIN

The myths of 'price gouging'

President Bush and Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez have joined the chorus of politicians clamoring for more investigations of "price gouging." Senate majority leader Bill Frist promises that "if the facts warrant it, I will support a federal anti-price gouging law."

But there are no facts that could warrant such a law, and there is no basis for any "price gouging" investigations — because there is no such thing as "price gouging" by private businesses.

The term "price gouging" implies that gas stations have an ability to forcibly inflict harm on us — but they do not. Any price we pay for a gallon of gasoline — whether \$1 or \$3 — we pay voluntarily, based on the value of the gasoline to us. If we think we are spending too much on gasoline, we are free to drive less, to buy more fuel-efficient cars, to use carpools or busses, or to travel by bicycle or on foot. Gas station owners cannot force us to buy gasoline. They can only offer us a trade, which we are free to accept or reject.

But, one might ask, without anti-"price gouging" laws won't owners of gasoline charge the absolute highest prices they can? Absolutely, and they have every moral right to do so — just as consumers of gasoline have every right to pay the lowest prices they can find. Gas station owners are not our servants. They are producers who spend money, exert effort, and assume risk to bring a product to market. They own the gasoline they sell, and like any property owner they should be free to set the terms of sale.

Since we pay the lowest price that we can find for gasoline — and never more than it is worth to us — and gas stations sell gasoline for the highest price they can get — and never less than it is worth to them — the price of gasoline is a reflection of mutually beneficial trade, which is the essence of proper interaction under capitalism. For a gas station owner to charge what the market will bear is no more "gouging" than it is for a computer programmer — or a cashier — to negotiate for the highest salary he can get.

Since the prevailing price of gasoline is the result of trade, it reflects not the arbitrary "greed" of gas station owners, but the facts of the market: The produc-

ers' costs, competition, and what customers are willing to pay. The reason that gasoline prices are higher after a natural disaster, for instance, is that the fact of relatively scarce supply leads various purchasers of oil and gasoline to compete to buy it, and bid up its price. Those who buy it are those who value it most, to the extent they value it most — like highly efficient factories overseas, or Americans providing for their most crucial transportation priorities.

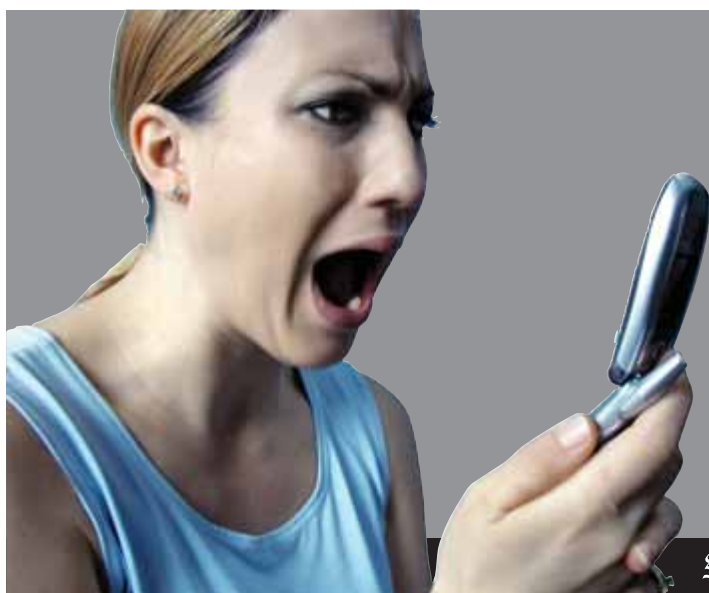
Anti-"price gouging" laws prevent producers and their customers from trading at mutually beneficial prices — sacrificing their interests to the interests of those who wish to avoid the "hardship" of paying prices higher than they are used to. By what right can the government force producers to set artificially low prices and prevent consumers from bidding up the price to get the gasoline they are willing to pay for?

Anti-"price-gouging" laws are a particularly vicious form of price controls. Like all price controls, they deprive businesses of earned profit, promote shortages, and discourage future production. But they also forbid the indefinable: "unconscionable" prices, the meaning of which cannot be known until after the ruling of some bureaucrat. This added uncertainty discourages producers from being in business, period — especially in times of emergency, when "gouging" claims are most rampant. If a federal "price gouging" law is passed, will gas station owners do everything possible after the next natural disaster to remain open for business — will private contractors from other states rush to bring generators, food, and debris-clearing equipment? Or will they not bother for fear that the prices they set will be declared "unconscionable?"

The real threat to individual rights and justice is not the so-called price gouging of free individuals, but the price-control gouging of a coercive government. We must fight this threat by asserting, unequivocally, that gas station owners have a right to charge whatever prices they choose.

(Alex Epstein is a junior fellow at the Ayn Rand Institute in Irvine.)

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



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By Daily Press staff

Officers' hands full with transients

On Wednesday, April 19 at 8:17 a.m., Santa Monica Police officers responded to the 2000 block of Ocean Avenue regarding a subject with an open alcoholic container. While officers were questioning the man, they were approached by a woman who said the man had robbed her roughly 12 hours earlier. She said when she refused to give the man money, he punched her in the face and reached into her pocket and removed money. After hearing this, officers arrested the man for strongarm robbery. He was identified as Jeffrey Kevin Cervantez, 40, a transient. No bail was set because of a probation violation.

On Wednesday, April 19 at 5:05 a.m., officers responded to the 100 block of Santa Monica Boulevard — Ye Olde King's Head Pub — regarding a report of vandalism. When officers arrived, they contacted the person who made the report, who said she saw a man hitting a window at the pub with his fist until it eventually broke. There was no information available on the price of the window. Officers detained the man a short time later and he was booked for vandalism. He was identified as Michael Anthony Baker, 43, a transient. His bail was set at \$1,250.

On Thursday, April 20 at 1:56 p.m., police responded to the 1400 block of Court 10 regarding a burglary in progress. When officers arrived, they contacted the reporting party who said they saw a man break the window of the front passenger side of a vehicle in an attempt to gain entry. The suspect did not make entry and left the scene, police said. He was arrested a short time later, about a block away from the scene of the alleged crime. He was identified as Zachary Hill, 45, transient. He was booked for attempted burglary, and bail was set at \$20,000.

On Thursday, April 20 at 7:53 p.m., police responded to the corner of Neilson Way and Pico Boulevard regarding an assault with a deadly weapon. When officers arrived, they spoke with a witness who said they saw a man striking a woman and then drug her down the sidewalk. The suspect then walked away. The victim was last seen walking away as well. Officers located the suspect, but were unable to locate the alleged victim, police said. The suspect was taken into custody and booked for assault with a deadly weapon. He was identified as Peter Michael Tansey, 38, transient.

On Monday, April 17 at 9:25 p.m., officers responded to the 2500 block of Lincoln Boulevard — Denny's restaurant — regarding two suspects who left the eatery without paying for their meals. When officers arrived, they spoke with an employee at the restaurant who said the two suspects entered the establishment, ordered \$29.29 worth of food, ate and left without paying. The two were arrested a short distance away and booked for defrauding an innkeeper. The suspects were identified as Jamie Alize Bencomo, 18, of Santa Monica, and Jeremiah David Brockway, 20, of Marina del Rey. Their bail was set at \$500 each.



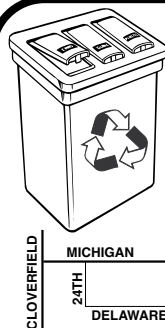
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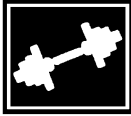
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LOCAL

A fair approach



Fabian Lewkowicz/Santa Monica Daily Press

Dr. Chui L. Tsang, president of Santa Monica College, speaks with John Leong, 25, and Emily Espinoza, 25, of Alhambra Medical University, during the recent Santa Monica College Fair.

City stumped for a solution

LIFE AND LIMB, from page 1

the future of restoring our forest and retaining our canopies for the next generation," Warriner said. "It is very important for the public to know why we are removing these trees. There is a very logical and precise reason for why each tree has been targeted for removal. We want the public to be aware of it so there aren't any surprises."

