

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

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FANTASY 5

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DAILY 3

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD BY CHUCK SHEPARD

For a six-month period four years ago, government scientists in Florida studied a "miracle" liquid called "Celestial Drops" as a cure for the canker menace that ravages the state's citrus crops. According to a July report by the Orlando Sentinel, the research was recommended by then-secretary of state Katherine Harris, who later said she had learned of Celestial Drops from New York rabbi Abe Hardoon, who is associated with the popularized version of Kabbalah, whose organizers sell its followers ordinary water that is supposedly "blessed" by being stored in a room with sacred texts. Celestial Drops, which was promoted as having "improved fractal design," "infinite levels of order" and "high energy and low entropy," was ultimately revealed by the scientists to also be water.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Today is the 245th day of 2005.
There are 120 days left in the year.

On Sept. 2, 1945, Japan formally surrendered in ceremonies aboard the USS Missouri, ending World War II.
In 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam an independent republic.
In 1963, Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace prevented the integration of Tuskegee High School by encircling the building with state troopers.

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Watch where you're going

City's policy to fix hazard brought to fore by lawsuit

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — A West L.A. attorney who successfully settled a trip-and-fall case against City Hall says hazards in Santa Monica may continue to go overlooked, despite his success in helping his client.

Robert Tucker, who represented Aljean Harmetz in a trip-and-fall case that settled for \$115,000 out of court in July, said there were discrepancies in depositions he took from city staff in the weeks leading up to the trial that was avoided by the settlement.

The evidence he gathered indicates Santa Monica may have abandoned efforts it made during the 1990s which required city staff to aggressively assess hazards on city property and prioritize the need to fix them. If true, City Hall may be paving the way for more accidents, as well as litigation.

"My hope in bringing this information before the public is that it may help prevent another serious injury," Tucker said.

Tucker was also incensed by an Aug. 15 SMDP article, "City settles suits for \$1.7 million," in which an official alleges, "Santa Monica becomes a hot bed for greedy lawyers salivating to collect fees from relatively minor slip-and-fall accidents." Tucker said such statements mischaracterize attorneys who sue over conditions municipalities often bring upon themselves.

See HAZARDS, page 8

Model behavior



Fabian Lewkowicz/Daily Press

Guest model Dana Harris, representing the Irene Dunne Guild, sashays down the catwalk on Thursday at the Fairmont Miramar Hotel in Santa Monica. Harris was taking part in the annual Christmas in September fashion show, staged by the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary. The event benefits programs for needy children.

City seizing the moment to tap homelessness czar

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — While delays seem to plague homelessness efforts throughout the county, Santa Monica is moving full-speed ahead with its plan to hire a czar to deal with the problem at home.

Advertisements have already been taken out in newspapers throughout the country, including the LA Times and the New York Times, asking qualified applicants to submit their applications by Sept. 9.

City Manager Susan McCarthy, who is retiring in November, is expected to hire someone for the new post before she departs.

Local officials are hopeful

whoever fills the position — which will command a \$200,000 annual salary — will be a leader who can build consensus. They also hope the person can gather nearby communities and resources to continue addressing the problem of chronic homelessness on the westside.

The idea of creating the temporary position was introduced by City Councilman Bobby Shriver earlier this year. A majority of the City Council approved the position in April.

The "regional liaison" will be responsible for advancing programs such as a sobering center, a mental health and drug court, year-round housing through the

See HOMELESSNESS, page 8

LOCAL

Spirit of 76 leaving schools concerned

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

SMMUSD HDQTRS — The biggest threat to the success of the Santa Monica school system in the next few years is the governor of California, whose special election seeks to undermine public education, local officials say.

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School district officials said the most significant impediment to the schools' progress may be the outcome of the November special election called by California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger.

In particular, local school officials are concerned that Proposition 76, if approved, will

See PROP. 76, page 9

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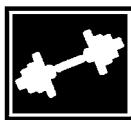
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Santa Monica Daily Press



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



ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Matters involving education, travel and/or in-laws could be subject to a swing in the next few days. Just observe what happens. Conversations and debate become instrumental as you view the issue. Tonight: Slow down, please.



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Dig into the basics with an associate or partner. You two might see issues differently, but use this lack of agreement positively. Remember that there are many ways to approach a situation. Learn the art of compromise. Be more playful. Tonight: Raise the roof in your Taurean style.



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ Saying what you mean is important, though a partner could reverse the intent behind your words. Keep conversations active until you see eye to eye and find understanding, if not resolution. If you can cut your day short, head home. Tonight: Happy at your place.



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ Expenses might be lessened by a different approach to work and your daily lifestyle. Talk to a budget-minded pal for suggestions. You might be amazed at what comes up. Stay open. Tonight: Relax with a friend.



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Your ideas and innovative style could draw a new reaction from someone you care about a lot. Talk about your creativity and where you are coming from. You finally have the opportunity to see eye to eye. Tonight: Dinner is your treat.



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ You might not be altogether content with a situation but, for now, feel powerless to change it. Suddenly, you could find that you are talking to yourself, mulling over ideas. This afternoon, claim your power when the Moon is in your sign. Tonight: The world is your oyster. Act like it.



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Emphasize others and their opinions. You have the ability to revise others' points of view. On the other hand, you might adapt to what they think. What is important is that you can flex and grow. Tonight: Do something exclusively for yourself.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Take charge, especially regarding money and revamping your budget. Spending to make money is one thing; letting go and just spending carelessly is a problem. Meetings punctuate your afternoon. Tonight: Your friends want to be with you.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ You change plans, or want to, this morning. Make a long-distance call, but avoid a heavy discussion. Get others' points of view. Avoid hearsay, and establish facts. Your decisions make a difference. Tonight: Others notice you.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ A partner might be unusually chatty this morning. You might have to listen, but could have difficulty absorbing everything he or she says. Investigate different solutions. Tonight: Take off ASAP.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Others overwhelm you with their chatter and ideas. You might find that a goal changes as the day progresses. Weigh the pros and cons of suggestions. Schedule a late-afternoon meeting with a specific person. Tonight: Be a duo.



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ You accomplish a lot, even if you are in the Friday mood. In fact, you find a shorter way, or certainly a more efficient path. Others will share more of themselves late this afternoon. Associates relax with the end of the day. Tonight: Accept an invitation.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

A call for volunteers, donations for hurricane victims

By Daily Press staff

The Santa Monica chapter of the American Red Cross is calling for help from the public in efforts to support disaster relief efforts now going on in the deep South as a result of Hurricane Katrina.

The Red Cross is asking for volunteers, donations and blood.

For those who lack disaster relief experience but are interested in volunteering, the Red Cross will offer “fast track” disaster orientation classes during the next few weeks.

Two classes will be held this Saturday, Sept. 3 — at 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. — at the Santa Monica chapter. Additional orientations will be scheduled in the near future.

Donations — in the form of checks made out to the American Red Cross — can be sent to 1450 11th St., Santa Monica, CA 90401.

Donations are also being accepted online at www.redcross.org.

Blood donations are also needed and will be accepted on the first and third Mondays of the month from 2 p.m. to 8 p.m., as well as the second and fourth Mondays of the month from 12:15 p.m. to 7 p.m.

To schedule an appointment, call (800) 974-2113.

The Red Cross has launched the largest mobilization of resources for a single natural disaster — involving thousands of trained disaster relief workers and tons of supplies. Two volunteers from the Santa Monica chapter are already on scene. Additional Santa Monica volunteers will be heading to the disaster area in the days and weeks to come.

To contact the Santa Monica branch, call (310) 394-3773.

