FREE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2004 Volume 3, Issue 264

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO
7 22 28 30 37
Meganumber: 11
Jackpot: 17 Million

FANTASY 5
2 4 8 11 12

DAILY 3
Daytime: 3 3 0
Evening: 5 4 7

DAILY DERBY
1st: 11 Money Bags
2nd: 08 Gorgeous George
3rd: 04 Big Ben
RACE TIME: 1:45.52

NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

More Unprofitable Counterfeiting: Japanese police have made no arrests in connection with a flurry of 400 counterfeit 1,000-yen notes that keep turning up in vending machines in Saitama Prefecture, north of Tokyo; in each one, a real 1,000-yen note is cannibalized to supply a key part of the bogus note. Similarly, in Calgary, Alberta, in July, Jason James Cremer was fined about Cdn$800 for passing a set of counterfeit $20 bills that he made by removing the optical security devices from real $20 bills and inserting them onto his bogus ones (and discarding the remnants of the real bills, believing them then worthless, which police said was not true).

TODAY IN HISTORY

ON SEPT. 16, 1919, the American Legion was incorporated by an act of Congress.

■ **In 1810**, Mexico began its revolt against Spanish rule.

■ **In 1940**, Samuel T. Rayburn of Texas was elected Speaker of the U.S.H.o.R.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Stoicism is the wisdom of madness and cynicism the madness of wisdom."

BERGEN EVANS
AMERICAN LEXICOGRAPHER (1904-1978).

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Entertainment complex plans approved

Previously rejected proposal for post-production facility makes it off cutting room floor

BY GENEVA WHITMARSH
Daily Press Staff Writer

COUNCIL CHAMBERS — After years of planning, negotiations and rejections, an international real estate developer will be allowed to build a post-production facility on Santa Monica's eastside.

The City Council on Tuesday approved the Lantana-Hines development on Olympic Boulevard, which includes two three-story entertainment buildings.

A 64,105-square-foot production/post-production studio building with a two-level underground parking garage is expected to be built at 3030 Olympic Blvd. A separate three-story, 130,000-square-foot building with a one-level parking garage is set to be constructed at 3131 Exposition Blvd. Under the contract, the company has five years to build the new structures.

The two buildings will complete the Lantana Media Campus, which already is home to many entertainment businesses, including the IMAX headquarters, Revolution Studios, Lawrence Gordon Productions and such shows as "Crime & Punishment" and "Curb Your Enthusiasm."

An earlier version of the development plan was shot down by both the Planning Commission and the City Council in 2002. Officials said the project would create too much traffic in the neighborhood. In response, developers reduced the size of the buildings by as much as 15 percent and agreed to provide benefits to the public.

Under the approved development plan, Lantana-Hines Development, LLC, will pay $80,000 annually for five years to be used as child care subsidies for low-income families. The company

See COMPLEX, page 5

City puts pier smokers in their places

BY GENEVA WHITMARSH
Daily Press Staff Writer

SANTA MONICA PIER — Visitors come here to gaze out at the vast Pacific Ocean, but if they plan on smoking, they might feel a bit confined.

Smokers will be restricted to eight 5-feet-by-15-feet designated areas, according to a recent decision by elected officials.

Six months after the City Council banned smoking at local beaches but agreed to let visitors light up at designated areas along the pier, officials on Tuesday determined where those areas will be.

The areas will be identified by signs and painted markings within the next month. Signs will be posted throughout the pier to inform visitors that smoking is prohibited except in those spots.

"Really, up to this point, it's been difficult to enforce (the ban) because there wasn't a place for (the smokers) to go," said Ben Franz-Knight, executive director the Pier Restoration Corp., which manages the pier. "Now, this allows us to enforce it."

Designated areas include the west gazebo, the south rail, the fire lane to the rear of Pacific Park, the fire lane west of the Pacific Park restrooms, the south lower fishing deck, behind the west public restrooms, the west lower fishing deck and the west upper deck.

Council members voted 4-1-1 in favor of the designated areas, with Ken Genser casting the only vote against and Mike Feinstein abstaining. Councilman Herb Katz was not present. The City Council originally split 3-3 before removing an area some council members felt was too narrow to be a safe smoking zone.

Genser said he has been a longtime advocate of designated smoking areas on the pier, but disagreed with one of the proposed spaces.

"At first — when we couldn't get the four votes — I said, 'Gee, if we can't get at least four votes, I think we should ask the staff to just start enforcing the ordinance', meaning otherwise that there

See SMOKERS, page 5

Performances score choice beach parking spot

BY GENEVA WHITMARSH
Daily Press Staff Writer

COUNCIL CHAMBERS — One of the largest beach parking lots in Santa Monica will be converted into an outdoor theater for various events in the upcoming year.

The Santa Monica City Council voted on Tuesday to allow long-term theatrical performances to take place at the 1550 parking lot, just north of the pier.

The first performance to be held at the lot will be Cavalia, a theatrical performance that bills itself as a "magical encounter between man and horse."

The community events program approved by the council allows for short-term events for the purposes of artistic expression but does not address long-term

See PARKING LOT, page 6

Carolyn Sackariason/Daily Press

Production trucks set up camp Wednesday at the 1550 beach parking lot for the filming of a JC Penny commercial. City Hall will allow the lot to be used for large theatrical performances in the future.

Air controllers report chaos, near misses

By The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — In at least five cases, aircraft passed dangerously close to each other after a computer failure cut off radio contact between pilots and air traffic controllers for hours and forced the grounding of hundreds of flights throughout the country, a union official said Wednesday.

Two flights "were almost near-mid-air collisions," said Hamid Ghaffari, local president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association.

As planes traveled perilously close to one another, "We couldn't do anything," Ghaffari said, based on his interviews with on-duty controllers and a review of radar records.

"We can't do our job unless there is communication. If there are no communications, you are helpless," he said.

See NEAR MISSES, page 6

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Get sleep tonight, Scorpio

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)
★★★★ Make an adjustment. Work on empathizing or understanding another person's position. You could be surprised by what you realize. A family situation weighs on you. You aren't going to change it soon, but you do need to accept it. Tonight: Detach and see the bigger picture.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★ Your ability to work with one other person could transform a money situation for both of you. Get down to the basics and avoid getting caught up in trivial details. A conversation or meeting could be difficult at best. Tonight: Be with your best friend.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★★ Your spirit and flirtatious ways affect others. Someone might come forward as a possible admirer or suitor. Be careful, as many are not as light and easygoing as you. Avoid a monetary risk no matter what. Tonight: Enjoy yourself to the max.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★ Deal with a domestic matter. You could be very uncomfortable, but you do need to face facts. Your ability to organize and achieve a lot quickly emerges. Greet new technology positively. Tonight: Play ostrich.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ An underlying problem might bother you, but somehow you skip right over it. Still, it might nag at you at different times. When you have some calm, tune in to yourself. Discussions might impact your plans. Clearly, your creativity is needed. Tonight: Hang out.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★ You could be disappointed by someone who means a lot to you. Let the problem go. Focus on building finances and making yourself feel more secure. Your self-confidence will grow as a result. Tonight: Go fall shopping.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★★ You might decide to step out on your own and make more decisions for yourself. All might work right now, but a boss or authority figure doesn't hesitate to tell you what he or she thinks. Tonight: You cannot please all the people all the time.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★ Lie back and see what goes down. How you view a situation could be distorted because you aren't getting the right information. Revamp your finances using your intuition and knowledge. Watch and observe for now. Tonight: Get a good night's sleep.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★★ You demonstrate your ability to flex when faced with adversity and problems. Yet you might want to think through what is best for a partner. This person has been giving you a lot of problems lately. Look to the common good. Tonight: Hook up with friends.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★ You find others demanding and difficult. You like to call your own shots. Right now you cannot command your ship, so slow down and go with the flow. Your humor helps you see the whole situation. Tonight: It could be a late night.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★ Fatigue marks your actions, even if you are unusually enthusiastic. Use your full mental capacity if possible. If you can just call, there's no need to go somewhere. Use every shortcut you know. Friends and associates support your actions. Tonight: Read a good book.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★ A key associate holds the cards. You might not be able to do what you want. Work with this person, but be ready to answer questions. Be easygoing with bosses and supervisors. You will be able to voice your opinions soon enough. Tonight: Have a long-overdue talk.