Warriner said people tend to react strongly to seeing a fully grown tree chopped down, but assured the public that he is an arborist first and will do anything to protect a tree that is worth saving.

"I'll be the first one to stand up and say 'Let's save this tree,' and also the first to say 'This tree is at the end of its life span and needs to be removed,'" Warriner said.

Falling Eucalyptus limbs, while uncommon, have struck pedestrians and, in one extreme case, a driver and his wife.

In January of 2001, Jim and Joan Holiday of West Los Angeles were driving down Broadway when one of the city's mature red-flowering Eucalyptus trees fell on their car, injuring Jim Holiday's neck and lower back, his attorneys said. The Holidays sued the city for \$1.5 million.

Should They Stay or Should They Go

City Hall subsequently contracted with HortScience Inc., an arboricultural firm, to provide an assessment of the city's 517 Eucalyptus trees. The assessment, conducted in late 2005, identified trees in danger of failing and made recommendations to lower the risk posed by trees that were still viable, but in need of attention, according to a city staff report.

Defects in the structure of each tree were identified, such as trunk decay, poor branch attachment and severe wounds. Using this information, HortScience gave a risk rating to each tree based on failure potential, the size of the part that might fall, and the target.

Each component was rated on a scale from 1 to 4. Those components were added together to generate a tree's overall risk, which could range from the lowest rating of 3 to the highest, 12. Of those studied, 77 trees scored between 8 and 12 — reflecting a high potential for failure. The remaining 440 trees have defective parts that were rated between 3 and 12. Those trees have been targeted



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

A Eucalyptus tree rises high above passersby in Palisades Park. The city plans to remove 77 of the aging trees in the interest of public safety.

for corrective pruning.

"We have learned a lot about Eucalyptus over the years, and one of the things we've found is that prior pruning practices actually harmed the tree to the point that wood would die, causing limbs to fall," Warriner said.

Past pruning practices had tree trimmers cutting the Eucalyptus at points that would create "sucker growth," in which the tree decays but the wound is covered by a new coating that shields the damage from the naked eye, making it harder to identify which trees are decaying.

"No more stub cuts," Warriner said.

The areas where trees will be removed are: Broadway, between Centinela Avenue and 11th Street; Seventh Street, between California Avenue and San Vicente Boulevard; Reed Park; and Palisades Park.

One crew will be deployed to complete the tree removal process over a period of two to three months, and a second crew will do the corrective pruning, expected to take four to six months, according to a city staff report. The work schedules will take peak traffic conditions into consideration.

LOCAL



He's got his back



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press
 Santa Monica Police Chief James T. Butts Jr. awards SMPD Lt. Alex Padilla with the United Latin American Citizens Community Service Award at the Sheraton Delfina earlier this week.

Search being eyed closely

SUPER SEARCH, from page 1

The Santa Monica Daily Press never received information that a forum would be held regarding the superintendent search.

District staff conceded having had problems sending e-mails and that may be the reason for the lack of notification.

Public input is vital at this stage of the superintendent search, for once Attea begins the hunt, all information about potential finalists will remain confidential. Representatives from Attea said the best candidates will most likely not agree to be interviewed if their names are released to the public.

In a presentation to the district, representatives from Attea said those who participated in meetings earlier this week felt transparency in district operations is crucial, and the next superintendent should be a leader who "has the ability to work collaboratively with an engaged, committed and proactive community and dedicated, professional staff."

District officials said roughly 150 people attended the first round of meetings, and Attea has received 170 separate forms found on the district's Web site that allow people to respond in writing as to what they want to see in the next superintendent.

The May 10 meetings will be held at the following locations and times:

Malibu High School Auditorium, 32015 Morningview Drive, Malibu, from 7 a.m. to 9 a.m.;

District headquarters, board room, 1651 16th Street, Santa Monica, from

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

contributor Janice Shapiro, as well as more work from previous contributor Roberto Ontiveros, and offerings from first-time contributors Manjula Menon and Joseph O'Malley.

Writer Natali Petricic offers a tragic, comic short story set in the memories of the former Yugoslavia. Artwork is by Anya Belkina.

Santa Monica Review, published twice a year, showcases the literary voices of established authors and emerging writers. Founded by SMC English professor Jim Krusoe (Blood Lake, Iceland), the Review has presented readers experimental, thoughtful, and funny works of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, interviews, and essays — including works by well-known authors such as Harold Pinter, Gary Soto, Lynn Freed, and James D. Houston. During its 15 years of publication, it has achieved a reputation as one of the West Coast's leading journals.

The current issue is available for sale at the SMC Bookstore, Dutton's Brentwood, Beyond Baroque in Venice, and other local booksellers. Copies also are available by mail and by subscription through Santa Monica Review, Santa Monica College, 1900 Pico Blvd.

12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.; District headquarters, from 7:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

A meeting for employees only will be held at the district headquarters from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m.

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STATE

Mercury rising: Tempers, gas running hot

Drivers keeping one eye on road, the other on posted gas prices

BY JOHN ROGERS

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — It's the great gasoline conundrum.

At a time when it's costing him \$40 to fill up and keep his aging maroon Ford Mercury on the road, Brian Graves has learned to drive with financial defensiveness, keeping one eye on the highway and the other on prices posted in front of the gas stations.

"I know that this station is cheaper than the one down the street, consistently," the 30-year-old handyman said this week as he filled his tank at a Shell station east of downtown Los Angeles.

Indeed, the nearby station was charging a nickel a gallon more than the \$3.17 Graves paid for regular grade gasoline. About four miles away on the same street, the price was 28 cents a gallon higher.

With prices now above \$3 a gallon across much of the country, few things are more exasperating than filling up at one station, only to learn you could have saved two or three or four bucks down the road.

If gas is gas, how can this be? Like so many of life's most vexing questions, there are no easy answers.

Industry officials say several factors come into play. Retailers who deal in large volume can cut their prices a bit, while those who take credit cards or pay higher rent and other overhead must charge a little more.

During periods when prices go up every day, it's not unusual for a station on one corner to have prices that for a few days are several cents higher than a competitor on the next block.

"It's all related to how recently you got your shipment," said Jeff Lenard, a spokesman for the National Association of Convenience Stores. "Retailers base prices on replacement costs."

Over time, he said, prices should even out.

"But consumers don't see it that way," Lenard acknowledged. "The reality is that people watching the store all day to see prices go up are not watching all day when prices go down."

With analysts saying the current spike isn't likely to subside until sometime next month, drivers from Massachusetts to California are resorting to cost-cutting methods, including price shopping, driving less and taking public transportation.

They all seem to be complaining about the price of gas.

Brandon Johnson of Chicago, Michelle

DeFurio of Springfield, Mass., and Maria Parra of Northglenn, Colo., accuse the big oil companies of charging all the public will bear.

"Price gouging," DeFurio said as she filled up her SUV. "I don't know what the hell else could be going on."

Johnson, 34, called for a consumer boycott as he gassed up his SUV at a downtown Chicago station charging \$3.09 a gallon.

"We should just all boycott gas for a day, just for one day, that would send a message," he said.

Parra, 23, recently traded in her SUV for a more economical Saturn and looks for smaller, independent stations to save a few pennies.

"I try to stop where I see the lowest prices," she said. "Even if I have to drive a little ways, I always go to the place where it's lowest."

Others were more resigned. Osman Krcak of Denver and Vi Thuc Ha of Los Angeles noted that prices in much of western Europe are still about twice as high as in this country due in large part to heavier taxes.

Ha said she doesn't bother to price shop and wasn't surprised that a station right down the street was selling gas for 7 cents a gallon less than the \$3.22 she was paying at a Union 76.

"I know there are cheaper stations, and

DRIVER'S REACTIONS

"I do look for the cheap gas. I live south of here, it tends to be cheaper out of the city. If gas was cheaper I'd put premium in. Sometimes I hear about low prices on the radio or word of mouth, then I'll go there."

Kevin Sullivan, Midlothian, Ill.

"If they're all paying the same rate at the market, I don't understand why I'm paying 12 cents less here than at a station in another town."

Shawn Deviller, Springfield, Mass.

"I don't fill up anymore. What I used to spend on filling up now only gets me to a half tank now."