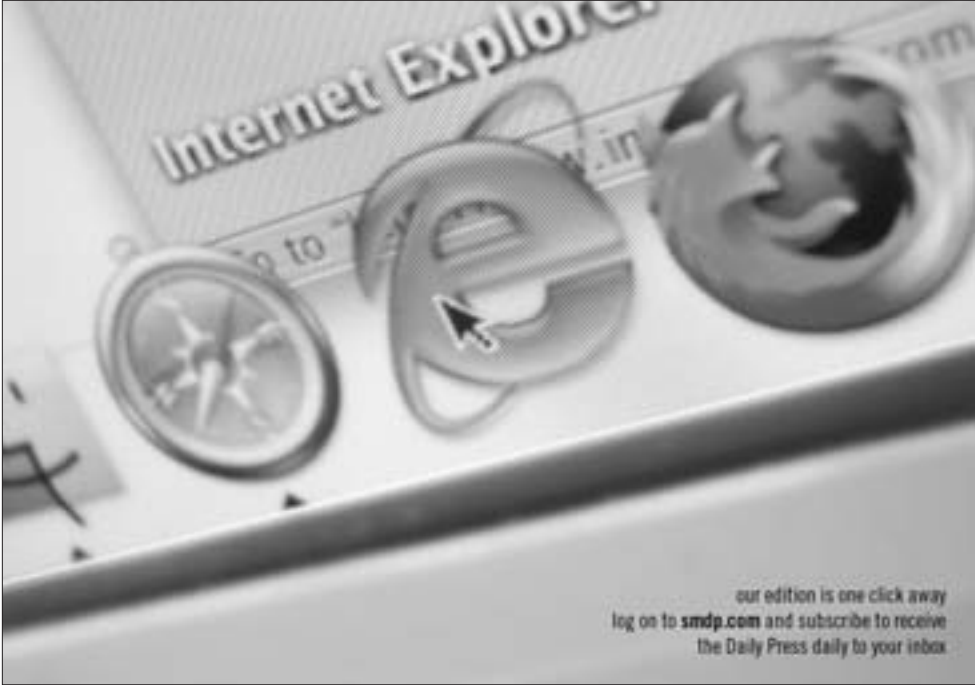
‘Austin’ power: Book signing on tap

By Daily Press staff

Author Constance “Connie” Constant is scheduled to read from her work “Austin Lunch, Greek-American Recollections,” on Saturday, Sept. 3, at 2 p.m. at the Barnes & Noble bookstore on the Third Street Promenade.

The meet-the-author event, book reading and signing is free and open to the public.

“Austin Lunch, Greek-American Recollections” re-creates Depression-era Chicago and a Windy City neighborhood near the famous “Loop” using details culled from the author’s older siblings and mother.



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SURF REPORT

Friday is looking like a smaller day with some NW wind swell in the knee- to waist-high range, and very little SW around the same size. West-facing breaks may at times see occasional chest-high sets.

We have mostly NW wind swell with a touch of SW energy along the California coast. Some NW wind swell and southern hemi ground swell is due over the Labor Day weekend.

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
MONDAY	1:42	0.2	12:57	3.1	8:46	3.9	6:53	5.3
TUESDAY	2:21	0.0	1:41	2.8	9:08	4.0	7:38	5.6
WEDNESDAY	2:52	-0.1	2:14	2.4	9:27	4.2	8:14	5.8
THURSDAY	3:18	-0.1	2:45	2.1	9:44	4.3	8:47	5.9
FRIDAY	3:42	0.0	3:15	1.9	10:12	4.0	8:17	5.9

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According to recently released numbers, Santa Monica’s students continue to show improved performance on standardized tests — a trend that has been ongoing ever since such test results started being tracked in the 2000-01 school year. However, officials acknowledge there is still plenty of room for improvement.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, “What does the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District have to do to ensure this upward achievement trend among students continues?”

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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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Love thy neighbor, even if they were once homeless

Editor:

I've often considered responding to editorials and letters to the editor regarding the homeless situation in Santa Monica. However, after reading Sara Chesluk's letter (SMDP, Aug. 23), I feel compelled to reply.

I was once homeless in Santa Monica.

For the last two and a half years, I have lived in a one-bedroom apartment in Santa Monica. I am a woman, but I do not have children. I did, though, receive a HUD voucher which supplements the rent that I pay.

Oh, and by the way, I now work in Santa Monica.

So, I suppose my question to Sara is this: Where would she have me live? And in what?

She seems to feel I am not worthy of a one-bedroom apartment in a fairly decent area simply because I was homeless.

Or is it that she is another one of those who supports homeless services only from a distance?

You see, Sara, you don't always know who your neighbors are. Right next door to you could be someone who was once homeless, but who, because HUD helped them get an apartment, now gives back to the very community that didn't really want them there in the first place.

There are many formerly homeless people living in Santa Monica who now volunteer and work here and elsewhere.

And why are they able to do this? Because they no longer have to worry about shelter and food.

Perhaps, Sara, you should stop feeling sorry for those who can't afford to live in Santa Monica and just be grateful that you can — if you are, in fact, happy living here.

Maybe, too, you should take a look at the support you give homeless services. The ultimate goal of all homeless agencies is housing, but it seems these agencies are damned if they do and damned if they don't.

The public rails against them for not doing enough, even blames them for the problem in the first place.

Yet, when a definite step is taken towards solving the problem, it is in the wrong direction.

I was homeless for 15 months — and not by choice, as is the case with most of the homeless men, women and children I meet.

It saddens and angers me that so many people see these individuals as so different from themselves.

In the end, there are more similarities than differences. There are homeless and housed alcoholics, homeless and housed mentally ill, homeless and housed artists, homeless and housed bankers and salespersons ... I even met a doctor who, after a nasty divorce, lost everything but the van he slept in.

So, if there is a better solution than helping someone move from the street into a bedroom, I'm sure all of the social services agencies would welcome it.

Rene Buchanan
Santa Monica

Honk if you're ornery

Editor:

I vigil in my neighborhood every week and I can tell by the number of approving honks we receive that the American people want this war to be over and they want to have our troops come home.

Eleanor Belser
Los Angeles

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.

If we build it, who will come?



OUR TOWN
BY TED WINTERER

If your beach reading included light fare such as "Moby Dick" and "Tristram Shandy" and you're ready for a tome of greater heft, you might enjoy City Hall's new "Opportunities and Challenges" report. Running about 400 pages, it's the second such lengthy document produced by the city's multi-year process for revising the blueprints for land use and transportation in Santa Monica for the next 20 years.

The first report coalesced public input on our future into "Emerging Themes," such as "Santa Monica's growth should be modest" to keep it a "community built at an appropriate town scale." The new document's purpose is to examine ways in which these goals can be attained through the update to the city's General Plan.

"Opportunities and Challenges" is quite comprehensive and thoughtful and includes many fine notions for improvements to our town. However, it's not without its flaws.

Foremost is its assertion that the community believes that "(e)xisting height limits should be maintained." I think otherwise: what people want perpetuated is existing heights, not the current zoning ceiling which might allow a block of two story buildings to be rebuilt to four floors. No one at any public meetings reviewed a model of our city built out to the maximum densities presently allowed. Instead, what folks like is the scale of Santa Monica today.

Then while the report is purportedly objective, there's an inherent bias, despite the public's expressed goals, in favor of population growth of at least 10 percent and a corresponding increase in density in certain neighborhoods. The authors encourage redevelopment along commercial corridors such as Wilshire and Lincoln, within the industrial zone surrounding Olympic and adjacent to the proposed light rail running through Bergamot Station to downtown. This "Smart Growth" would consist of taller, mixed-use buildings (apartments above retail) along bus and rail lines. The theory is that new residents will take public transit to work, walk to local services and not further congest our streets with autos.