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LOCAL

Triathletes gear up for Malibu charity competition

BY KATHLEEN BISHOP
Special to the Daily Press

Celebrities, professional athletes and about 2,000 others will replace regular beachgoers on Zuma Beach this weekend as participants run, bike and swim in the 18th annual Nautica Malibu Triathlon.

The event will benefit the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation. It's scheduled for Sunday and consists of a half-mile Pacific Ocean swim, an 18-mile bike ride on Pacific Coast Highway and a four-mile run to Point Dume and back. Though participation in the race is sold out, the weekend's events are free and open to the public.

Celebrity competitors include David Duchovny, Disney President and COO Bob Iger, defending champion Tate Donovan, "Two and a Half Men"'s Jon Cryer, "CSI: Miami"'s Emily Procter, and "The Bachelorette"'s Ryan Sutter. Athletes include 2004 swimming Olympic medalist Amanda Beard, 2004 swimming Olympic silver medalist Larson Jensen, 2002-2003 Ironman champion Lori Bowden and 2000 triathlon Olympic silver medalist Michelle Jones.

Mary Ellen Barone, a representative for Nautica who has worked on the triathlon the eight years the company has sponsored it, cited Zuma's scenery, manageable distances and a worthy foundation as the primary reasons for the race's popularity.

"I've seen this triathlon grow from about 700 entrants to more than 2,100," she said. "It's just an easy, comfortable, feel-good time that people enjoy ... it's not just come do the triathlon, feel great that you did it and leave, it's a two-day event."

Attendees and competitors also may enjoy Saturday's Spectator Festival on Zuma Beach from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., where a sand castle demonstration and clinics on biking, health and wellness, and training tips will be held throughout the day.

Competitors had the option to do the race alone or as a relay team. One Santa Monica woman didn't see her solo participation as a great feat worthy of praise, but more of a challenge to herself and an opportunity to contribute to a good cause.

Christie Gloster has been doing triathlons since November, but this is her first Olympic distance.

"You reach a certain age where you need to stretch again and challenge yourself and get out there and see what you can do," she said.

Paul Michael Glaser, husband of the late Elizabeth Glaser, lives in Gloster's neighborhood. Elizabeth Glaser contracted HIV from a blood transfusion, and the disease was passed on to her son, Jake, and daughter, Ariel. Glaser and two friends started the foundation in 1988 after Ariel Glaser's death from the disease. Glaser worked toward eradicating pediatric AIDS until her death in 1994.

"There's no question that this inspires me," Gloster said. "Any time you're doing an event and it has a cause attached, it motivates you even more."

The triathlon has raised more than $600,000 for the foundation over the past eight years through donations and participant sponsorships. The goal for this year is $135,000, and the final tally of funds raised will be revealed with the presentation of a check after the race.

The race begins at 7:15 a.m. Sunday at Zuma Beach. The parking lot closes at 7 a.m. as to not disrupt the course. The fastest individuals and teams are expected to finish in about an hour and a half. After the race, there is a sold-out celebrity brunch, 12-and-under "Tot Trot" race, and celebrity and competitor awards ceremonies.

The event will air on Fox Sports Net Saturday, Oct. 16.

CORRECTION - In the Sept. 15 edition, the caption on the front page photo contained an error. The finale of the Twilight Pier Concert Series will be on Saturday, with music presented by KCRW from 4 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Check Friday's edition for details. The photo shown was of workers placing the screen on the stage for Tuesday's evening movie screening of "Ferris Bueller's Day Off." The Santa Monica Pier Drive In occurs every Tuesday at the pier through October.

Also in the Sept. 15 edition, the page 1 article about City Council candidates contained errors regarding Matt Dinolfo's candidacy. He garnered 8,356 votes in his bid for a seat in 2002.

SURF REPORT

On Thursday look for a mix of building SW swell and steep NW wind/ground swell. Northern LA spots see surf in the knee- to chest-high range, with some occasional bigger sets up to shoulder high at standout breaks. South Bay breaks will work the NW energy for 2-3' waves on average, although standout spots see sets to shoulder. Winds will be generally light in the morning. Look for onshore W wind to build in the 8-10 knot range in the afternoon.

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

Today the water is:

70°

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	2:38	0.0	2:10	2.3	9:08	4.4	8:10	5.8
SUNDAY	3:03	-0.1	2:42	1.9	9:25	4.6	8:43	5.9
MONDAY	3:27	-0.1	3:15	1.5	9:44	4.8	9:17	5.9
TUESDAY	3:51	0.0	3:49	1.2	10:05	5.1	9:52	5.7
WEDNESDAY	4:15	0.3	4:27	0.9	10:28	5.3	10:30	5.4
THURSDAY	**4:39**	**0.7**	**5:09**	**0.7**	**10:53**	**5.5**	**11:12**	**4.9**
FRIDAY	5:04	1.1	5:56	0.7	11:21	5.6	NA	NA

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The Q Line

Earlier this year, the Chamber of Commerce established a political action committee to endorse City Council candidates, which has never been done before. The chamber will raise hundreds of thousands of dollars and tirelessly campaign for their candidates. How it proceeds from here will be critical for the future of Santa Monica, political observers say.

Through local voters, the chamber hopes to overthrow a city government that has been dominated by a more liberal-thinking group called the Santa Monicans For Renters' Rights for the majority of the past 26 years. It's widely known that the chamber and City Hall have for years had an adversarial relationship. The business community laments that policies set by the current administration create an unfriendly environment for residents and visitors.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, **"Do you think the Chamber of Commerce and its endorsements will represent your issues and views in the upcoming election? Why or why not?"**

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your response in our weekend edition. Please 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

Non-citizens should vote for education

Editor:

Twenty years ago I suggested that parents who were permanent residents, i.e., green card holders, and had children in the public schools be allowed to vote for school board members despite the fact that they are not citizens. At the time, this idea was dismissed as wildly radical. Apparently, however, it was simply ahead of its time. This week, the Wall Street Journal had a long article about similar laws and movements in other municipalities. I think Santa Monica should seriously consider it given the unique importance to all parents of their children's education coupled with the lengthy citizenship process.

Tom Larmore
Santa Monica

Thoughts of living on the street

Editor:

I've been reading your paper since you began, and I know that you guys publish many different things from the community. You have also addressed homeless issues in Santa Monica. The following occurred to me at the intersection of Fourth Street and Pico Boulevard:

Homeless
Never saw a man moving so slow,
One foot, then the other, nowhere to go
But the other side and another street —
Home is a sidewalk and sleep on your feet.

Little stops and starts, a jangle of junk,
Necessary treasures wrapped up in a funk
Of rags and bruises and thick matted hair —
The Westside Shuffle is going nowhere.

A complicated story laden with psychology,
Thoughts on fire burn psychopharmacology,
Step after step, each closer to the end —
And when night falls, where to sleep?