Alletra King, Dallas, Tex.

"I changed cars. I had a TrailBlazer and it cost \$60 to fill up. So I had to trade it in and I got this. (Saturn)"

Maria Parra, Northglenn, Colo.

"It's ridiculously high but there's no way for anyone to fight it. Personally, I think the government and the oil companies are to blame. Both of them are getting paid, so what do they care about the people who have to work for a living?"

Brandon Johnson, Chicago, Ill.

"I get to travel less. ... I just go to work and come back, and before I used to go like everywhere just to enjoy my time. And now I don't even enjoy my time."

Alex Agüero, Los Angeles, Calif.

I should look around, but I always come to this one," she said before driving off.

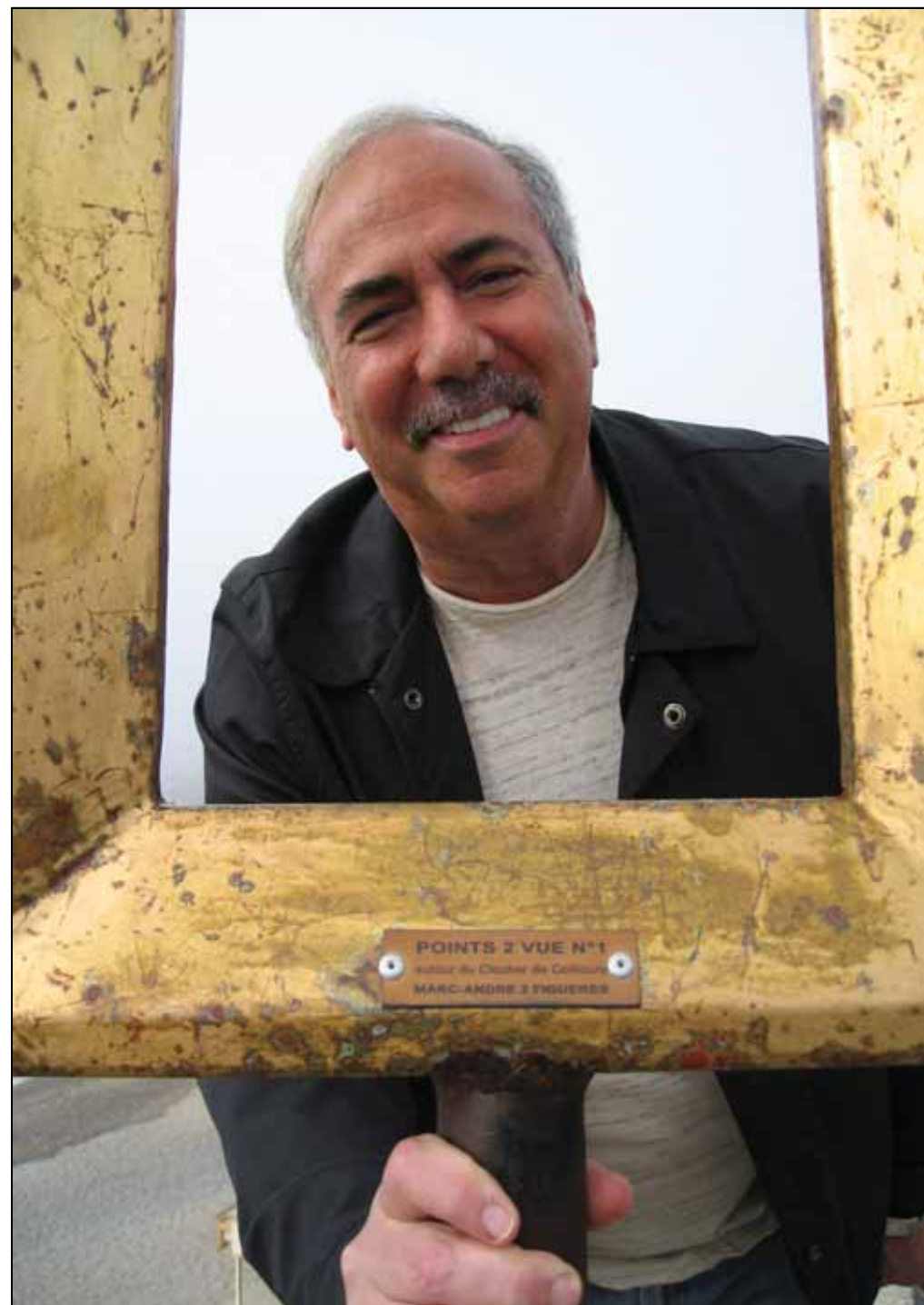
Albert Hernandez filled up his car at an Arco station charging \$3.15 a gallon after passing a nearby site where the price was \$3.30.

"I don't know why that is," the 18-year-old college student said, shaking his head. "It just seems too expensive."

SEE RELATED STORY

Oil and high prices don't mix

Page 13



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STATE



It's business as usual, despite May 1 boycott

By Daily Press staff

LOS ANGELES — Although almost half of all surveyed California companies suspect staffing levels will be affected by the immigrant boycott on May 1, 85 percent of California firms claimed they will conduct business as usual the best they can, according to a survey conducted by Employers Group, a human resources management association for California employers.

According to 620 California firms, 23 percent of all companies surveyed reported experiencing a higher than average number of requests for the day off, while another 42 percent companies expressed that they may experience staffing disruptions. However, despite companies' staffing forecasts, 87 percent of all the firms have said there will be no change to their time-off policy; and their existing policy will be enforced.

"The employer community seems to recognize the likelihood of staffing disruptions, but they are counting on existing time-off policies to deal with the situation," said William Dahlman, president and CEO of Employers Group.

In regards to communicating policy, 48 percent have not communicated their time-off policies to employees in regards to May 1, while 38 percent have. Fourteen percent have decided to adopt an informal time-off policy that will deal with absences on a case-by-case basis.

"The survey reveals that if anything, employers are holding their breath and not adjusting their time-off policy," stated Juan Garcia, Director of Research Services for Employers Group. "Companies are well aware of the issues surrounding May 1st but for now they are taking a wait-and-see policy. The survey

did reveal, however, that 66 percent of the companies will consider working with minimal staff."

Of all the companies surveyed, Employers Group found that larger companies are more likely to be affected than smaller companies. Although there were slight variations, significant industry differences were not found.

Koreatown employers asked to let Hispanics go march for reforms

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Hispanic immigrants asked Koreatown business owners Wednesday not to fire them if they leave work to participate in May 1 demonstrations to bring attention to the immigration reform debate on Capitol Hill.

The Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates called on business owners in Koreatown to allow their Hispanic employees to skip work for the nationwide demonstrations without resorting to "blacklisting and retaliation."

Thousands of Hispanic immigrants work in Koreatown, where they make up about 60 percent of the low-wage work force in markets and restaurants, said Vy Nguyen, an organizer with KIWA.

The Korean American Garment Owners Association urged its members at a news conference this week to not retaliate against Hispanic workers who participated in the boycott.

The association represents 1,000 members.

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'93' wounds slow to heal

MOVIE REVIEW
BY DAN DUNN
 Special to the Daily Press

THE MOVIE: United 93
THE DIRECTOR: Paul Greengrass
THE STARS: David Alan Bashe, Trish Gates, Ben Sliney

Several days have passed since I screened "United 93" and I've since spent quite some time staring at a blank Word document, trying to summon the composure, a level objectivity — hell, some adequate words to occupy this space. As you can see, I'm struggling mightily with the task at hand, which has led to an even greater appreciation for what filmmaker Paul Greengrass ("Bloody Sunday," "The Bourne Supremacy") has accomplished with his haunting, cinéma vérité-style account of what might have transpired aboard the doomed titular vessel.