It sounds swell, but I think there are reasons to be skeptical about some of these assumptions:

1. Until the city can produce a study proving that denser, transit-oriented

growth will actually increase ridership on trains and busses, current trends suggests otherwise. Jammed freeways and high gas prices have yet to cause people to switch to mass transit.

2. Given that past transit planning in LA County has been driven by politics rather than common sense (such as the decision to end the Green Line short of LAX to appease cab drivers), there's no guarantee the Expo light rail will run into Santa Monica. Even now LA Councilman Bill Rosendahl is talking about routing it to Venice instead. So while it might make sense to develop along rapid bus lines, why build for light rail until it's a sure thing?

3. Mixed-use development has failed thus far in places such as Sixth Street downtown to provide the mix of uses which might obviate the need for car trips.

4. It's perhaps no accident the report promotes growth largely in the city's Northridge earthquake redevelopment zone, areas in which City Hall would profit handsomely from increased property taxes. We need to make sure fiscal policy isn't driving land use policy, as it did in the decision to allow expansion of auto dealerships to the detriment of neighbors while implicitly promoting driving over mass transit.

5. Smart Growth is a nifty phrase with some laudable tenets, but we have to be cautious that it's not being hijacked by those with a vested interest in development, in the same way George W. has co-opted "Clear Skies" and "Healthy Forests" as a cover for environmental degradation.

I agree that we should promote alternate modes of transportation and that sectors of our commercial corridors would benefit from a makeover — wouldn't it be nice if Lincoln south of the freeway was pedestrian friendly and neighborhood serving? But let's plan for small-scale redevelopment that furthers walkability, not for tall buildings serving as an economic engine and justified by unproved planning theory.

Finally, the report observes that our population has been stable over the last 25 years while office space has increased 170 percent, creating a jobs/housing imbalance which clogs our streets. So why would we build any more offices?

It's perhaps prudent to look at our town as an ecosystem with an inherent carrying capacity before we are driven to race like lemmings into the sea. The opportunity before us is to keep our city livable and sustainable. The challenge will be to curtail the forces within and without City Hall which favor more growth than our citizens desire.

(Ted Winterer can be reached at ourtownsmdp@aol.com.)

YOUR OPINION MATTERS!

PLEASE SEND LETTERS TO:

Santa Monica Daily Press: Att. Editor 1427 Third Street Promenade Suite 202 Santa Monica, CA 90401
Or email: editor@smdp.com



COMMENTARY



GUEST COMMENTARY BY BENNET KELLEY

Robertson, Falwell and the assault on Christianity

Pat Robertson's call for the assassination of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez evokes the old proverb that "it is better to be known as a sinner than a hypocrite." In issuing his fatwa, the same Robertson who attacks Democrats for engaging in an "all-out assault on Christianity" for opposing the display of the Ten Commandments in government buildings violates both the Ten Commandments' prohibition on killing and the New Testament's Great Commandment to "love thy neighbor as thyself."

When placed in the context of Robertson's past comments, this fatwa illustrates that the real attack on Christianity comes from those who seek to use it as a political tool and/or as a cloak for bigotry.

The growing claim by Republicans to be "God's Official Party" and events such as "Justice Sunday" are the fruit of the efforts of Robertson and his fellow Bishop of Buffoonery, Jerry Falwell, in the 1980s to inject their right-wing version of Christianity into American politics through the Christian Coalition and the Moral Majority. All too often, however, the message from these self-appointed defenders of Christendom is the exact opposite of the New Testament and is neither moral nor Christian.

Robertson's comments about Chavez are mild compared to many of his other statements. The same man who claims God speaks to him about matters of politics, at various times announced that "Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Methodists . . . [are] the spirit of the Anti-christ," and that Kwanza was "a fraud". Falwell similarly has labeled Rev. Billy Graham as the Devil's servant, Jews as "spiritually blind" and Mohammed as a terrorist. It is no wonder that Sen. John McCain condemns the two as "agents of intolerance".

Robertson and Falwell know no restraint on the question of feminism or homosexuality, as they blamed 9/11 on feminists, homosexuals, the ACLU and all "who have tried to secularize America". In Robertson's view, feminism "encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism and become lesbians." Meanwhile, Falwell

views AIDS as "not just God's punishment for homosexuals; it is God's punishment for the society that tolerates homosexuals."

On racial matters, both Robertson and Falwell were strong supporters of apartheid, which Falwell called a "bulwark for Christian civilization." Only recently, Robertson's Christian Coalition was forced to settle a racial discrimination suit that claimed they required African-American employees to use a separate entrance and lunchroom and excluded them from certain events, while Falwell's church states that the "idea of America being a multi-cultural community has served only to dilute our sovereignty and our national identity."

On issue after issue, Robertson and Falwell freely use and distort Christianity as a polarizing tool to divide "believers" and "infidels" to further their political and personal agendas. While they denounce Democrats for seeking to "eliminate religious values from America" by opposing extreme right-wing judicial nominees, they are debasing Christianity by claiming that God is pro-war and supports war criminals. Incredible as it may sound, Falwell truly claimed that "God is pro-war," while Robertson's gold-mining interest led him to invoke religion to defend Liberian President Charles Taylor as a Christian fighting Muslim domination, despite the fact that he had been indicted by a U.N. tribunal for war crimes.

Where Jesus calls for love and reconciliation, these two televangelists have been promoting the politics of piety and polarization. A generation ago, Sen. Barry Goldwater stated that "every good Christian should line up and kick Jerry Falwell" in the behind. What is really needed today is a much stronger boot to kick Falwell, Robertson and other deacons of division out of politics altogether. Hopefully, comments such as Robertson's fatwa may fuel this exit as people recognize that under their veneer of piety lies a hypocrite.

(Bennet Kelley is the author of "President Bush: False Prophet of the Christian Right," which appears in Big Bush Lies (RiverWood Books).)



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The QLine



STATE

Calif. reaches out to hurricane victims with money

BY GILLIAN FLACCUS
Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — Substitute teacher Liliette Pena watched television images of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina until she could watch no more. Then she turned to her checkbook.

"It's heartwrenching," Pena said, stifling sobs as she waited to donate \$100 at a Red Cross center at Dodgers Stadium.

"A little money from me can go a long way. I'd like to think that if anything like that happened to Los Angeles, people back East would do the same thing."

Thousands of Californians reached out to Katrina victims Wednesday as pictures of the storm-ravaged Gulf Coast overwhelmed living rooms and offices across the country. From churches to ballparks to train stations, efforts to help were under way.

New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin said Wednesday the hurricane and flooding probably killed thousands. Emergency officials were trying desperately to evacuate up to 100,000 people from the city and plug a 500-foot gap in an overwhelmed levee. And while the economic toll is unknown, the human need is not.

Many Californians, like Pena, reached for their wallets. Others packed their bags and prepared to join the stream of civilian

doctors, nurses, paramedics, morticians and veterinarians headed south to shepherd shellshocked residents through their trauma.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said he planned to talk with the governors of Mississippi and Louisiana and urged all Californians to donate money or other assistance to Katrina's victims.

"We are trying as a state to do everything we can to help those two states," he said at a news conference in Long Beach. "It's unbelievable the suffering going on in those two states."

Officials said eight 14-person swift water rescue teams, 11 urban search and rescue teams — including 70 personnel from the Los Angeles County Fire Department — and more than 100 civilian doctors, nurses and paramedics were mobilized at the request of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Some arrived in Lafayette, La., early Wednesday, while others were headed to Houston where they would await orders.