Survival of the fittest got you down,
Arms hang heavy, legs claw the ground,
I see you and forget and go about my day —
And fail you once more as I drive away.

Michael Tracey
Santa Monica

An insider's guide to SM's top football venues

NEWS ON THE EDGE
BY RON SCOTT SMITH

In case you missed it, America breathes easier this week — football is back. Inexplicably, the Southland once again has no NFL home team to root for, but you won't see a lot of fretting. They can't take the televisions away, and in the melting pot that makes up Southern California, most fans still have loyalties to the cities they came from, even if they couldn't wait to run away from them. So the following is presented as an SMDP public service to transplants and natives alike. It's our annual survey of some favorite Santa Monica sporting establishments. Here's how they say they will respond to the onslaught of hungry, thirsty revelers for the next 17 weekends.

It starts with the champions.

Sonny McClean's
2615 Wilshire Blvd. (310) 449-1811

Home of the Super Bowl champion New England Patriots, this all-Boston-all-the-time saloon kicked off the new season last Thursday with a packed house watching the Patriots knock off the Colts in a rematch of last year's AFC Championship game. Sonny's opens at 9 a.m. on Sundays, and sports 22 TVs for complete NFL coverage, but please note: During Pats games all TVs are tuned to them. That is, unless the Red Sox also happen to be playing. On Saturdays they've got NCAA football from around the nation, with Boston College — who else — as the featured attraction. Two-dollar Buds and select food specials are available during Monday Night Football.

The Shack
2518 Wilshire Blvd. (310) 449-1171

Right down the street from Sonny's sits this westside nest of the Philadelphia Eagles, and if Vegas oddsmakers are right, there might be a street war up on Wilshire in late January. (Both the Eagles and Patriots are favored to win their conference and meet in the Super Bowl.) The Shack unlocks the doors at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays, and 9 a.m. on Saturdays, when the Ohio State Buckeyes draw a loyal following. Breakfast is served both days. Monday Night Football gets you 25-cent wings, $2 tacos, and $1.50 drafts. There are 12 TVs, but be forewarned — as with their adversaries up the street, when the Eagles are playing that means the Eagles are playing — on every one of those 12 screens.

Busby's
3110 Santa Monica Blvd. (310) 828-4567

This relative newcomer jumps into the fray with a full 22 TVs, many of them high-end plasma models. They serve up a weekend brunch that gets you anything from burgers to steak tartare, seared Ahi to broiled prawns. Doors open at 9 a.m. on college Saturdays and NFL Sundays here, where Jets and Giants fans appear to have found a home. Monday nights hold the promise of surprise half-time shows such as dancing girls in football jerseys. There's a free buffet and a $4 tapas menu featuring the likes of crabcakes and individual pizzas. Happy hour drink prices are in effect from 4 to 7 p.m.

Gotham Hall
1430 Third Street Promenade (310) 394-8865

This billiard room/nightclub on the Promenade does the quick turnaround, and goes from nighttime party house to daytime sportsbar, opening at 9:30 a.m. on weekends. A full breakfast menu is offered, along with $3 domestic bottled beer, while 13 TVs, including one giant 15-footer, show all the games. Michigan is represented, as Detroit Lions fans have been gathering here on Sundays, Michigan Wolverine fans on Saturdays. Play pool for free on Monday nights, when Budweiser goes for $2, and appetizers for $5.

Over Under Sports Grill
1333 Santa Monica Blvd. (310) 899-0076

Take a little rock and roll with your football? Over Under is joined at the hip to one of Southern California's most popular music clubs, 14 Below. A full breakfast menu for NCAA and NFL games is available on both days, starting at 9 a.m., with 12 TVs carrying the action all day long. The draft beer of your choice flows for $2.50 during any game, on either day. Ditto Monday nights, when prizes are handed out during a half-time raffle. Appetizers like turbo-hot wings and tacos are offered at half-price. Over Under is the westside home of the Cleveland Browns, but a healthy contingent of Raider fans is said to disagree.

The Bitter Redhead
2101 Lincoln Blvd. (310) 450-6776

Here you go, Chi-town. This popular neighborhood hangout sets up the barbecue outside on weekends to grill the burgers and the brats, while inside, one movie-sized projection screen and six other TVs present the NFL and NCAA, with the Bears stepping up front and center on Sundays; the Nebraska Cornhuskers on Saturdays. Two-for-the-price-of-one beers and those same grilled burgers and links are Monday Night specials. A couple of pool tables offer a much-needed diversion for the often-distraught Bears faithful.

J.P.'s Bar and Grill
1101 Wilshire Blvd. (310) 394-7660

Plywood covers the pool tables, turning them into communal benches, as 10 TVs air a full schedule of both college and pro. The "Bushwhack" Breakfast is recommended to get you jump-started. Open at 9 a.m. both days, J.P.'s is a favorite hangout of serious point spread aficionados, as you're likely to see players on cell phones calling "home" throughout the day. On Monday nights, $9 gets you a bucket of four beers.

O'Briens
2226 Wilshire Blvd. (310) 829-5303

Here's where you can saddle up to a dark mahogany bar and order a hearty Irish weekend breakfast to go with the football. The games will be coming at you on seven screens Saturday and Sunday. Doors open at 9 a.m. both days. Monday nights, normal happy hour prices are in effect.

Big Dean's
1615 Ocean Front Walk (310) 393-2666

If you can't stand the thought of a beautiful weekend afternoon without the beach somehow involved, but still crave the gridiron action, this place might solve the dilemma. Sitting right at sands' edge, Big Dean's gives you the NFL and NCAA packages on those bayside afternoons. Opening at 10 a.m., Sunday breakfast is served to a predominantly Giants and Jets local following. Unspecified beer specials and free half-time munchies are featured for Monday Night Football. There are three TVs.

Chez Jay
1657 Ocean Ave. (310) 395-1741

This venerable Santa Monica landmark deserves a mention despite only nine barstools and one lonely TV. It can at least carry the game of the day while you indulge in a memorable breakfast, or, simply crack open peanut after peanut as you down some very tall, cold things, and ponder the greatness, or not, of last night.

(Ron Scott Smith can be reached at edgeofthewest@aol.com).

YOUR OPINION MATTERS! Send your letters to Santa Monica Daily Press Attn. Editor: 1427 Third Street Promenade Suite 202 Santa Monica • 90401 • sack@smdp.com

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 sack@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.

LOCAL

Final development plan includes local donations

COMPLEX, from page 1

also will make improvements to Stewart Street Park and the playgrounds at Edison Language Academy. Also included in the agreement is an apprenticeship with a commitment to hiring local residents, and replacing parking for any residential spaces lost on Exposition Boulevard or adjacent blocks. The company also will make a $100,000 contribution to art or cultural programs at Virginia Avenue Park, according to city documents.

The Olympic Boulevard location is currently used as a surface parking lot containing 233 spaces for the nearby Lantana Center building. The new buildings would be the third installment in a three-building, 330,000-square-foot entertainment production campus. The Lantana Center was converted from manufacturing to entertainment use in 1989.

The Exposition Boulevard site was previously used for a Verizon public utilities maintenance yard, an industrial truck terminal, truck maintenance and a film equipment storage lot. It is currently used as an industrial maintenance building for the nearby IMAX film production and distributing building.

The Lantana Media Campus this year swept all three award categories to become a winner of the "2004 Sustainable Quality Award" issued by the Chamber of Commerce's environmental affairs committee. For the past eight years, the award has recognized businesses that exhibit sustainable operating principles. Award categories are environmental, economic development and social responsibility.