We're five years removed from that most infamous day, September 11, 2001, yet for most of Americans there remains a powerful sense of bewilderment, a debilitating disquietude. As hard as it is to reflect upon 9/11, imagine the degree of difficulty in effectively dramatizing the day's events in a feature-length motion picture. But Greengrass has done so eloquently and with unflinching commitment to verisimilitude. Working closely with victims' families, ground personnel and members of the government-appointed 9/11 Commission, Greengrass pieced together a gripping narrative deeply rooted in verifiable truths. His attention to detail of the goings-on at various command centers on the ground is extraordinary, but the delicate handling of that which is unknown — the actions and reactions of the people aboard that plane — is a testament to the tremendous lengths this filmmaker went to fully absorb the subject matter. Nobody knows what really happened up there, but Greengrass and his cast of little known actors who play the passengers, crew and hijackers certainly make a strong case for their chronicle



■ **UNITED TILL THE END:** '93' is moving testament to courage.

of events. There were heroes and there were villains, and this movie presents both with deep nuance. The passengers who stormed the cockpit did so as a last ditch effort to save themselves; their killers were equally resolute in carrying out their mission.

Watching the tragedy unfold again, in real time, is heart wrenching. And while many have raised objections to the release of "United 93" on the grounds that it's exploitative or is arriving in theaters too soon, I believe history will judge Greengrass's film and the timing kindly. As Allison Vadhan, daughter of UA 93 passenger Kristin White Gould, offers in the production notes, "It's never going to be over for us families who've lost loved ones. It's never going to be over for the country, anyone who witnessed it on TV. It's always going to be touchy, awkward ... and something that a part of us don't want to see again. But I feel the more films, the better. We can't forget. We have to remember what happened, why it happened. And we can't fool ourselves into thinking that it won't happen again if we forget about it."

(RATED R. RUNNING TIME: 111 MINUTES)



■ **STICK TO THE SCRIPPS:** Fishburne and Palmer spell it out.

'Akeelah and The Bee' goes to head of the class among recent rash of speller flicks

MOVIE REVIEW
BY DAN DUNN
 Special to the Daily Press

THE MOVIE: Akeelah and The Bee
THE DIRECTOR: Doug Atchison
THE STARS: Angela Bassett, Laurence Fishburne, Keke Palmer

You may be wondering whether another spelling bee movie is really necessary. The answer is A-B-S-O-L-U-T-E-L-Y. Despite being fairly predictable and cliché-ridden, "Akeelah and the Bee" is an irresistible treat thanks, in very large part, to 11-year-old Keke Palmer's superb performance in the title role. Akeelah's a kid from South Central LA with an off-the-charts aptitude for words. Fearful of being teased, she hides her gift, which developed as a coping mechanism in the wake of her father's death. At her principal's insistence, she enters and wins her school's bee. Laurence Fishburne chips in with a skillfully muted turn as a college professor who guides Akeelah down the road to the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

(RATED PG. RUNNING TIME: 112 MINUTES)

LOCAL

Baldwin brother is arrested for drug possession at the Ocean Park Inn

BY KEVIN HERRERA
 Daily Press Staff Writer

LINCOLN BLVD. — Actor Daniel Baldwin was arrested at a Santa Monica hotel last weekend for possession of cocaine, and other charges, police said.

The 45-year-old Baldwin — the lesser known brother of fellow actors Alec, Stephen and William — was arrested on Saturday, April 22, along with another man at the Ocean Park Inn around 5:09 p.m. after police responded to a call that a man was threatening a woman in one of the

inn's rooms, Santa Monica Police Lt. Frank Fabrega said.

When officers arrived at the inn, they entered the room only to find no female inside. During their investigation, Baldwin and his companion, Winston Anthony Hunter, 52, allegedly admitted to using narcotics and were in possession of a glass pipe. Police searched the two and found a small amount of cocaine and a pipe. The two were arrested and booked for possession of a controlled substance, possession of drug paraphernalia and being under the influence of narcotics, Fabrega said.

Baldwin's bail was set at \$10,000. Hunter had no bail

due to a parole hold, Fabrega said.

The case was presented to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office, which declined to file felony charges and referred the matter to the City Attorney's Office for filing consideration on misdemeanor charges, Fabrega said.

The City Attorney's Office is still evaluating the case. Baldwin, who has appeared in several films and television movies, has a history of drug use, having admitted in 1998 to having been hospitalized in "critical condition" after he was found in his hotel room suffering from a suspected drug overdose, according to the Internet Movie Database.

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SANTA MONICA ART PALETTE

MAKING ARTS AND CULTURE COME ALIVE IN SANTA MONICA

Welcome to the Santa Monica Art Palette for the weekend of April 28. The goal of the Art Palette, created by City Hall's cultural affairs division, is to showcase the many eclectic arts and cultural opportunities available in Santa Monica every week, highlighting one or more of the many happenings within our borders.



This weekend we've got Virginia Avenue Park's Green Garden Tour, opera from Verdi Chorus, a musical at Lincoln Middle School and a one-man show on baseball. And the Miles Playhouse is sponsoring the first-ever Santa Monica Teen Film Festival. Entries are now open so all current teen wunderkinds should send in their original films before May 26. On Saturday you can help support one of the agencies that are using the arts to make a better life for young people in our community. Spend Saturday visiting some spectacular ecologically sound gardens, all within our city borders, while taking the Virginia Avenue Project's annual Green Gardens Tour of Santa Monica. Along the way you'll be able to watch demonstrations of sustainable techniques that you can apply in your own gardens while viewing the beauty of the green parcels. The tour takes place from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. starting at 629 16th St. Tickets and information are available at (310) 264-4224, or at www.VirginiaAvenueProject.org



The Verdi Chorus promises that this year its spring concert will be one of its best ever and as good as previous concerts have been it will have to be very good indeed. Guest vocalists Kathleen Roland, Christopher Campbell and Nmon Ford will add their voices to the company in excerpts from Nabucco, Pagliaci, Cavalaria Rusticana. And from Verdi's first Shakespearean masterpiece, Macbeth, the chorus presents the Witches Chorus, Patria Oppressa, and the infamous banquet scene with the appearance of Banquo's ghost.

Saturday, April 29, 7:30 p.m.
Sunday, April 30, 4 p.m.
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1008 11th St.
For tickets and other information check out their website at <http://www.verdichorus.org>, or call (310) 826 8309.

SANTA MONICA PLAYHOUSE



Don't miss former Santa Monica High School coach Eddie Frierson's outstanding performance in "Matty: An Evening With Christy Mathewson" at the Santa Monica Playhouse. Now a successful actor, Frierson workshopped the one-man-show 18 years ago at the playhouse and brings it back to its birthplace this weekend as a fundraiser for the Save the Playhouse Campaign.

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<http://www.santamonicaplayhouse.com/>



Lincoln Middle School's PTSA is presenting "Your Friend in Hollywood" an original musical telling the story of a depression-era Oklahoma family migrating to Santa Monica in the wake of the Dust Bowl. Written by local theatre artists Tara Redepening and Darin Goulet, the performance promises a spunky young starlet and a bevy of middle school chorines.

April 27 and April 28, 7 p.m. \$5
Lincoln Middle School Auditorium at 1501 California Ave.
Reservations: (310) 497-7009, or lincolnmusical@hotmail.com



The Santa Monica Teen Film Festival is now accepting submissions in three categories:

- Live action
- Animation/experimental
- Music video



If you know a budding Spielberg, a high school Ida Lupino, a middle school Preston Sturges, or an adolescent Frank Capra, send them along to the Virginia Avenue Park Teen Center or the youth reference desk at the Santa Monica Main Library to pick up an entry form. Submission deadline is Friday, May 26. Sponsored by the Santa Monica Cultural Affairs Division, City TV, the Santa Monica Public Library and Virginia Avenue Park.



And once again, don't forget to mark your calendars now for the 14th Annual Santa Monica Festival on May 13. Bucovina Klezmer will kick off the day with their unique blend of traditional Jewish celebratory music mixed with Latin and jazz rhythms. The dynamic group will set up a tempo that will keep us all hopping all day long.