Corporate California and everyday Californians chipped in with cash — and lots of it.

By midday Wednesday, Red Cross donation centers in Anaheim and Los Angeles had collected a combined \$145,000 in individual donations. By midday, the Salvation Army in San Diego

received \$126,000 from 449 Internet donations. Hundreds of fundraisers and rallies were scheduled throughout the state over the Labor Day weekend.

Eloise Rosales, 34, arrived with her husband and three children to donate at the Red Cross center at Dodgers Stadium. She said she was moved by television images of homeless and lost children wading through the flooded streets of New Orleans.

"It's devastating. It's so sad," she said. "It's almost unbelievable, but you look at it on TV and you say, 'My God, this is really happening — it happened.'"

Others opened churches, restaurants and even train stations for impromptu fundraisers for Katrina's victims.

At the Ragin' Cajun, a popular Creole restaurant in Hermosa Beach, the Domingue family — natives of Lafayette, La. — collected \$600 in the early hours of a drive to help a friend's business that was wiped out by flood waters.

Jeannine Domingue, who works at the restaurant, said she was shocked to see the streets of New Orleans so ravaged by flood waters. Domingue said her family, who lives about 30 miles inland, was safe.

"It's horrific. I was in Louisiana through Andrew and that was nothing compared to the tragedy that this hurricane has done," she said. "When they

show pictures of the French Quarter, you can tell they're in the French Quarter but you can't tell which bar is what."

At Union Station in Los Angeles, a nonprofit called Phone for Life, Inc., planned a Labor Day weekend collection of used cell phones for elderly hurricane victims. The group planned to distribute the phones to elderly and sickly residents in remote areas of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama so they can call 911 if necessary.

For Cathy Brown, the charity efforts at the church where she's a receptionist had an added urgency. About half of the 1,100 families that worship at the Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church in Los Angeles have roots in bayou country — and Brown hasn't heard from her own daughter since Sunday.

The 22-year-old last called home from the sixth floor of the administration building at Xavier University, where she was huddled with 39 other students and a week's worth of supplies. There was no power, she told her mother.

The parish is holding daily prayer sessions and a special collection on Sunday, Brown said.

"Lately, I've been able to leave a message on her cell at least, but she hasn't called back," she said. "We're just holding our breath."



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LOCAL



CRIME WATCH

By Daily Press staff

Thief's nom de plume was a no-go

At 12:55 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 24, the Santa Monica police responded to the 1200 block of Fourth Street, Circuit City, regarding a suspect seeking to purchase a computer using a fictitious credit card. While officers were en route to the scene, the suspect fled and was followed by the security guard. The suspect was apprehended on the 1400 block of Fourth Street and taken back to the store. The value of the computer was \$2,150. Kamal Morsy Ismaiel, 54, of Daly City, was charged with commercial burglary, using a fictitious credit card and attempted grand theft. Bail was set at \$20,000.

At 10:53 a.m. on Monday, Aug. 22, a victim came to the police station to report that while she was stopped at the intersection of Lincoln Boulevard and Pearl Street, she saw her ex-boyfriend who is the father of their three-year-old daughter. The ex-boyfriend, the suspect, pointed a handgun at her and yelled at the victim, who drove off and called the police. Officers responding to the area eventually stopped the suspect in the 1500 block of Euclid Street. Harvey Robertson, 24, of Santa Monica, was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon, criminal threats, and violation of a restraining order. Bail was set at \$50,000.

At 3:05 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 23, the Santa Monica police responded to the 1200 block of the Third Street Promenade, the Apple store, regarding a theft suspect in custody. When officers arrived to the scene, they spoke to the security guard, who said he two suspects entered the store and one of them walked to the iPod display shelf and removed an iPod and placed it inside his backpack. The two suspects left the store, failing to pay for the items. When they were being detained, the suspect who had taken the iPod began to fight with the security guard and was taken in to custody. The other suspect fled on foot and was not apprehended. The value of the iPod was \$728. Shawn Thomas Brundrett, 19, of Culver City, as charged with strong-arm robbery. Bail was set at \$50,000.

At 10:28 p.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 24, the Santa Monica police responded to the 1500 block of Second Street regarding a vandalism. When officers arrived to the scene, they spoke to the witness, who said he saw the suspect walking on the sidewalk. As the suspect passed five vehicles, she struck the windows and side mirrors and put dents in the bodies with her hands. Damage was estimated at more than \$400. Lisa Booker, 38, transient, was arrested for vandalism. Bail was set at \$20,000.

At 6:15 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 25, the Santa Monica police responded to the 2200 block of Main Street regarding a vandalism. When officers arrived to the scene, they spoke to the witness, who directed them to the suspect. According to the witness, the suspect was walking down the street, kicking vehicles, intoxicated. Damage to vehicles was estimated at \$500. Anthony Karlos Vasquez of Los Angeles was arrested for felony vandalism and public intoxication. Bail was set at \$23,000.

At 2:19 a.m. on Friday, Aug. 26, the Santa Monica police responded to the 800 block of Palisades Park regarding a call of shots fired. When officers arrived to the scene, they saw a vehicle leaving the location, which officers believed might have been the vehicle from which the shots were fired. It was not the same vehicle. However, during their conversation with the driver, officers smelled marijuana emitting from the vehicle and the driver's breath. Officers searched the vehicle and found a clear plastic baggy containing a green leafy substance that resembled marijuana. Officers also discovered a pipe and baggy containing a crystal-like substance resembling methamphetamine. Robert Lee Teasley, 31, of Virginia, was arrested for possession of a controlled substance. Bail was set at \$30,000.

At 10:51 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 26, a Santa Monica police officer on patrol saw a Jeep Wagoneer parked near the beach. While the officer watched the vehicle, he saw approximately 15 different men walk to up to the vehicle and disappear out of sight for 30 seconds, then walk away. The officer contacted the occupant of the vehicle. When asked if she had any drugs in the vehicle, the occupant told the officer she had some under the cushion. Officer recovered rock cocaine from the vehicle. Denise Paulene Roger, 39, transient, was transported to Santa Monica jail for possession of a controlled substance. Bail was set at \$10,000.

This police report was provided by Daily Press staff writer Ryan Hyatt.

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Dukes of hazard: City defends policy

HAZARDS, from page 1

Meanwhile, City Hall said there has been no significant policy shift regarding assessing hazards on city property, and responsibilities among staff members to fix them generally remain clear.

"It's absurd," said Lance Gams, a deputy city attorney assigned to the Harmetz case. "Do you know how many trip-and-fall accidents we'd have in Santa Monica if we encouraged staff to walk around with their eyes closed?"

Harmetz, who Tucker characterized as older than 65, was walking on the sidewalk on the north side of Santa Monica Boulevard near the intersection of 20th Street on Feb. 2, 2004. As she passed a bus stop and trash can and attempted to pass pedestrian traffic, she tripped over a tree well and exposed tree stump on the sidewalk, fracturing her right elbow.

The uncovered tree well had been in place since a tree was removed from the site by the city on Aug. 27, 2001, nearly two-and-a half years before Harmetz's accident. City Hall may have intended to

replace the tree, according to records.

Meanwhile, records show a trip-and-fall accident occurred at the same site in May of 2003, before Harmetz took her spill. Staff from City Hall's street maintenance and open space divisions also surveyed the area during routine inspections while the tree well was exposed. Neither group managed to address the hazard until a month after Harmetz's accident, when staff members coned the tree well and eventually cemented it over. In the depositions, some city staff even refer to the gap in the sidewalk as not being their responsibility.