Some of the sustainable practices at the Lantana Center are diversions, programs and projects that aim to reduce storm water runoff. Since Hines' purchase of Lantana in 1998, the firm has supported a myriad of local social programs. Recent Hines community outreach projects include corporate sponsorship of local elementary school Edison Language Academy, a local job fair in conjunction with St. Anne's Catholic Church and support of various local art programs and groups.

The Hines portfolio of projects completed and underway includes 737 properties representing more than 244 million square feet of office, mixed-use, industrial, hotel, medical, sports facilities and residential properties, as well as large, master-planned communities and land developments. With offices in 62 U.S. cities and 12 foreign countries, and controlled assets valued in excess of $14 billion, Hines is one of the largest real estate organizations in the world.

SMFD approved smoking spots

SMOKERS, from page 1

would be no smoking on the pier," he said.

The locations were backed by pier officials. The Santa Monica Fire Department confirmed that the designated areas are away from the main public thoroughfare, situated to benefit from prevailing winds and can be fire proofed.

City Hall agreed to allow pier restaurants to designate smoking on a portion, or all, of their outdoor dining areas, with the belief that a ban would place restaurants at a competitive disadvantage to non-restricted restaurants.

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LOCAL

Collision avoidance system saved the night

NEAR MISSES, from page 1

On-board safety equipment that includes a collision avoidance system allowed pilots to avoid potential disaster in the sky, he said.

"That was the hero of the night," he said.

After radio contact failed about 4:40 p.m. Tuesday at the Federal Aviation Administration facility in Palmdale, the control room "looked like complete chaos all over the place," Ghaffari said.

A backup computer system was activated but that also failed, he said.

Three workers filed on-the-job injury claims after becoming traumatized by watching flights veer toward one another on radar without being able to do anything, he said.

Under FAA "separation standards," planes are required to fly at least five miles apart horizontally and no less than 1,000 feet vertically. In at least five cases, that safety bubble was violated, and in two cases planes came within about two miles of each other, Ghaffari said.

Flights across much of the country resumed late Tuesday after repairs restored radio contact. But airports struggled to accommodate irked passengers who were forced to wait hours to board delayed flights.

At Los Angeles International Airport, the outage brought about 400 flights to a standstill. Two dozen flights at the Oakland International Airport and more than a dozen at Ontario International Airport also did not depart or arrive on time.

The delays caused a ripple effect throughout the country as planes bound for Los Angeles and other airports were held on the ground.

In all, planes were grounded for about three hours at airports in the Los Angeles region, northern California and parts of Nevada, Federal Aviation Administration spokeswoman Laura Brown said.

The outage began at the Los Angeles Air Route Traffic Control Center in Palmdale. The station, located in the desert north of Los Angeles, controls airspace for a vast region that encompasses California, Arizona, Nevada and parts of Utah.

Control of the airspace was turned over to other air traffic control facilities, including one in Albuquerque, N.M.

By 8 p.m. Tuesday, the FAA allowed flights to resume at 50 percent airport capacity so the facilities wouldn't be flooded with passengers, said Nancy Castles, a spokeswoman for Los Angeles International Airport.

Air travel reached full capacity by early Wednesday, said Diana Joubert, an FAA operations officer.

Theatrical performances to beef up beach fund

PARKING LOT, from page 1

performances. Cirque du Soleil, which had a run in the same parking lot several years ago, was operating under a special licensing agreement.

"We're in the pilot phase of this right now," said Barbara Stinchfield, director of community and cultural services for City Hall. "Hopefully, this will draw people into the area at a time when things are pretty slow, but the main goal is revenue."

City officials say over the past year they have been approached by several theatrical groups looking for a venue, and City Hall hopes to capitalize on this interest by beefing up the beach fund. The fund is comprised of event revenue, parking and concession fees. It's used for beach maintenance, operations and capital improvements.

City officials also hope the events provide new entertainment opportunities and attract visitors. In the prior fiscal year, City Hall generated approximately $154,000 from special events and filming at the parking lot. Stinchfield said City Hall is still in negotiations with Cavalia and wasn't sure how much the performance would generate. Documents presented at the council meeting, however, say that "the production could generate net revenue to the city's beach fund that would approximate prior year levels."

Stinchfield also said the entertainment group would be responsible for a parking and traffic plan, so as not to interfere with beach access or community events.

Cavalia's ticketed performances take place under a large tent-like structure and will require use of half the lot, with the remaining space available for general parking. The group will run seven performances weekly over an initial period of five weeks.

Do you have community news?

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Santa Monica Daily Press

Business

The 'cost' of charity: Gifting stock versus cash

IT'S YOUR BUSINESS

BY JOHN KIM

When making a gift, or fulfilling a pledge, you might want to consider using stock as opposed to cash, especially if the stock has a capital gain and has been held longer than 12 months. The simple reason is that the net cost of the gift, after considering tax issues, might be less when gifting stock.

As an example, suppose you wanted to make a gift of $1,000 to a favorite charity. Instead of giving cash, you gift 10 shares of a stock currently trading at $100 per share. You have owned the stock for three years, and your basis in the stock is $10. So $90 per share represents a long-term capital gain. In essence, the stock has a capital gains tax liability of $135 ($90 x 15 percent x 10 shares). That computation is for illustrative purposes only and assumes a 15 percent capital gains tax rate.

If you were to sell the stock, you would owe $135 in capital gains tax. So, think of your $1,000 gift as really only "costing" you $865. A straight gift of cash, on the other hand, would cost the full $1,000. Hence the stock is actually less expensive to gift than cash.

There's actually a somewhat complicated formula that you can use to figure out the real after-tax cost to you. For a gift of cash, the "cost" is equal to the gift minus your income tax rate times the gift. If you're in the 35 percent bracket, for example, your $1,000 gift will "cost" $650 ($1,000-$350). If the gift is one of long-term capital gain property, like the stock example above, then the formula gets more complicated. It figures the "cost" just like with a gift of cash, but then subtracts the potential capital gains tax — because that is actually being "saved" when you make the gift of stock to a charity. In our example, it would be $650-$135 — or a net cost of $515: It "costs" $650 to gift the cash, but only $515 to gift the stock. The difference? That $135 of capital gains tax liability.

Of course, it's probably much simpler just to calculate your potential capital gains tax liability — and then subtract it from your gift. That's what you're really saving. In short, consider making gifts of appreciated stock rather than cash — it can save you money and ensure that charity gets what you want it to have.

(John S. Kim is a financial consultant with Smith Barney in Beverly Hills. Call (310) 205-4939 or visit www.fc.smithbarney.com/jkim. Smith Barney does not provide tax or legal advice. Consult your own personal advisors for such information. This article is based, in whole or in part, on information provided by the sales and marketing department of Smith Barney. Smith Barney is a division and service mark of Citigroup Global Markets Inc. Member SIPC).

Storms boost demand for CA fruit

BY ALEX VEIGA
AP Business Writer

RIVERSIDE — They can't pick the grapefruit fast enough at Gless Farms these days.

Like other California citrus growers, Gless is trying to keep up with higher demand for grapefruit following the hurricane double-punch that struck Florida in recent weeks, wrecking much of that state's grapefruit crop.

Last week, John Gless, who has owned the 5,000-acre citrus growing operation since 1960, began receiving requests from packers to speed his summer grapefruit harvest.

"There's more demand," said Gless, 65. "We're picking as fast as we can pick."

In the last week alone, prices for fresh grapefruit from California and Arizona have increased about 10 percent, according to Sunkist Growers, a Sherman Oaks-based marketing cooperative representing 6,000 citrus growers in both states.