If you would like to subscribe to the Santa Monica Arts Palette via e-mail, please send a blank e-mail with the word "Subscribe" in the subject line to artpalette.mailbox@smgov.net

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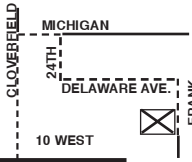
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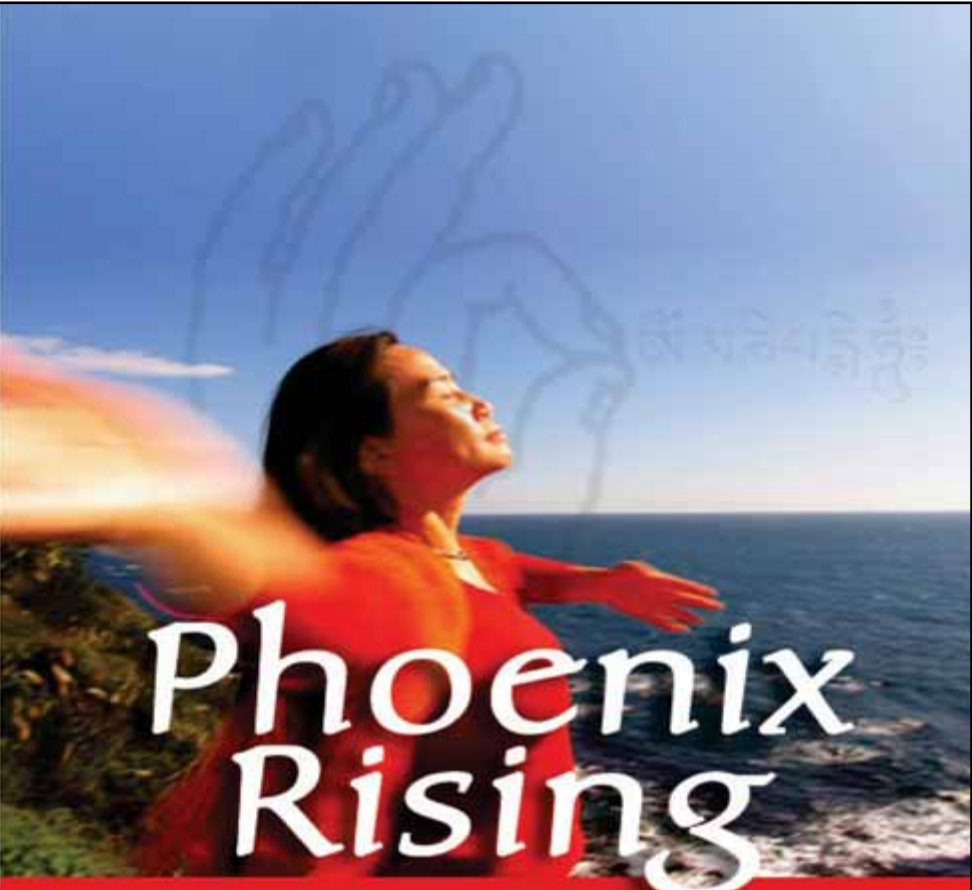
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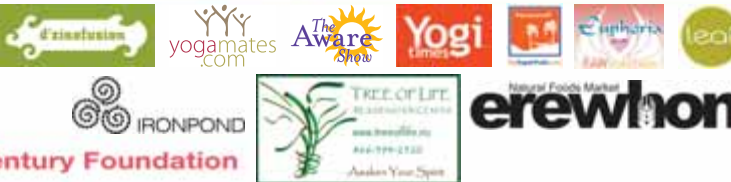
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City to split the costs of building driveway

BIG BLUE BUS, from page 1

woman fall on a bus, sustaining a head injury and claiming brain damage and a hip fracture, \$100,000 is not a bad result at all.”

Kanoff said Robinson’s attorney wanted to settle the case for \$800,000.

“In his closing arguments he had the jury add up all figures (of the cost of accident) and it amounted to around \$11 million,” Kanoff said.

Robinson’s attorney could not be reached.

WATCH YOUR STEP

Joel Lipscher was exiting a Big Blue Bus in downtown Los Angeles in November 2003 when he fell and broke his right ankle, according to Jeanette Schachtner, chief deputy city attorney.

Schachtner said a settlement was reached in the amount of \$75,000, with approximately \$35,000 of that intended to cover Lipscher’s ankle surgery.

DRIVE TIME

In the third payment approved Tuesday, City Hall has agreed to help build a private driveway for a residence at 161 Ocean Park Boulevard, City Attorney Marsha Moutrie said.

When street improvements were done along Ocean Park Boulevard, the residents at the location had to use the handicapped-accessible curb cut on the sidewalk to use their driveway. The property was built along an old rail line.

Under terms of the agreement, City Hall will pick up the tab for the first \$40,000, and there will be a 50/50 split for the next \$70,000, with the property owner covering the next \$40,000. The project is not expected to cost more than \$150,000, but if it does, the extra cost would be split between City Hall and the residents, Moutrie said.

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STATE BRIEFS

Suit claims couple preyed upon immigrants

By The Associated Press

VENTURA, Calif. — A lawsuit claims a couple fraudulently offered legal and other services to immigrants.

Lucia and Hector Velasco of Camarillo told clients they could nullify deportation orders for a fee and offered to buy houses for clients in exchange for \$275 down payments, according to the lawsuit filed on behalf of 14 people by attorney Allen Ball in Ventura County Superior Court.

The lawsuit alleges the Velascos took nearly \$100,000 from the plaintiffs using unlawful and fraudulent business practices that began in January 2002.

Lucia Velasco illegally represented herself at different times as an attorney, an Immigration and Naturalization Service agent and as a real estate agent, among other guises, according to the lawsuit.

Lucia Velasco denied that she and her husband offered immigrants services that they didn't intend to deliver.

"I am innocent," she said. She said she and her husband will be cleared, but declined further comment.

It's all hazy for marijuana dispensaries

By The Associated Press

HERMOSA BEACH, Calif. — City leaders approved a moratorium on medical marijuana dispensaries.

City Council unanimously voted Tuesday in favor of the 45-day moratorium.

City Manager Steve Burrell said it will give planners time to establish a regulatory ordinance.

The moratorium may be extended twice, which could buy the city nearly two years' time, City Attorney Michael Jenkins said.

"That'll give staff adequate time to come up with an ordinance," he said.

Medical marijuana dispensaries are illegal under federal law but permitted by California's Proposition 215.

Jail officials searching for green cards

By The Associated Press

ONTARIO, Calif. — San Bernardino County jail officials have started checking the immigration status of inmates for possible deportation.

The jail employees responsible for the checks completed their training in January. But computer glitches and equipment-delivery delays kept the checks from starting until now, officials said.

The effort to get deportable immigrants out of county jails is part of a move to ease crowding.

In a report last month on jail crowding, the county grand jury criticized federal immigration authorities for not providing the computer equipment earlier.

Loaner laptops to the rescue

By The Associated Press

FULLERTON, Calif. — The Fullerton School District will make loaner laptops available to some students as part of a settlement agreement with the American Civil Liberties Union.

The agreement, announced Wednesday, ends controversy over a district program requiring parents to buy their children \$1,500 laptops, a cost criticized as too expensive for public school students.

"We fulfilled our fundamental objective" of making sure students' participation wasn't dependent upon their family paying for a computer or obtaining a fee waiver, said Hector Villagra, director of the ACLU's Orange County office.

The ACLU represented families opposed to buying computers although the school district determined they could afford them, and families that didn't want to share financial information needed to qualify for grants to pay for the machines.

Under the school district's plan, students without computers were to be transferred to different classrooms, sometimes at other schools.

The settlement will let parents at the district's 20 elementary and middle schools decide whether to participate in the laptop program.

If 90 percent of the students at a school or grade get their own computer, the district will loan machines to the remaining students. If fewer than 90 percent get computers, the district will either discontinue the program at that school, or find a way to hand out loaners to the rest of the students.

District Superintendent Cameron McCune said in a written statement that the laptop program remains important to the "education process" and that he is "hopeful the entire community can now move forward in a positive way for its continued and future implementation."

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NATIONAL



Senators proposing plans to ease pain at the gas pump

BY H. JOSEF HEBERT
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans advocate sending \$100 rebate checks to millions of taxpayers, and a Democrat is leading the campaign for a 60-day gasoline tax holiday.

Either way, it seems no one in Congress wants to be without a plan, however symbolic, to attack the election-year spike in gasoline prices.