A deposition taken from a street maintenance staff member in September of 1999 in the case Rita Mandell versus Santa Monica shows City Hall had a policy which required it to "identify a clear hazard that must be ... repaired." However, during testimony taken in April for Aljean Harmetz versus Santa Monica, the references to the word "hazard" were completely removed from the same guidelines for sidewalk repairs.

Tucker suggests there may have been a policy change between the 1999 deposi-

tion taken in the Mandell case and the April deposition he took from the same city staff member in the Harmetz case. As a result of this possible policy change, Tucker said city staff may now be required to prioritize repairs in terms of evaluating "damaged" public assets, as opposed to specifically looking for hazards.

If true, Tucker said this may be a step in the wrong direction.

"If the city is only inspecting for 'damaged assets,' what does that say about the dangerous hazards there may be on public property that could affect people like my client?" Tucker said.

Tucker said that if City Hall had a less aggressive approach to noting and handling hazards, it may help relieve Santa Monica of liability in some accident cases, because there would be no "notice" that the hazard exists, unless a citizen complains about it. Since city staff may not be reporting on such hazards, it may be more difficult for parties to prove City Hall is responsible for creating the hazards.

Tucker wasn't sure if this was a strategy being employed by City Hall to defend itself

against lawsuits, but he suggested it could be.

Gams said Tucker's line of reasoning, however interesting, wasn't accurate.

During the 1990s, City Hall was able to levy money from property owners whose sites were adjacent to damaged sidewalks. The money was used to fix damaged or hazardous assets.

However, that law is no longer in effect, Gams said, and because of it City Hall has less money in its coffers to immediately address hazards.

As a result, City Hall continues to look for hazards, but the hazards are prioritized and the response time takes longer, due to lack of funding.

Gams said the Harmetz case was a "hard fought" settlement that nearly went to trial. However, City Hall was concerned about some weaknesses in its case.

"From a litigation perspective, we did have concern the jury would think this tree well should have been taken care of in a shorter period of time," Gams said. "This was a hole where people were expected to walk."

"It was there for too long."

Shriver and company are thinking big for czar short list

HOMELESSNESS, from page 1

Veterans Administration, and chronic homeless outreach.

Councilman Shriver has said homelessness was one of the key issues he ran on during his campaign for the City

Council, but since being elected it has been difficult to do much about it, namely because of the lack of a regional liaison.

Thinking big, Shriver hopes to get the likes of someone on the level of Leon Panetta, President Bill Clinton's former chief-of-staff.

With delays in a 10-year plan to end homelessness and financial troubles plaguing LA County's lead homeless service agency, City Councilman Richard Bloom hopes the timing of the new liaison in Santa Monica will come as the battle to fight homeless ramps up.

"We haven't stopped efforts in Santa Monica," said Bloom, who sits on the advisory board for Bring LA Home, a plan to end homelessness throughout LA County within the next decade. The plan is more than 1 1/2 years overdue.

"When I sit down with our new hire, this will be one of my two big issues," he

said. "The second will be to look at our own programs so we know where we're at with them."

Looking on the positive side of the Bring LA Home plan being delayed, as well as \$24.6 million in county funding delayed because of financial issues with the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority, Bloom said the timing might just work out that Santa Monica's liaison comes on board when everything has come into focus.

"That could ultimately be better than anything we did a year ago," he said.



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The following is a description of what applicants have been directed to via national newspaper advertisements for a Santa Monica homeless liaison at <http://LeadershipOnHomelessInitiatives.smgov.net/>

Because no regional entity is currently prepared to engage such a leader, the city of Santa Monica seeks to engage a representative for homeless initiatives who will act regionally while serving locally. This direction-setter will create and implement new approaches and expand successful models.

The brief for the representative for homeless initiatives includes:

- Obtaining the necessary federal, state and regional resources to assure full implementation of initiatives.
- Identifying and promoting the implementation of best practices to reduce chronic homelessness.
- Achieving an alternative sentencing system for homeless individuals.
- Establishing partnerships with hospitals to determine their current costs to serve homeless individuals for emergency and long-term care, and securing their financial support.

■ Fostering development of long-term therapeutic supportive housing for chronically homeless veterans in currently unused buildings.

■ Securing a year-round, 24-hour emergency shelter, transitional housing

and long-term therapeutic supportive housing for the non-Veteran homeless.

■ Developing additional new paradigms for addressing homelessness in Santa Monica and across the region.

■ Developing regional consensus by seeking advice and support from top management of Los Angeles County and the cities of Beverly Hills, West Hollywood, Culver City and Los Angeles.

■ Coordinating his or her work with efforts to end chronic homelessness in greater Los Angeles.

Terms of engagement

The representative for homeless initiatives will serve for an initial period of 18 months, reporting directly to the City Manager, who will ensure appropriate support from all city departments.

An ad hoc committee of the City Council will provide policy support. Expert advice regarding mental health, housing, the law, law enforcement and other fields related to the issues of homelessness is available and the individual selected may wish to assemble a working group of advisors.

A fee of \$200,000 will support the engagement for the initial 12 months, with the subsequent six months to be included in the 2006/07 city budget. Extension of the assignment beyond 18 months will be by mutual agreement.



District mighty concerned over Prop. 76

PROP. 76, from page 1

strip K-12 funding throughout the state and devastate public education in California.

Statements from the governor's office regarding Proposition 76, which Schwarzenegger has dubbed the "Live Within Our Means Act," says it will improve the manner in which the state manages its financial affairs by preparing a "rainy day fund" for future economic downturns.

It also would allow Schwarzenegger to make mid-year cuts to some groups that receive funding, such as teachers.

Darrel Ng, a Schwarzenegger campaign spokesperson, said that state revenues since 2000 have increased by \$12.5 billion, while expenditures have increased by \$23.5 billion.

Proposition 76 is intended to stabilize revenue over a period of years, so California won't spend more than it takes in. The ballot measure would also eliminate one of the major ways to reduce education funding, Ng said.

SMMUSD superintendent John Deasy disagrees with that assessment.

"If Prop. 76 is approved, all bets are off," Deasy said. "One need only look at the legislative analysis to see it would deeply cut funding to public education."

Since Schwarzenegger took office, schools have been required to operate on a

business model in which money districts save by cost-cutting measures one year, can be used the following year.

Deasy said the model has its merits. For example, by sticking to the strict guidelines, the SMMUSD has been able to achieve a \$1 million surplus in revenue for the first time in years. Then again, the district has the good fortune of being subsidized \$6 million per year by City Hall over the next 10 years, in order to maintain the high level of programming residents expect.

Poorer school districts — in parts of Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco — aren't so lucky. If Proposition 76 is approved, it will be "catastrophic" to those areas, Deasy said, many of which already teeter on bankruptcy.

However, Deasy said there's a greater problem with the governor's "business model" approach to public education, an issue that his special election intends to sweep under the rug.

"Public schools, unlike regular businesses, aren't intended by law to be revenue-generating enterprises," Deasy said. "Costs can be a factor, but they shouldn't supersede the state's goal of providing the best education possible to all of its students."

Deasy noted Schwarzenegger's three children attend private schools, the cost of which rose by 9 percent last year.

The tuition increase is attributable to

factors also affecting public education, Deasy said, such as the cost of health care for teachers.

Approval of the ballot measure would also allow the governor to restrict funding mid-year to schools, Deasy said.

"Technically, he'd be able to cut funding to teachers," Deasy said. "OK, you get rid of the teachers. Then what? You still have all of the students. Then what? You put them all into an auditorium? I wouldn't allow that for my kid."

In addition, Deasy said any attempts by the governor to claim Proposition 76 would help students is false, if one only looks at his track record. Since the governor has been in office, public schools haven't received money he promised from Proposition 98 funding.