"Our summer crop is now virtually sold out," said Claire Smith, spokeswoman for Sunkist Growers. "Normally that wouldn't happen probably until the end of September, at which time Florida comes into the market very heavy."

In recent years, many California growers had been scaling back their grapefruit fields amid low prices and stiff competition from Florida.

"They just have a huge volume and when they come in, they dominate the market," Smith said.

But while the short-term uptick in prices will be a boost for Gless and other California growers, he worries the problems in Florida might also open the door for increased competition from foreign growers.

"Anytime somebody gets hurt now ... it helps you maybe for that season a little bit, but then what you do is you find the other countries come to fill the void," said Gless, who also grows lemons and oranges.

Tariffs and cheaper labor costs overseas give the foreign growers an advantage, he said.

"Once they get established, they're here for the duration," Gless said.

Officials in Florida have estimated that losses from Hurricanes Charley and Frances exceed $2 billion.

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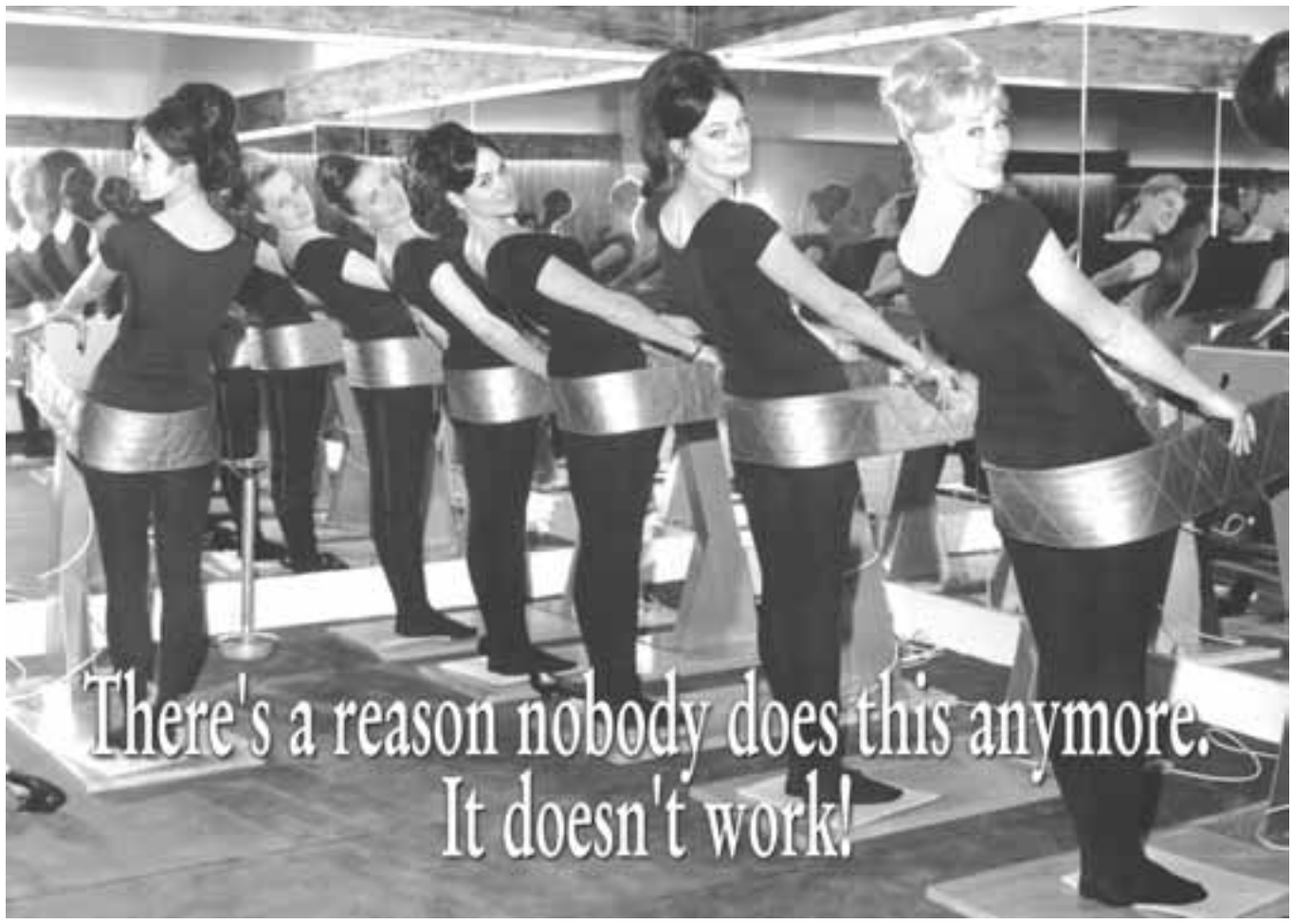

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STATE

Parks grants rife with problems, controller says

BY DON THOMPSON
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — State parks grants awarded by legislators are often handled without adequate supervision, Controller Steve Westly said Tuesday as he ordered the return of $15 million in unspent money.

Westly's audit of the grants administered by the state Parks and Recreation Department showed the agency provided little oversight, and that some grant recipients didn't need the money distributed by the Legislature. Often, auditors said, the grants were awarded without any conditions on how the money would be spent.

"We found problems every step of the way," Westly said.

Last month, Westly ordered a review of four years of parks grants after news stories suggested $125,000 may have been illegally sidetracked to the 2002 campaign of Secretary of State Kevin Shelley from a nearly $500,000 grant for a San Francisco community center that was never built.

The report released Tuesday by Westly's office said documents indicate that money intended for the nonprofit San Francisco Neighbors Resource Center "may have been misspent."

But that was only the most egregious example of a system of pork barrel spending run amok, Westly said.

Though it's the only one so far where auditors have found potential wrongdoing, his auditors are reviewing 20 other large grants worth up to $10 million in which there was little documentation or oversight. His office and state auditors will also examine other state grants that may exhibit the same pattern of problems.

"During boom times, a lot of pet projects money goes out," Westly said. "They're across the board geographically."

Legislators often wrote grants into law with no details on how they should be spent. "City of Los Angeles: Antes Columbus Club Youth, $1,000,000," reads one example in its entirety. "City of Yucaipa: Community Center/Gym, $2,265,500."

At times, recipients didn't need the money or know they had received it. Of $102 million granted in fiscal years 2000 and 2001, Westly ordered the return to the state's general fund of up to $15 million where recipients didn't spend it within a five-year period.

The parks department awarded as much as 90 percent of the money in advance, without proper documentation or follow up to see how the state money was spent, the audit said.

"It's hard to say if the money was spent well when you don't have receipts," Westly said, citing just one of many problems. "There is a clear, consistent pattern here where we do not have tight enough fiscal control."

The parks department pinned the blame on lawmakers for attaching few or no requirements to constituent grants. The department said in a statement it provides "the maximum oversight possible" given "the financial constraints imposed by the Legislature." The amount of oversight money granted by lawmakers isn't enough to allow for adequate supervision, the department said.

Full audits of four grants are underway, with another 16 possible, Westly said. The four are the Slavonic Cultural Center in San Francisco, $394,000; Mission Trails in San Diego, $985,000; MLK Museum/Chavez Center in Los Angeles, $246,250; and Breed Street Shul in Los Angeles, $492,500.

Westly called for the Legislature to write more specifics into future grants and the parks department to provide better oversight.

Investigations of the grants are underway by the FBI, the state attorney general's office, the Fair Political Practices Commission, state auditors and the Legislature's Joint Audit Committee.