A vote is possible as early as this week on the Senate GOP approach, which calls for \$100 rebate checks for taxpayers to cushion the impact of higher gasoline prices. The measure seems unlikely to prevail, at least initially, since it includes a highly controversial proposal to open a portion of Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to oil drilling.

Senate Republicans also favor extending a tax break that manufacturers receive for each hybrid vehicle they make, and want President Bush to suspend deliveries to the nation's strategic petroleum reserve for six months.

Democrats seemed caught off guard by the GOP maneuvering, but a spokesman said they would have a plan of their own.

Sen. Bob Menendez, D-N.J., has proposed a 60-day suspension in the federal tax on gasoline and diesel, a holiday that he says would cut the cost of gasoline by more than 18 cents a gallon and reduce the price of diesel fuel by more than 24 cents a gallon.

The Senate Finance Committee provided additional evidence of the lawmakers' scramble to respond. In a rare move, the panel requested tax returns from the country's major oil and gas companies as part of an investigation into industry profits and soaring gasoline costs.

Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, the committee's chairman, said senators were concerned about the "record profits and significant executive compensation in the oil and gas industry."

"I want to make sure the oil companies aren't taking a speed pass by the tax man," Grassley said in a statement.

With gasoline prices soaring and oil companies announcing record profits, "it's relevant to know what the real financial picture is for this industry," added Montana Sen. Max Baucus, the panel's ranking Democrat.

It's highly unusual for the Senate committee to seek corporate tax records. The last time it made such a request to the IRS it involved the tax records of the bankrupt Enron Corp.

The committee announcement came as Washington scrambled to respond to public anger over soaring gasoline prices — \$3 a gallon or more in many parts of the country — and try to contain the political fallout.

On Tuesday, Bush suspended filling of the nation's emergency oil reserve, urged the waiver of clean air rules to ease local gas shortages and called for the repeal of \$2 billion in tax breaks for profit-heavy oil companies. He also urged lawmakers to expand tax breaks for the purchase of fuel-efficient hybrid automobiles.

Both Republicans and Democrats said they planned to support rescinding the \$2 billion in tax breaks, which included subsidies for exploration in deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico and in geologically or politically difficult regions of the world, as well as royalty relief for certain oil and gas exploration. Executives of the major oil companies said at a recent hearing they do not need those tax breaks.

House and Senate conferees were also considering a measure that would change accounting rules involving oil held in inventory, which would force the five biggest oil companies to pay an additional \$4.3 million in taxes.

The industry and the White House oppose that measure, viewing it as a form of windfall profit tax that singles out five companies for accounting practices widely used in and out of the oil industry.

Republican leaders and tax writers said they hope to finish work on the broader tax bill this week, but it's not certain the oil inventory tax measure will survive.

Several major oil companies were expected to report sharp increases in their first quarter profits this week. On Wednesday, ConocoPhillips said its earnings rose 13 percent to \$3.29 billion in the first quarter.

In a letter to the IRS, Grassley and Baucus said the tax records of the major oil companies are needed to conduct "a comprehensive review" of the companies' compliance with tax laws.

"As pressure mounts to address extraordinarily high gas prices that consumers are facing at the pump, we feel we should better understand the federal tax posture of the

"In the oil and natural gas business size is everything. It is critical to understand that fact when looking at the operational financial performance of our industry."

RED CAVANEY
President,
American Petroleum Institute

industry," the two senators wrote IRS Commissioner Mark Everson.

In their request, the senators noted not only the industry profits, but "an extremely lucrative retirement plan by one oil and gas industry executive, benefits which may have been subsidized in part by the taxpayers."

The retirement compensation package given by Exxon Mobil Corp. to outgoing Chairman Lee Raymond is said to total \$400 million when all pension payoffs and stock options are included.

Red Cavaney, president of the American Petroleum Institute, the major oil companies Washington-based lobbying group, said Wednesday oil company profits are huge because the industry is huge.

Executive is fined \$50K for killing trees at Tahoe home

By The Associated Press

STATELINE, Nev. — A California business executive has agreed to pay a \$50,000 fine for poisoning trees to enhance the view from his Lake Tahoe home.

John Fitzhenry apologized Wednesday to officials with the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

"This has been the most foolish thing I've ever done," he said.

Agency staff discovered last summer that Fitzhenry poisoned three, 40-foot Jeffrey pines on his \$2.4 million property in Dollar Point on Tahoe's north shore.

Inspectors noticed the trees were ailing while responding to the Silicon Valley executive's request for approval to cut them down.

Officials said Fitzhenry, vice president of human resources for San Jose, Calif.-based computer chip maker Altera Corp., drilled holes in the base of the trees and applied a herbicide.

In February, agency staff proposed a \$17,000 fine. But environmentalists and agency governors called that amount paltry, saying it would do little to deter wealthy Tahoe homeowners from similar actions to boost the value of their property.

At Wednesday's meeting, Fitzhenry's lawyer Drew Briner said his client hoped the fine would go toward future protection and restoration of Lake Tahoe. He said Fitzhenry also has agreed to a fully restore vegetation on his property.

"Staff takes no pleasure from discovering violations and assessing fines," agency attorney Joanne Marchetta said. "We would prefer that everyone understand the fragile ecosystem at Lake Tahoe so that harmful acts for the exclusive enjoyment of individuals do not destroy the resource that can be enjoyed by all."

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Katrina may dislodge FEMA

BY LARA JAKES JORDAN
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Hurricane Katrina’s latest fatality should be FEMA, the nation’s disaster response agency, a Senate inquiry concluded in calling for a government overhaul to avoid future failures like those the devastating storm exposed.

Eighty-six recommendations by the bipartisan panel indicate the United States is still woefully unprepared for a storm of Katrina’s scope with the start of the hurricane season little more than a month away.

Though the proposed changes do not place blame on any official or government agency, Sen. Joe Lieberman, D-Conn., will offer “additional views” to the panel’s findings in a statement accusing President Bush of failing “to provide critical leadership when it was most needed.”

“The United States was, and is, ill-prepared to respond to a catastrophic event of the magnitude of Hurricane Katrina,” said the recommendations. “Catastrophic events are, by their nature, difficult to imagine and to adequately plan for, and the existing plans and training proved inadequate in Katrina.”

The recommendations were being released Thursday and will be included in the Senate panel’s full report to be issued next week.

The recommendations, obtained Wednesday by The Associated Press, are the product of a seven-month Senate investigation. The probe follows similar inquiries by the House and White House and comes in an election year in which Democrats have seized on Katrina to attack the Bush administration.

President Bush was visiting Louisiana and Mississippi on Thursday.

Katrina, which struck on Aug. 29, was one of the worst natural disasters in U.S. history. The storm killed more than 1,300 people in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama, left hundreds of thousands of homeless and caused tens of billions of dollars in damage.

The recommendations conclude that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is crippled beyond repair by years of poor leadership and inadequate funding. They call for a new agency to plan and carry out relief missions for domestic disasters.

Unlike now, the authority would communicate directly with the president during major crises, and any dramatic

cuts to budget or staffing levels would have to be approved by Congress. It would remain within the Homeland Security Department and would continue receiving resources from the department.

The new authority would be “better equipped with the tools to prepare for and respond to a disaster,” said Sen. Susan Collins, R-Maine, who led the inquiry by the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. She described FEMA as a “shambles” and said the change “will help ensure that we do not have a repeat of the failures following Hurricane Katrina.”

The proposal drew disdain from Homeland Security and its critics, both sides questioning the need for another bureaucratic shuffling that they said wouldn’t accomplish much.

“It’s time to stop playing around with the organizational charts and to start focusing on government, at all levels, that are preparing for this storm season,” Homeland Security spokesman Russ Knocke said.

Former FEMA Director Michael Brown, who resigned under fire after Katrina, said the new agency would basically have the same mission FEMA had a year ago before its disaster planning responsibilities were taken away to focus solely on responding to calls for help.

“It sounds like they’re just re-creating the wheel and making it look like they’re calling for change,” Brown said. “If indeed that’s all they’re doing, they owe more than that to the American public.”

The House report, issued in February, similarly criticized Bush, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff and Brown for moving too slowly to trigger federal relief. The White House report, which came a week later, took a softer tone and singled out Homeland Security for most of the breakdowns.