It's such a sore point among educators they have decided to sue him.

The lawsuit, filed by the California Teachers Association in Sacramento Superior Court on Aug. 16, states Schwarzenegger failed to provide the minimum school funding guaranteed under voter-approved Proposition 98 and mandated by the state constitution.

Specifically, the suit claims the schools have been funded at a combined level of \$3.1 billion below what is required by state law for the last and next fiscal years.

In January of 2004, Schwarzenegger

made an agreement with the education community in which he said if public schools gave \$2 billion to help balance the budget, that money would be restored when revenues increased.

The lawsuit asserts state revenues increased under the agreement and that Proposition 98 and Chapter 213 schools were entitled to a share of those additional revenues they didn't receive.

Deasy, frustrated with Schwarzenegger and his empty promises, said he and other educators have sent letters to the governor requesting he re-consider his policies.

However, educators seem unable to convince Schwarzenegger they know what they're talking about, since the policies he's fostering continue to exacerbate the state's public education crisis, Deasy said.

Once the star of public education in the 1970s, California only performs better these days than Louisiana and Mississippi, according to a recent RAND report, which correlates the decline with inadequate funding. It's a point Deasy believes the governor will continue to ignore.

"If the governor were really interested in having California 'live within its means,' he wouldn't waste all of those millions of dollars of taxpayer money funding the special election," Deasy said. "He'd put it into the schools, health and child care, where it's needed."



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ANNA'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT-Celebrating its 36th anniversary, Anna's has become a landmark in West LA with its famous pastas, pizza, veal, prime beef, chicken, seafood, appetizers and salads all at surprisingly reasonable prices. A must try is the minestrone soup, considered the best around. Owners Andy and Tony are always on hand and many of their friendly staff have been with them since their opening in 1969. Come and experience the best in Roman cuisine (Southern & Northern Italian). Full selection of beer, wine and cocktails. Lunch: Monday-Friday 11:30-4pm, Dinner: 4:30pm nightly. 10929 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles. (310) 474-0102.

VIOLET-At Violet restaurant the atmosphere is casual, comfortable, and, like its cuisine, is uncluttered. Chef Jared Simons' flavorful small plate fare has something to suit everyone, from light eaters to those with a taste for a more robust fare. The Braised Short Ribs with Shallot Potatoes (\$14.50) melt apart while the Multi-Colored Beet Salad with Eel delights with Kumquat and Ginger Vinaigrette (\$9) and the favorite among the regulars is the Baked Macaroni and Gruyere Cheese with Serrano Ham (\$7.50). Unique selection of new and old world wines by the bottle, glass or flight as well as an impressive list of domestic & imported artisan beers. Hours: Lunch: Tuesday-Friday, 11:30am-2pm. Dinner: Tuesday-Friday, 6pm-10pm & Saturday and Sunday, 5:30pm-10pm. 3221 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica. www.violetrestaurant.com (310) 453-9113.

CASA ESCOBAR-This family owned institution in Santa Monica has been serving excellent food since 1965. A friendly bar and dinner house frequented by the "locals" and tourists alike. We feature the best Mexican dishes in town. Among the favorites are the crispy beef tacos, spinach enchiladas and our house-cut NY Strip steaks on the grill. Our full bar is home of the famous Casa Escobar Margarita-a winner! While at the bar, enjoy our classic piano bar along with cable TV. Valet Parking available. All major credit cards. Open lunch and dinner. 2500 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica. (310) 828-1315.

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PANINI GARDEN-This authentic European eatery serves traditional Italian and French style food. Panin style sandwiches grilled on a cast-iron panini grill that seals all the savory flavors inside a bread envelope of your choice, from very soft and thin like the tramezzini, soft and crispy for the al forno and crusty for the rustico. A large selection of meats and cheeses, organic produce, fresh and healthy combinations of menu items to enjoy everyday have made PANINI GARDEN the local's favorite. In addition, delicious crepes are served all day, for breakfast or just dessert, it is always a treat. The setting is quiet in the lavender garden with the bubbling fountain. Hours: 8am-9pm Sunday-Thursday, 8am-10:30pm Friday and Saturday. 2715 Main Street, Santa Monica. (310) 399-9939.

Entertainment



THE IMBIBER

BY DAN DUNN

Let's get drunk. Take that, Pat.

If you've been paying attention to the news of late you're probably aware that America's reigning pulp-pounding crackpot Pat Robertson recently upset many of the folks in Venezuela by suggesting, in no uncertain terms, that we send assassins down there to kill their president. Now, some might say that's just Pat being Pat. In the past, the septuagenarian "700 Club" founder has, after all, compared left-leaning citizens of this country to Nazis; claimed that the feminist movement encourages women to kill their children; and accused little Halloween trick-or-treaters of being Satanists ... and nobody here really seems to care all that much.

Still, I thought it wise to extend an olive branch to our friends down in Venezuela by encouraging Americans to get drunk on South American hootch this Labor Day weekend (and, boy, won't that get Pat's goat?) Venezuela's most well known export is Angostura Bitters, which doesn't lend itself to warm-weather cocktails, so allow me to instead suggest something from neighboring country Brazil: Cachaca (pronounced "KUH-shah-suh"), the rum-like spirit that is the key ingredient in the refreshing caipirinha. The name translates roughly to "farmer's drink," but the caipirinha has outgrown its bumpkin beginnings and become quite popular.

Made with lime, sugar and two ounces of cachaca — Beliza Pura is an outstanding brand — the key to a great caipirinha is in the muddling. Place eight lime wedges, pulp-side up, in a glass and sprinkle with sugar. With a pestle, use mild pressure and a twisting motion to release the juice in the flesh, not to crush the skin, which is high in unwanted bitter oils. And as Pat Robertson would no doubt attest, the only thing worse than a bitter caipirinha is a pack of liberal lesbo devil-kids coming around begging for sweets!

(Thirsty for more? Log on to www.TheImbiber.com)

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Fall back into the cineplex

(Daily Press film critic Dan Dunn previews films opening in September and October.)

THE MOVIE: The Man (September 9th)
THE STARS: Samuel L. Jackson, Eugene Levy
THE DIRECTOR: Les Mayfield
THE SKINNY: Screwball comedy with Levy playing a hapless traveling salesman who, in a case of mistaken identity, gets caught up in a sting operation led by Jackson's foul-mouthed ATF agent.
THE DRAW: Jackson inexplicably appears in lots of bad movies, but in the end he's still the guy with the wallet that reads "Bad M-----F-----."
THE VERDICT: The director's previous efforts include such dreck as "Flubber" and "Encino Man," so expectations should be lower than the square root of zero. Sadly, Levy seems dead-set on rehashing his tired "Jim's dad" shtick until audiences totally forget what a versatile comedian he used to be.

THE MOVIE: Just Like Heaven (September 16th)
THE STARS: Reese Witherspoon, Mark Ruffalo, Donal Logue, Jon Heder
THE DIRECTOR: Mark Waters
THE SKINNY: It's "Ghost" meets "All of Me" with an unexpected twist at the end. Ruffalo is living and breathing and pining away for the spirit of Reese's recently deceased doc. Hey, can you blame him? Dead or not, Reese is hot.
THE DRAW: The stars look good together on the movie poster, and they can act. In his brief career, director Waters has made some pretty entertaining films, most recently "Mean Girls" and "Freaky Friday."
THE VERDICT: Promises to be a decent chick flick.