Shelley has since returned the $125,000 to the state and put another $80,000 in questionable donations in escrow, while denying he knew the money may have been diverted through campaign contributors. His office declined comment Tuesday.

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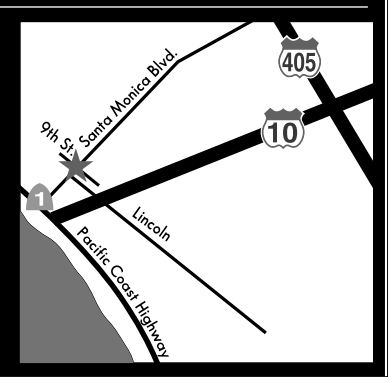

STATE

Lawyers seek to bar untrained interrogators from Iraqi prisons

BY SETH HETTENA
Associated Press Writer

SAN DIEGO — Human rights lawyers asked a federal judge Tuesday to grant an injuction that would bar defense contractor CACI International Inc. from employing untrained civilian interrogators in prisons in Iraq. The request follows an Army report that implicated three CACI interrogators in the Abu Ghraib prison scandal.

Lawyers suing two U.S. defense contractors also maintained that abuse continued at U.S. military facilities as late as July, when a 15-year-old boy allegedly was stripped naked, starved, beaten and sexually abused in Baghdad.

San Diego-based Titan Corp. and CACI, based in Arlington, Va., are defendants in an unusual racketeering lawsuit accusing them of conspiring to torture, rape and kill Iraqi prisoners. The companies are being sued by eight Iraqis and the estate of an Iraqi man who lawyers said was tortured to death.

The lawsuit was filed in U.S. District Court in San Diego, where Titan, the larger of the two defendants, is headquartered. The injunction request, filed Tuesday afternoon, does not apply to Titan.

U.S. Distrct Judge John S. Rhoades should order CACI to provide 16 weeks of interrogation training to its workers, lawyers with the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York and a Philadephia law firm said. The proposed injunction also would force CACI to hand the lawyers its files on all of its employees in Iraq. Lawyers want a chance to object to CACI employees with "violent or otherwise unsuitable backgrounds."

"An injunction will begin to repair the damage done to the United States' standing in the world community," the lawyers wrote in their motion. "An injunction will prevent innocent persons from being tortured by untrained interrogators sent into prisons by the United States. An injunction will prevent CACI from making money without performing in good faith under its contract."

John F. O'Connor, an attorney representing CACI, said he was confident the court would deny the request. He said CACI has always provided highly trained interrogators in support of the U.S. military mission in Iraq.

"The motion is just the latest effort by a group of unprincipled lawyers to twist and invent facts in an attempt to dictate the United States' policies in Iraq, and to defame and extort financial compensation from CACI," O'Connor said.

The motion is based in large part on a recently released investigation by Army Maj. Gen. George Fay, which found that three civilian interrogators employed by CACI contributed to the Abu Ghraib prison scandal. The Fay report recommends the information be forwarded for possible criminal prosecution and that "appropriate contractual action" be taken. The interrogators aren't named in the report.

Two of the interrogators are no longer with the company. A previous Army investigation indentified a CACI interrogator, Steven Stefanowicz, as one of those implicated in the Abu Ghraib scandal. He remains employed by the company but, at his own request, is no longer working in Iraq, O'Connor said.

CACI has said it has provided a total of 36 interrogators since August 2003 to support military operations in Iraq. Roughly a third lacked formal military training as interrogators, according to the Fay report.

The human rights lawyers claim CACI also "improperly influenced" the military's procurement of interrogators. A company employee, Thomas Howard, helped write a job description for interrogators before CACI won the contract. The description required only "equivalent" training and experience rather than interrogation training.

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CALIFORNIA BRIEFS

Sludge to saturate state soil

By The Associated Press

RIVERSIDE — Supervisors voted unanimously to allow spreading tons of Southern California's sewage sludge on farm fields.

Despite strong protests from some residents, the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved a proposal to import Class-A sludge into Riverside County. No contracts have been signed however.

"Based on past experience with Los Angeles, Orange and even San Diego counties shipping material here, we anticipate we may see large amounts again," deputy environmental health director Damian Meins said.

Federal rules demand that treated human waste designated Class A must have all but trace amounts of certain disease-carrying bacteria removed.

Under the county ordinance's tiered system, based largely on odor intensity, the most highly treated, least odiferous material could be placed immediately next to schools and homes. Other Class A material could be placed no closer than 500 feet.

Regional sewage processors, who say the material provides nutrients for farming, annually trucked hundreds of wet tons of less-regulated Class B sewage sludge to Riverside County farm fields until it was banned in 2001.

Since then they have been forced to ship it to Arizona and elsewhere. Many are now upgrading their facilities to produce Class A material.

Newport bans butts at beach

By The Associated Press

NEWPORT BEACH — Smoking is now banned on the beach.

The City Council voted Tuesday night to outlaw smoking on the beach, making Newport Beach the third Orange County coastal city to do so. Many other California beach towns have also banned smoking.

No smoking signs will be posted Oct. 15 on beaches, piers, walkways, floats, wharves and lookout points. A 30-day warning period is likely before tickets are issued, General Services director David Niederhaus said.

San Clemente and Huntington Beach have also banned smoking.

Environmental groups and high school students pushed for the no-smoking law.

A bill making its way through the Legislature would ban smoking on all state beaches. The bill, sponsored by Assemblyman Paul Koretz, D-West Hollywood, would allow local governments to tighten or loosen the proposed $100 fine.

Memorial to honor missing soldiers

By The Associated Press

RIVERSIDE — Work has begun on a $675,000 memorial at Riverside National Cemetery to honor prisoners of war and soldiers killed in uniform whose remains have never been located.

The POW/MIA monument, the graveyard's third memorial to veterans, is expected to be completed in about a year.

"Memorials like this help MIA families keep the faith and continue the struggle," said Mickey Olmstead, 44, of Austin, Texas, who spoke during Tuesday's groundbreaking ceremony.

His father, Navy pilot Stanley Edward Olmstead, flew his F-4 Phantom jet off the deck of the aircraft carrier Independence on Oct. 17, 1965, and never returned. He was listed as missing in action.

"We always thought dad would come home alive right up until the very last prisoners of war were released. But he never did," his son said.

Legislation introduced in Congress will make the new monument a national shrine to prisoners of war and servicemen and women listed as missing in action, said Paul Adkins, chairman of the cemetery's support committee.

Riverside National Cemetery is already home to a national monument to Medal of Honor recipients, as well as a memorial to all veterans.

NATIONAL

Odd coalition backs Bush on combating slavery

BY GEORGE GEDDA
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — There was an unusual sight last week in the gilded elegance of the State Department's main reception room: anti-abortion activists standing shoulder-to-shoulder with abortion rights campaigners in shared commitment.

With Secretary of State Colin Powell presiding, members of this odd coalition were attending a ceremony that highlighted the scourge of human trafficking and why united action was necessary to combat it.

Among those present was Jessica Neuwirth, president of the women's rights group Equality Now.

"This would be one of the rare moments I would find myself in the State Department," said Neuwirth, whose organization advocates women's rights throughout the world including a right to abortion.

Among other projects, her group has been battling U.S. sex tourism companies that promote travel by Americans to Southeast Asia for encounters with women and children forced into prostitution.

Also at the ceremony was Rep. Chris Smith, R-N.J., a leading congressional activist against abortion and trafficking. He has introduced two major anti-trafficking laws passed since 2000.

For some, trafficking is an issue that carries a deep moral resonance.