Many of the rest of the Senate recommendations were far less dramatic, ranging from creating a Homeland Security Academy to encouraging plans to evacuate and shelter pets during a disaster.

They also called for more funding for disaster planning and response at all levels of government, clarifying levee maintenance responsibilities, and suggested better contracting procedures to avoid waste or fraud in the rush to get aid to disaster victims.

ON THE NET

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
<http://hsgac.senate.gov/>

Totem pole is back ‘G’: Haisla celebration marks 77-year hiatus

By The Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — A world-renowned totem pole, regarded by native people whose ancestors carved it more than a century ago as an “umbilical cord” to their history, has been returned to British Columbia after 77 years in a Swedish museum.

The 30-foot-tall G’psgolox pole, named after the chief who had it commissioned, is made of red cedar and features a mythical human figure and two grizzly bears.

It was unveiled to the Haisla First Nation Wednesday evening at the University of British Columbia’s Museum of Anthropology, where it will be temporarily housed.

Haisla member Louisa Smith, from the village of Kitamaat on British Columbia’s north coast, said her great-great-grandfather commissioned two people to carve the pole in 1872.

In 1929, the Swedish consul arranged for the totem pole to be transported to his country by boat as a gift to the Swedes.

The first totem pole in Scandinavia was placed outside a Stockholm museum for several months before the weather took its toll and it ended up in storage for 40 years.

In 1980, the pole was taken to the new, climate-controlled buildings of the Museum of Ethnography, where residents and visitors gained an appreciation for native art.

Meanwhile, Smith said her family continued wondering what had happened to the pole that had such a profound connection to them.

“It actually started with my brother Cecil Paul, who kept hearing our grandmother’s voice to keep your ears open for the whereabouts of the old pole,” she said.

Paul sought the help of a museum in Kitamaat. It would be a decade before the pole’s whereabouts were discovered in an anthropology book.

“From the information that we have, the Swedish museum wanted to have a totem pole because that was the rave at that time,” Smith said. “People from Europe wanted these totem poles in their possession.”

In 1991, she went to Stockholm to see the pole she had imagined for so long.

“When I first saw the pole, it literally took my breath away,” Smith said.

“Touching the old pole, you’re touching your ancestors. It’s an invisible umbilical cord that’s connected to our ancestors. It’s as if the pole was waiting a long, long time for someone to bring it home.”

Negotiations to bring the totem pole back home went on for years, with Smith making four more trips to Sweden to continue discussing who actually owned the pole.

Finally, in 1994, the Swedish government decided the pole would be returned as a gift to the people of Kitamaat, although the museum wanted to give it back on the condition that it be housed in a museum-like setting.

“We continued to negotiate and let the museum know that when we give a gift, there is no attachment,” Smith said.

Eventually, the director of the museum joined the Haisla First Nation’s efforts to bring home a part of their culture.

“We’re bringing it back to where it originally grew, and the breath of our ancestors will be home,” Smith said.

“For our families, it’s a reconnection to our ancestors and for the future it’s for our children and our hopes that our culture will be rejuvenated, revived.”

Andres Bjoklund, director of the Swedish Museum of Ethnography, said he’s happy the unique repatriation process has come to an end.

“I think the common feeling among Swedes is that it was the right thing to do,” he said before attending the totem pole’s unveiling in Vancouver.

“It’s their culture, it’s their heritage and they have provided us with a fantastic solution, making us a new one that’s as authentic,” Bjoklund said.

The replica red cedar totem pole, carved six years ago, stands outside the museum and is a special gift to the people of Stockholm, he said.

“It’s as authentic as the old one but it carries another story. It carries a story about the old history but also about a new history and the future of the relations with the museum and different native people.

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Jolie tops ‘Most Beautiful’

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK — She’s got that pregnant glow, but it is Angelina Jolie’s humanitarian efforts that make her most radiant, according to People magazine.

The pillow-lipped actress graces the cover of People’s “100 Most Beautiful People” issue, on newsstands Friday. It’s her fourth time on the list, but first as cover girl.

“She looks the most beautiful when she’s in the field — natural, no makeup, nothing,” the magazine quotes musician Wyclef Jean, who worked with Jolie on a relief effort in Haiti. “Because you see Angelina, the angel. It doesn’t get any better than that.”

The magazine didn’t forget her boyfriend Brad Pitt, or her two children, either. People named the globe-trotting Jolie-Pitt clan the “World’s Most Beautiful Family.”

The world may have to wait several more weeks for the arrival of the Brangelina offspring: Jolie told NBC News that she is shy of eight months pregnant, according to MSNBC’s web site.

In the interview, which was set to air on Thursday’s “Today” and on “Dateline” Sunday, Jolie also said she knows the baby’s gender but did not disclose it, according to MSNBC. The actress, interviewed in Namibia, is awaiting the birth at an African resort.

Also making the “Beautiful People” list, which until this year was limited to 50: Halle Berry, Julia Roberts, George Clooney, Scarlett Johansson, Kirstie Alley, Ryan Seacrest and University of Southern California quarterback Matt Leinart.

All 26 spokesmodels of the NBC game show “Deal or No Deal” were also chosen.

NEW YORK — Chanel has selected “Pride & Prejudice” star Keira Knightley as the new face of its Coco Mademoiselle fragrance.

The 21-year-old actress will appear in Chanel ads beginning in 2007, the company

announced Wednesday.

Knightley succeeds Kate Moss, whose contract expired last October. The 32-year-old British supermodel had starred in the Coco Mademoiselle ads since 2002.

Moss lost several high-profile modeling contracts last year after a tabloid published pictures of her allegedly using cocaine in a west London music studio.

“Keira Knightley is a bright, young actress who has already made her mark in a diverse portfolio of films, including her Oscar-nominated performance in ‘Pride & Prejudice,’” said Chanel artistic director Jacques Helleu in a statement.

He also said Knightley’s elegance, beauty and modernity parallel some of the brand’s other previous famous faces, including Catherine Deneuve and Nicole Kidman, who represented Chanel No. 5.

“(I am) really proud to have been asked to work with such an iconic house as Chanel, and thrilled to follow the extraordinary women who have been associated with it before,” Knightley said in a statement.

Knightley’s upcoming films include “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest,” which is set for release this summer.

PARIS — Tom Cruise skipped a “Mission: Impossible III” press conference to go shopping for baby outfits for his new daughter, organizers said.

Hours later, the 43-year-old actor arrived by helicopter at La Defense, the sleek high-rise complex on the western edge of Paris, where thousands of fans massed Wednesday ahead of a red carpet showing of his new film. Cruise treated them to autographs.

His fiancée, Katie Holmes, and their week-old daughter, Suri, stayed home in Los Angeles while Cruise was in Europe this week to promote his role as superagent Ethan Hunt.

Suri is the first child for Cruise and Holmes, 27. The couple became engaged last year.

At the press conference, “Mission: Impossible III” director J.J. Abrams playfully asked Michelle Monaghan what it was like to kiss Cruise with Holmes on the set.

“Was it weird?” he asked.

No way, the actress replied.

“Just in general to kiss Tom Cruise is, you know ... an experience of a lifetime,” she joked. “I highly recommend it. ... I said to Katie, ‘I understand why you keep him around.’”

ENTERTAINMENT

Who let the Dogg out? Snoop busted in airport

BY TARIQ PANJA

Associated Press Writer

LONDON — Snoop Dogg was released on bail Thursday after a fracas over access to a first-class lounge at Heathrow Airport, which injured seven police officers, his lawyers said.

The 34-year-old rapper was driven away from the airport’s police station, police said, while speaking on condition of anonymity in line with department policy.

“Snoop has been released on bail,” said his attorney, Peter Binning, adding that Snoop, whose real name is Calvin Broadus, has not been not charged with any offense.

London’s Metropolitan Police said officers responded late Wednesday to reports of a disturbance involving 30 people at British Airways’ first-class lounge.

When officers told the group they wouldn’t be allowed to board their flight, “a number of the group became abusive and pushed officers,” a police spokeswoman said on the force’s customary condition of anonymity.