THE MOVIE: Proof (September 16th)
THE STARS: Gwyneth Paltrow, Anthony Hopkins, Hope Davis, Jake Gyllenhaal
THE DIRECTOR: John Madden
THE SKINNY: This adaptation of David Auburn's award-winning play features Hopkins as a mentally disturbed mathematical genius who dies, leaving his daughter (Paltrow) to wrestle with the possibility she's inherited his psychosis.
THE DRAW: The cast is as good as it gets, and remember that Paltrow and director Madden previously made magic with "Shakespeare In Love." This film is being touted as the year's first serious Best Picture contender.
THE VERDICT: The proof is in the pedigree of the A-list cast and crew.

THE MOVIE: Corpse Bride (September 23rd)
THE STARS: Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter, Emily Watson, Albert Finney

THE DIRECTORS: Tim Burton, Mike Johnson
THE SKINNY: Animated feature with Depp voicing a groom-to-be who unexpectedly gets hitched to a dead woman (Bonham-Carter).
THE DRAW: Over the years Depp and Burton have proven to be one of Hollywood's most entertainingly off-beat duos, and Bonham-Carter one of the Biz's most underrated talents. Composer Danny Elfman can always be counted on to deliver a rousing score.
THE VERDICT: Fans of the Burton-produced "The Nightmare Before Christmas" should find plenty to love about this one.

THE MOVIE: Into the Blue (September 30th)
THE STARS: Jessica Alba, Paul Walker, Scott Caan, Ashley Scott
THE DIRECTOR: John Stockwell
THE SKINNY: Remake of 1977's "The Deep," about a group of divers who get into big trouble after discovering sunken treasure that belongs to a ruthless criminal.
THE DRAW: Hot-bodied young stars in bikinis means there's no need to waste energy paying attention to stuff like plot and dialogue.
THE VERDICT: The "PG-13" rating sinks the hopes of horny males worldwide. Still, a nearly naked Alba will put plenty of butts into theater seats.

THE MOVIE: In Her Shoes (October 7th)
THE STARS: Toni Collette, Cameron Diaz, Shirley MacLaine
THE DIRECTOR: Curtis Hanson
THE SKINNY: Collette and Diaz play sisters feuding over a boy who are paid a surprise visit by a grandmother (MacLaine) neither knew existed.
THE DRAW: This one has the makings of a winner: Cool cast, great director in Hanson ("8 Mile," "Wonder Boys," "LA Confidential"), script by Oscar-nominee Susannah Grant ("Erin Brockovich") adapted from Jennifer Weiner's bestseller. Plus, the movie was shot in my hometown ... yeah, Philly!
THE VERDICT: "Shoes" will fit nicely into your schedule.

THE MOVIE: Elizabethtown (October 14th)
THE STARS: Orlando Bloom, Kirsten Dunst, Susan Sarandon, Jessica Biel, Alec Baldwin
THE DIRECTOR: Cameron Crowe
THE SKINNY: On his way to his dad's funeral, a young man (Bloom) befriends a flight attendant (Dunst).
THE DRAW: It's a Cameron Crowe movie. Bloom and Dunst certainly make for an appealing on-screen couple.
THE VERDICT: Having read the script, I can tell you that this promises to be one of the year's best pictures.

THE MOVIE: Domino (October 14th)
THE STARS: Keira Knightley, Mickey Rourke, Edgar Ramirez
THE DIRECTOR: Tony Scott
THE SKINNY: Biopic about the daughter of actor Laurence Harvey, who reportedly turned down an offer to be a Ford model and instead became a bounty hunter.
THE DRAW: This past June, Harvey was found dead in a bathtub in West Hollywood, the apparent victim of a drug overdose. At the time of her death, she was awaiting trial on drug trafficking charges.
THE VERDICT: This bizarre true story seems like the right project for "True Romance" director Scott.

THE MOVIE: Shopgirl (October 21st)
THE STARS: Steve Martin, Claire Danes, Jason Schwartzman
THE DIRECTOR: Anand Tucker
THE SKINNY: Based on Martin's best-selling novella about a department store employee (Danes) being pursued by an older, successful man (Martin) and a struggling young musician (Schwartzman).
THE DRAW: It appears the casting director knew what he/she was doing.
THE VERDICT: Should satisfy those suffering from Wes Anderson withdrawal.

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Superdome evacuation gets disrupted by arson, gunfire

BY ADAM NOSSITER

Associated Press Writer

NEW ORLEANS — Fights and trash fires broke out at the hot and stinking Superdome and anger and unrest mounted across New Orleans on Tuesday, as National Guardsmen in armored vehicles poured in to help restore order across the increasingly lawless and desperate city.

"We are out here like pure animals. We don't have help," the Rev. Issac Clark, 68, said outside the New Orleans Convention Center, complaining that he and others were evacuated, taken to the convention hall by bus, dropped off and given nothing.

The Superdome, where some 25,000 people were being evacuated by bus to the Houston Astrodome, descended into chaos.

Huge crowds, hoping to finally escape the stifling confines of the stadium, jammed the main concourse outside the dome, spilling out over the ramp to the Hyatt hotel next door — a seething sea of tense, unhappy, people packed shoulder-to-shoulder up to the barricades where heavily armed National Guardsmen stood.

Fights broke out. A fire erupted in a trash chute inside the dome, but a National Guard commander said it did not affect the evacuation.

An additional 10,000 National Guard troops from across the country were ordered into the hurricane-ravaged Gulf Coast to shore up security, rescue and relief operations in Katrina's wake as looting, shootings, gunfire, carjackings and other lawlessness spread.

That brought the number of troops dedicated to the effort to more than 28,000, in what may be the biggest military response to a natural disaster in U.S. history.

"The truth is, a terrible tragedy like this brings out the best in most people, brings out the worst in some people," said Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour on NBC's "Today" show. "We're trying to deal with looters as ruthlessly as we can get our hands on them."

The first of hundreds of busloads of people evacuated from the hot and stinking Louisiana Superdome arrived early Thursday at their new temporary home — another sports arena, the Houston Astrodome, 350 miles away.

But the ambulance service in charge of taking the sick and injured from the Superdome suspended flights after a shot was reported fired at a military helicopter. Richard Zuschlag, chief of Acadian Ambulance, said it had become too dangerous for his pilots.

The military, which was overseeing the removal of the able-bodied by buses, continued the ground evacuation without interruption, said National Guard Lt. Col. Pete Schneider.

The government had no immediate confirmation of whether a military aircraft was fired on.

Fury rose among many of those evacuated. Outside the Convention Center, the sidewalks were packed with people without food, water or medical care, and with no sign of law enforcement. Thousands of storm refugees had been assembling outside for days, waiting for buses that did not come.

At least seven bodies were scattered outside, and hungry, desperate people who were tired of waiting broke through the steel doors to a food service entrance and began pushing out pallets of water and juice and whatever else they could find.

An old man in a chaise lounge lay dead in a grassy median as hungry babies wailed around him. Around the corner, an elderly woman lay dead in her wheelchair, covered up by a blanket, and another body lay beside her wrapped in a sheet.

"I don't treat my dog like that," 47-year-old Daniel Edwards said as he pointed at the woman in the wheelchair. "I buried my dog." He added: "You can do everything for other countries but you can't do nothing for your own people. You can go overseas with the military but you can't get them down here."

Just above the convention center on Interstate 10, commercial buses were lined up, going nowhere. The street outside the center, above the floodwaters, smelled of urine and feces, and was choked with dirty diapers, old

bottles and garbage.

"They've been teasing us with buses for four days," Edwards said.

People chanted, "Help, help" as reporters and photographers walked through.

John Murray, 52, said: "It's like they're punishing us."

In Washington, the White House said President Bush will tour the hurricane devastated Gulf Coast region on Friday and has asked his father, former President George H.W. Bush, and former President Clinton to lead a private fund-raising campaign for victims.