Perhaps the most repugnant form of trafficking constitutes the kidnapping of children and forcing them into prostitution. If these luckless youngsters are the 21st century's slaves, Smith, Neuwirth and others trying to free them are the new abolitionists.

Among them is former Rep. Linda Smith, R-Wash., who said an encounter with an 11-year-old girl in India years ago was a life-transforming experience. She committed her life to help women and girls desperate to escape forced prostitution. Toward that end, she founded Shared Hope International.

Scores activists much like Smith were at the State Department ceremony. They witnessed the swearing-in of former Rep. John R. Miller, R-Wash., to the newly created position of ambassador-at-large for the department's anti-trafficking office. Previously, he was office director.

"Today, the slavery is not just on plantations and in homes; it is in factories and armies as well, and especially in brothels," Miller said in a speech.

"But the slave masters use the same tools today as the earlier slave masters: kidnapping, fraud, threats and beatings, all aimed at forcing women, children, and men into labor and sex exploitation."

No country, he said, is free of the plague. Former Rep. Smith agrees, citing estimates that 4,000 women a year are trafficked into his home state.

Countries that don't act to combat serious trafficking problems can be subject to international penalties.

The White House ordered partial sanctions against Venezuela last Friday for its role as a "source, transit and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation." A Venezuelan spokesman said the U.S. allegations were "not well-documented."

Among industrialized countries, Japan has one of the poorest trafficking records, according to a June State Department report.

Brothels in Cambodia were found by the Virginia-based International Justice Mission to be employing girls aged 4 to 14. It mounted an operation to rescue the children. World Hope International, also located in Virginia, is heavily involved in rehabilitation of these victims.

The State Department estimates that up to 800,000 people, mostly women and children, are trafficked across national borders annually. Millions more are trafficked within their own countries.

Powell says U.S. efforts have contributed either directly or indirectly to 2,800 trafficking convictions worldwide. He says 24 countries have enacted new legislation banning trafficking.

While traffickers prey mostly on females, males are often victims as well. The International Justice Mission recounts the story of Sridar, a 10-year old Indian boy who earned 20 cents a day rolling bidis, small cigarettes. His quota was 1,000 a day, and he suffered beatings if his output fell short.

His desperate parents had sold him to a money lender for $31. As a result of the intervention of the Virginia charity, local authorities ordered Sridar released from a year's bondage and the debt to the money lender forgiven.

Forest Service halts Wyoming energy leases

By The Associated Press

JACKSON, Wyo. — Responding to public outcry and pressure from Gov. Dave Freudenthal, the U.S. Forest Service has decided to withhold oil and gas leasing in the Bridger-Teton National Forest, some of it within 25 miles of Jackson.

The agency had proposed leasing 175,000 acres in the forest's Wyoming Range — much of it in roadless areas prized for wildlife and recreation.

Instead, it will take a closer look at the concerns of citizens and the governor, Deputy Regional Forester Bert Kulesza said Tuesday.

Auctions of leases were to take place in October and December.

Freudenthal, a Democrat, released a statement applauding the Forest Service decision.

"I continue to fully support Wyoming's oil and gas industry, but development needs to occur in a deliberate fashion that takes into account all the impact it brings," the governor said.

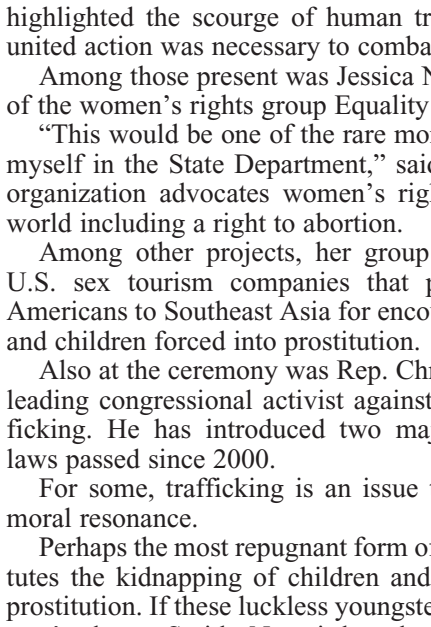
Public outcry had been mounting in recent weeks, with more than 100 people attending open houses in Jackson and Alpine to express concerns about oil and gas development in the forest.

Sen. Craig Thomas on Tuesday became the latest elected official to add his voice to the growing chorus of protest over the leases. Thomas, a Republican generally seen as pro-industry, issued a statement challenging the Forest Service to justify the auctions.

Dru Bower, spokesperson for the Petroleum Association of Wyoming, called Troyer's decision "frustrating."

"We are disappointed that the leases will be pulled at this time," Bower said. However, once the additional study is completed, "we are confident it will comply with environmental regulations, and it is our hope that parcels will be available for lease in the near future."

Franz Camenzind, executive director of the Jackson Hole Conservation Alliance, hailed the decision, saying, "The highest and best use for lands sometimes is the least intrusive kind of use."



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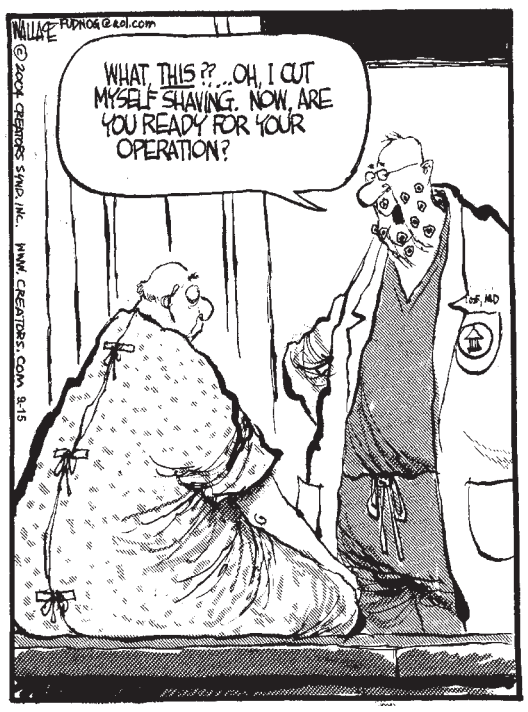

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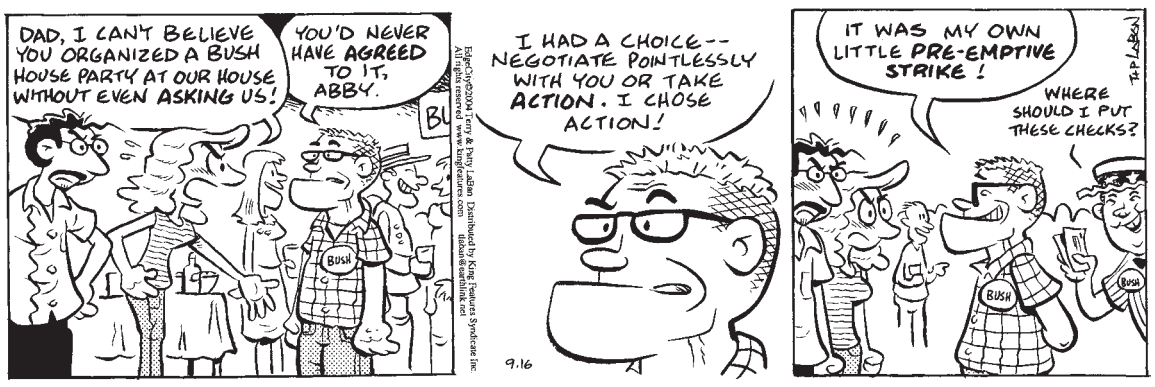