Snoop and his party were denied entry into the lounge because some were flying first class while others were flying economy, said Richard Goodfellow, a spokesman for British Airways.

Santa Monica Daily Press

MOVIEGUIDE

SHOWTIMES: FRIDAY, APRIL 28, 2006

Broadway Loews Cineplex
1441 3rd Street
(310) 458-6232

American Dreamz (PG-13)

2:00, 4:45, 7:30, 10:00

The Benchwarmers (PG-13)

1:45, 4:05, 7:00, 9:30

The Sentinel (PG-13)

2:15, 5:10, 7:45, 10:30

United 93 (R)

1:30, 4:20, 7:20, 10:15

Mann's Criterion Theatre
1313 3rd Street
(310) 395-1599

Hard Candy (R)

11:50am, 2:20, 4:50, 7:30, 10:10

Ice Age: The Meltdown (PG)

11:40am, 2:00, 4:20, 6:40, 9:00

La Mujer de Mi Hermano (R)

12:30, 3:00, 5:30, 7:50, 10:20

Lucky Number Slevin (R)

11:30am, 2:10, 5:00, 7:40, 10:30

Take the Lead (PG-13)

12:50, 3:50, 7:00, 9:50

V for Vendetta (R)

12:40, 3:40, 6:50, 10:00

AMC7 Santa Monica
1310 3rd Street
(310) 289-4262

Akeelah and the Bee (PG)

11:20am, 2:00, 4:40, 7:30, 10:15

Inside Man (R)

1:10, 4:00, 7:10, 10:00

RV (PG)

11:45am, 2:30, 5:10, 7:50, 10:30

Scary Movie 4 (PG-13)

11:30am, 1:30, 3:35, 5:40, 8:00, 10:20

Silent Hill (R)

12:00, 2:40, 5:30, 8:20, 11:10

Stick It (PG-13)

11:10am, 1:40, 4:20, 7:00, 9:30, 11:40

The Wild (G)

1:00, 3:10, 5:20, 7:40, 9:40

Nuwilshire Theatre
1314 Wilshire Blvd
(310) 281-8228

The Notorious Bettie Page (R)

12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 10:00

Thank You for Smoking (R)

11:45am, 2:15, 4:45, 7:15, 9:50

Laemmle 4-Plex Theatre
1332 2nd Street
(310) 394-9741

Friends With Money (R)

12:45, 3:00, 5:20, 7:40, 10:00

Kinky Boots (PG-13)

1:40, 4:25, 7:10, 9:45

Water (PG-13)

1:00, 4:00, 7:00, 9:55

Information: calendar@smdp.com

MORE TODAY IN HISTORY

■ **In 1789**, there was a mutiny on HMS Bounty as the crew of the British ship set Capt. William Bligh and 18 sailors adrift in a launch in the South Pacific.

■ **In 1947**, a six-man expedition sailed from Peru aboard a balsa wood raft named the Kon-Tiki on a 101-day journey to Polynesia.

■ **In 1958**, Vice President Nixon and his wife, Pat, began a goodwill tour of Latin America that was marred by hostile mobs in Lima, Peru, and Caracas, Venezuela.

■ **In 1967**, heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali refused to be inducted into the Army, the same day Gen. William C. Westmoreland told Congress the U.S. “would prevail in Vietnam.”

The advertisement features a blue background with a subtle pattern of ice cubes. In the top left corner is the Liquid Ice logo, a blue diamond shape with a yellow outline and a white drop inside. Below the logo, the text "LIQUID ICE ENERGY DRINK" is written in a bold, yellow, sans-serif font. In the top right corner, the text "This Is No 'Bull'" is written in a large, red, italicized, sans-serif font. In the bottom left corner, the text "If you're gonna play the game you're gonna need the energy" is written in a large, yellow, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner, there is a detailed illustration of a blue can of Liquid Ice Energy Drink, tilted at an angle. The can has the Liquid Ice logo and the words "LIQUID ICE ENERGY DRINK" on it.



COMICS

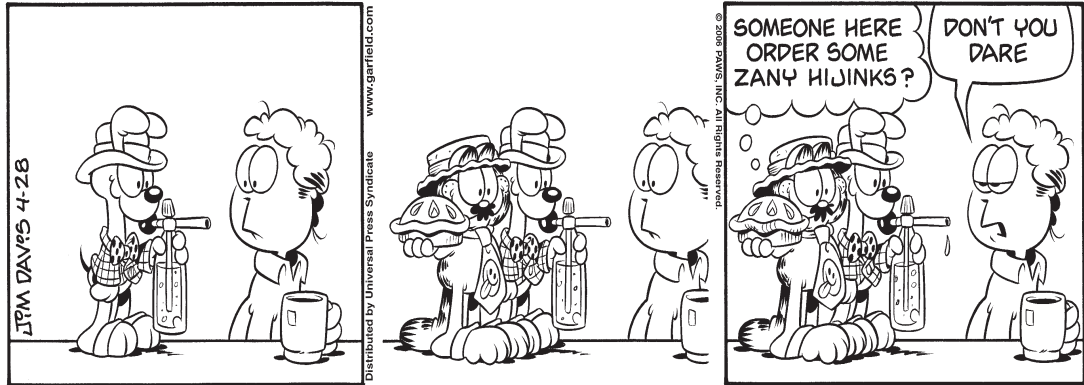
The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



edge city by TERRY & PATTY LABAN



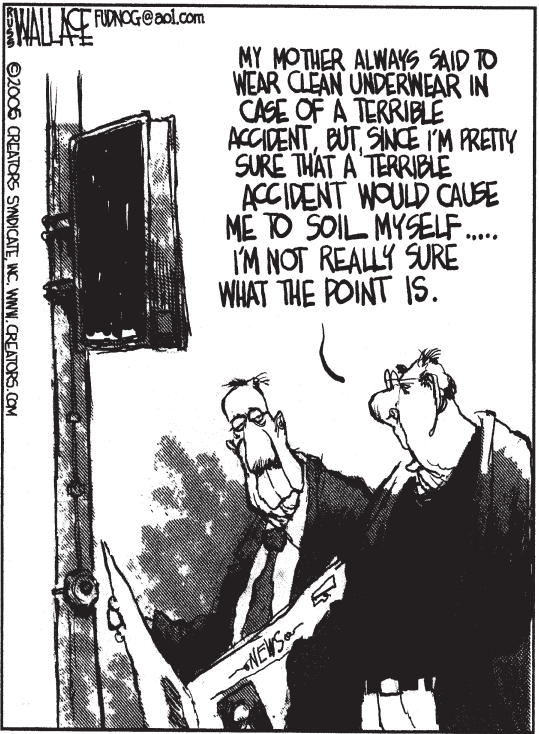
Garfield® By Jim Davis



Speed Bump® By Dave Coverly



Natural Selection® By Russ Wallace



Interesting question number 7.

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By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
- 1 Daytona car
 - 6 Film trophy
 - 11 Love, to Luigi
 - 12 Gofer's job
 - 13 Chart anew
 - 14 Breaks, in a way
 - 15 New Haven student
 - 16 Look over
 - 18 Immoral act
 - 19 Pants part
 - 20 "Unforgettable" singer
 - 21 Luggage hangers
 - 23 Album tracks
 - 25 Pointer
 - 27 Squirrel's prize
 - 28 Crates
 - 30 Big flop
 - 33 Research site
 - 34 Balloon sound
 - 36 Water tester
 - 37 Squashed circle
- 39 Juan's wife
- 40 Domicile
- 41 Car quartet
- 43 Might
- 44 Let in
- 45 Fresh
- 46 Endures

- DOWN
- 1 Least common
 - 2 Pilot Earhart
 - 3 Fighting
 - 4 Depression, e.g.
 - 5 Push away
 - 6 Stop sign, e.g.
 - 7 Fake

- 8 Reaching an accord
- 9 Bowls
- 10 Fix a clock
- 17 Marks a ballot
- 22 Middling card
- 24 Essence
- 26 Hot, in a way
- 28 Panama explorer
- 29 Urgent call
- 31 "Outta my way!"
- 32 Creatures
- 33 Bounds
- 35 Daisy part
- 38 March date
- 42 Rhoda's mother

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