The president urged a crackdown on the looting and other lawlessness that have spread through New Orleans.

"I think there ought to be zero tolerance of people breaking the law during an emergency such as this — whether it be looting, or price gouging at the gasoline pump, or taking advantage of charitable giving or insurance fraud," Bush said. "And I've made that clear to our attorney general. The citizens ought to be working together."

On Wednesday, Mayor Ray Nagin offered the most startling estimate yet of the magnitude of the disaster: Asked how many people died in New Orleans, he said: "Minimum, hundreds. Most likely, thousands." The death toll has already reached at least 110 in Mississippi.

If the estimate proves correct, it would make Katrina the worst natural disaster in the United States since at least the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire, which was blamed for anywhere from about 500 to 6,000 deaths. Katrina would also be the nation's deadliest hurricane since 1900, when a storm in Galveston, Texas, killed between 6,000 and 12,000 people.

Nagin called for a total evacuation of New Orleans, saying the city had become uninhabitable for the 50,000 to 100,000 who remained behind after the city of nearly a half-million people was ordered cleared out over the weekend, before Katrina blasted the Gulf Coast with 145-mph winds.

The mayor said that it will be two or three months before the city is functioning again and that people would not be allowed back into their homes for at least a month or two.

"We need an effort of 9-11 proportions," former New Orleans Mayor Marc Morial, now president of the Urban League, said on NBC's "Today" show. "So many of the people who did not evacuate, could not evacuate for whatever reason. They are people who are African-American mostly but not completely, and people who were of little or limited economic means. They are the folks, we've got to get them out of there."

"A great American city is fighting for its life," he added. "We must rebuild New Orleans, the city that gave us jazz, and music, and multiculturalism."

With New Orleans sinking deeper into desperation, Nagin ordered virtually the entire police force to abandon search-and-rescue efforts Wednesday and stop the increasingly brazen thieves.

"They are starting to get closer to heavily populated areas — hotels, hospitals, and we're going to stop it right now," Nagin said.

In a sign of growing lawlessness, Tenet HealthCare Corp. asked authorities late Wednesday to help evacuate a fully functioning hospital in Gretna after a supply truck carrying food, water and medical supplies was held up at gunpoint.

The floodwaters streamed into the city's streets from two levee breaks near Lake Pontchartrain a day after New Orleans thought it had escaped catastrophic damage from Katrina. The floodwaters covered 80 percent of the city, in some areas 20 feet deep, in a reddish-brown soup of sewage, gasoline and garbage.

The Army Corps of Engineers said it planned to use heavy-duty Chinook helicopters to drop 15,000-pound bags of sand and stone into a 500-foot gap in the failed floodwall.

But the agency said it was having trouble getting the sandbags and dozens of 15-foot highway barriers to the site because the city's waterways were blocked by loose barges, boats and large debris.



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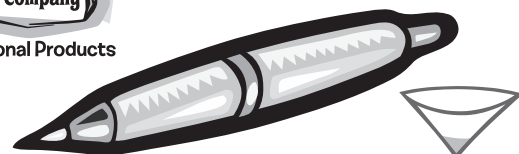
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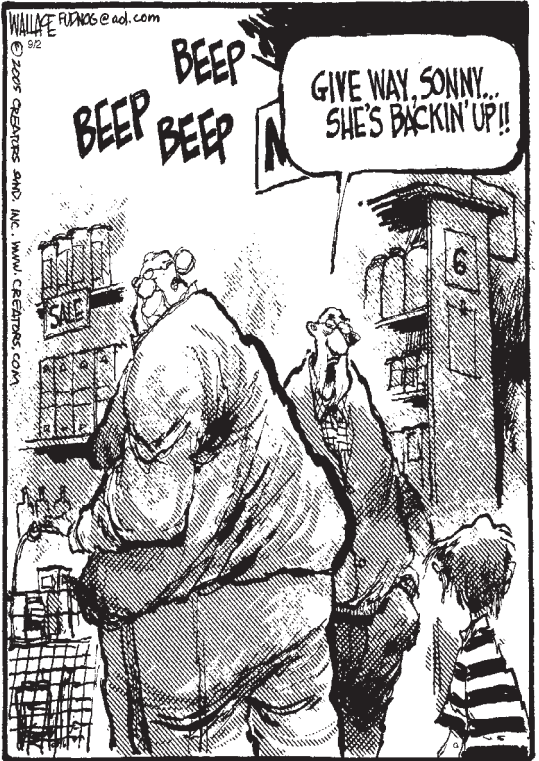


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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Still crazy about 'Kotter' — TV's favorite teacher

By The Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Jennifer Lopez was in Puerto Rico this week to record a reggaeton song with rapper-producer Pharrell Williams.

The 37-year-old singer-actress arrived Tuesday to work on the track, which will be produced by top reggaeton duo LunyTunes, El Vocero and El Nuevo Dia newspapers reported.

Lopez and Williams are the latest U.S. artists to cross over into reggaeton, a mix of Jamaican dancehall, hip-hop and Latin beats that is becoming increasingly popular in the United States.

Williams forms half of the Grammy-winning production duo The Neptunes with Chad Hugo. N.E.R.D., which fuses hip-hop, rock and funk, is a side project of the duo.

Lopez released her latest album, "Rebirth," in March.

NEW YORK — A bad back has been keeping NBC "Today" show weatherman Al Roker off the air.

In a posting Wednesday on his Web site titled, "They've Got My Back," Roker writes that doctors had told him he needed back surgery for a ruptured disc.

He said the surgery "should relieve the pressure on my

sciatic nerve and in turn, ease intense pain in my left leg."

Roker, 51, said he expected to be home Thursday after an overnight stay in the hospital.

He didn't say when he hoped to return to "Today."

NEW YORK — Gabe Kaplan's character on "Welcome Back, Kotter," has been named the Most Memorable Teacher on Television by Inside TV magazine.

The magazine recognizes Gabe Kotter, the high school teacher from the 1970s sitcom that also starred John Travolta, in its new issue.

Also on the list: cartoon character Edna Krabappel of "The Simpsons," Lydia Grant (Debbie Allen) on "Fame," Charlie Moore (Howard Hesseman) on "Head of the Class," Laura Ingalls (Melissa Gilbert) on "Little House on the Prairie," Ross Geller (David Schwimmer) on "Friends," Mark Cooper (Mark Curry) on "Hangin' With Mr. Cooper," Fonzie (Henry Winkler) on "Happy Days," Carol Vessey (Julie Bowen) on "Ed" and Max Medina (Scott Cohen) on "Gilmore Girls."

LONDON — Jerry Hall is in trouble below ground.

Ads for her new reality show, "Kept," have been banned from London's subway system because the poster — which shows Hall surrounded by several half-

naked men with her holding a leash wrapped around their necks — violates a rule banning the use of people as sex objects.

The London Underground, which operates the vast public transportation network, said the poster had been put up in four stations without permission.

"This advert breaches our advertising code relating to the depiction of men, women and children as sexual objects," a London Underground spokesman said Wednesday.

"Kept," which has already been shown in the United States, begins airing in Britain this week. In it, the 49-year-old former model and ex-wife of Rolling Stone Mick Jagger tries to find a younger man to be her boy toy. Twelve men will compete, with the winner receiving a six-figure cash prize.

NEW YORK — Britney Spears, who was raised in Kentwood, La., says she is praying for the victims of Hurricane Katrina.

In a posting on her Web site, the 23-year-old pop star writes that her "thoughts and prayers go out to everyone" in the states along the devastated Gulf Coast.

"All of my family members there are safe and thank you to all my fans for your concern," says Spears.

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