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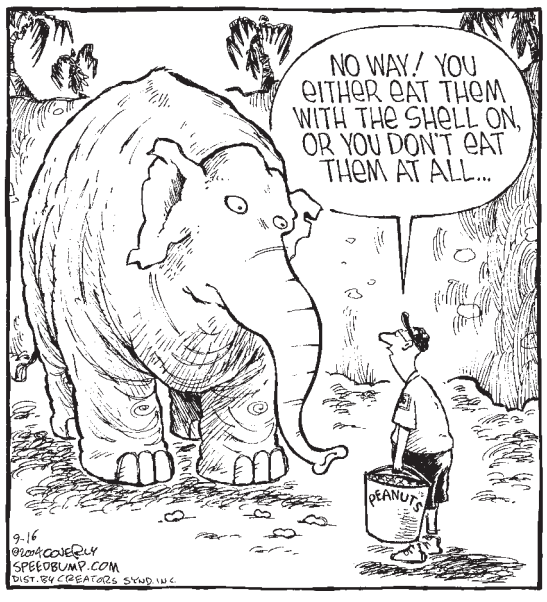

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By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
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5 Florida city
10 Mine find
11 Soap opera
12 Track shape
13 Defector, e.g.
14 Band's sample
16 Tear down
20 Bounty event
23 Feathery wrap
24 Put up
25 Boat back
27 Period
28 Laughed derisively
29 Succubus, e.g.
32 Donkey follower
36 Salad green
39 First-rate
40 Granola bit
41 Behind schedule
42 Incites
43 First place

DOWN
1 Oaf
2 Wander
3 Hoss' brother
4 Tuneful
5 Score speed
6 "The Tempest" spirit
7 Soviet plane
8 Course number
9 Heady drink
11 Sordid
15 Camping need
17 "Yeah, right!"
18 Aching
19 Set of cards
20 Anthropology's Margaret
21 Incite
22 Be rife
25 Fair
26 Like blueprints
28 Macho guys
30 Keats, for one
31 West Indies island
33 Fork setting
34 Poker cost
35 Prom attendee
36 Pitching stat
37 Collar
38 Game cube

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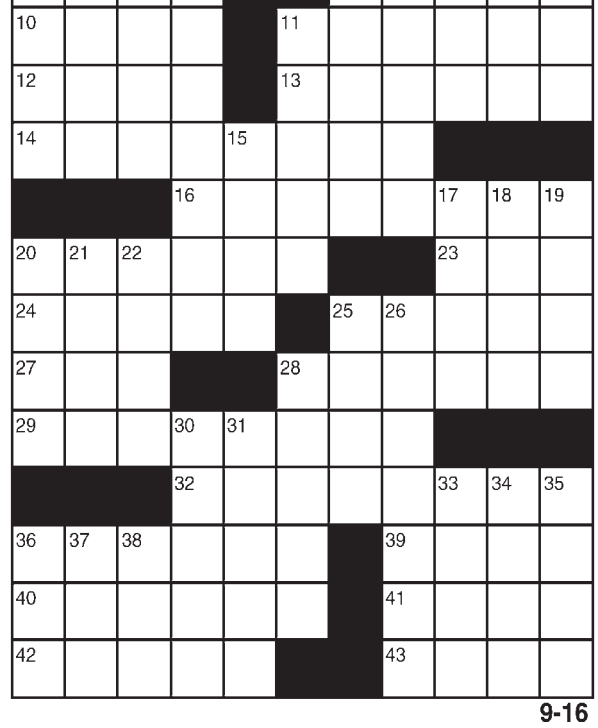

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Beefy Bradys drop blubber in reality TV show

By The Associated Press

NEW YORK —Apparently, a couple Bradys didn't own any exercise equipment.

Former "Brady Bunch" actors Christopher Knight and Susan Olsen, who portrayed Peter and Cindy Brady respectively, as well as four other not-so-A-list celebrities signed up to shed excess pounds for Discovery Health Channel's "Body Challenge: Hollywood," a 12-week health and fitness competition.

"It's not a beauty contest," Knight told The Associated Press Tuesday. "It is a contest about health. It was very illuminating to me. I thought I knew what I needed to know."

The competitors, which included Erik Estrada ("CHiPS") and Charlene Tilton ("Dallas"), were given personal trainers and nutritionists to help in their transformation. Knight, 47, lost 50 percent of his fat mass during the competition, which was filmed last December.

"I have been in and out of shape for 20 years," said Knight, who worked behind a desk in the high tech industry for most of his life. "I couldn't find the time. There was just no energy to work out and stay in shape."

Now that Knight, who was a fan of the previous seasons of "Body Challenge," is in better shape and free of his desktop duties, he'd like to get back to his acting roots.

"If I'm going to re-approach the entertainment industry, there's no room for chubby," Knight said.

The four-episode "Body Challenge: Hollywood" premieres Sept. 14.

INDIANAPOLIS —Rupert Boneham, the bushy-bearded giant from Indianapolis who was an audience favorite during two "Survivor" games, is donating $100,000 to help troubled children.

The donation will launch Rupert's Kids Inc., designed to help troubled youth and provide affordable housing for the poor in Indianapolis, Boneham said Tuesday.

"I've always wanted to create my own organization for kids, but I've never had the resources until now," said Boneham, who won a $1 million consolation prize during a special edition of the CBS game.

Boneham, 40, appeared on "Survivor: All-Stars" and "Survivor: Pearl Islands."

The project is an extension of his work with Indianapolis-based Dawn Project, a social outreach organization where he worked for six years.

Boneham mentored 40 children with behavioral and emotional problems.

"These (kids) were the toughest of the tough," said Brock Hesler, spokesman for Choices Inc., which administers the Dawn Project. "The kids respect him because he is a genuine person. He always has been."

Boneham wants to identify troubled youths ages 12-20 and have them remodel dilapidated houses. The charity would then donate the homes or sell them for a nominal amount to a low-income families.

He also would give a cash reward to children who achieve better grades in school or make progress in other ways in their lives.

The organization will work with youngsters referred by the Juvenile Court, the Department of Correction and other agencies. City officials have agreed to help identify distressed homes.

NEW YORK —A tongue-in-cheek troupe called Billionaires for Bush and some of Broadway's bold-faced names got together to fan the flames of political discontent.

"You've got to have a sense of humor," comedian Robert Klein told a political fund-raiser that filled Avalon, a Manhattan church-turned-nightclub.

"I feel much safer with Bush," deadpanned Klein, who hosted the Monday night event. "These days, an air marshal can remove any Mideastern-looking man from a plane. The other day, one guy misread something, and removed a Midwestern man!"

Through two hours of punch lines, the liberal message came through: "This is about getting rid of Bush," said comedian Al Franken.

With a minimum ticket price of $50, the evening raised about $20,000 for the Washington-based organization Grassroots Democrats.

For the "Broadway for a New America" show, a "special thanks" in the program went to Paul Newman, Sigourney Weaver and Wendy Wasserstein for their support.

NEW YORK —Snoop Dogg will host Spike TV's second annual Video Game Awards on Dec. 14. The hip-hop star and other celebs will pass out awards to honor games, designers, animators, musicians and performers.

"Snoop is an icon and the perfect example of how Hollywood and the music industry have embraced the video game genre and catapulted it into pop culture," said the awards' co-executive producer Casey Patterson.

Snoop brings video game cred to the ceremony. The "Gin and Juice" artist appeared as himself in "True Crime: Streets of L.A." and "NBA Live 2003." He'll again appear as himself in the electronic brawl-fest "Def Jam: Fight for NY," due in stores Sep. 20.

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