

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

LOTTO

FANTASY 5

33, 20, 23, 32, 30

DAILY 3

Afternoon picks: 9, 9, 2

Evening picks: 6, 5, 3

DAILY DERBY

1st Place: 1, Gold Rush

2nd Place: 5, California Classic

3rd Place: 6, Whirl Win

Race Time: 1:48.84



NEWS OF THE WEIRD

by Chuck Shepard

Britain's Industrial Christian Fellowship of religious scholars complained in September that people's prayers go disproportionately for teachers and nurses and said it would distribute a set of prayers for the underblessed financial sector under the heading "When did you last pray for your stockbroker?" And in November, the Saudi government set new restrictions on the export of sand, fearing that increased needs of its neighbors (in the reconstruction of Iraq and in Bahrain's reclamation projects into the Persian Gulf) will create a shortage.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"At age 50, every man has the face he deserves."

— George Orwell

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Lapping it up



John Wood/Daily Press

A young member of the Police Activities League lays his wish list on Santa Claus at the annual holiday workshop at the PAL drop-in center on Olympic Boulevard. Hundreds of children attended the event, which featured various arts and crafts, including graham cracker-house building, and snowflake-, reindeer-, and decoration-making. Santa also gave away new toys to the tykes, including skateboards, backpacks, jewelry and football/soccer ball sets.

Hispanic advocacy groups call for statewide boycott

BY DEBORAH KONG
AP Minority Issues Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Advocates are asking Hispanics throughout California to refuse to go to schools, work or stores today in response to the repeal of a law that would have allowed undocumented immigrants to get driver's licenses.

"Latino and immigrant communities don't have to roll over," said Edward Headington, a spokesman for the Mexican American Political

Association, one of two groups organizing the protest. "There is strength in numbers."

At 11.9 million, Hispanics make up about a third of the state's population. California, home to the nation's largest Hispanic community, has been the scene of a series of divisive battles over immigration.

Headington said he did not know how many people would participate in Friday's general strike, but acknowledged its effect would

See BOYCOTT, page 4

Retailers rung up for overcharging

Six businesses plead guilty following sting operation

BY JOHN WOOD
Daily Press Staff Writer

SM COURTHOUSE — Six of nine local retailers accused of overcharging customers pleaded guilty here on Wednesday and Thursday, agreeing to pay nearly \$30,000 in penalties and fines.

Fashion outlets Diesel, Bebe and Urban Outfitters — all on the Third Street Promenade —

Carlton Cards in Santa Monica Place mall, drugstore Walgreens on Wilshire Boulevard, and the Coffee Bean on Montana Avenue all agreed to pay the maximum penalty and post a 60-day notice of violation in front of their stores.

The six retailers will pay a collective \$28,289.80 in fines and penalties, according to a sentence handed down by Santa Monica Superior Court Judge Bernard Kamins. Three other retailers, the Gap and Barnes & Noble — both

See GUILTY, page 4



Steve Averill/Daily Press

City crews assess the damage from a water main break on Thursday at Fifth Street and Ocean Park Boulevard.

Water main break forces street closure

By Daily Press staff

OCEAN PARK — An 80-year-old water main broke Thursday at Fifth Street and Ocean Park Boulevard, leaving a dozen homes without water for about eight hours, a city official said. The road is expected to remain closed until this afternoon.

The water main, constructed in 1925, burst before noon, splitting open the pavement above the cast-iron pipe. The pressure from the water forced the asphalt to break, leaving a hole about 20 feet by 20 feet.

Ocean Park Boulevard between Fourth and Sixth streets will be closed while crews patch the area.

The pipe was re-lined in 1965 and it's unknown what caused it to break, said Gil Borboa, the city's utilities manager.

Ocean Park Boulevard has been the site of a lot of road repair over the past year. When a 1,000-foot-long stretch of roadway collapsed in January, it took two months and \$1 million to repair the street. The sinkhole at the intersection of Ocean Park Boulevard and Euclid

See WATER MAIN, page 4

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HAPPY BIRTHDAY for Friday, December 12, 2003:

You have unusual charisma, and others cannot help but respond to you. In the professional and/or public realm, you could win an election you're so popular — if you were so inclined. With everything going for you, you have the ability to surge ahead professionally. You get the type of acknowledgment you want, be it a promotion or a pay raise. By fall 2004, your popularity floods into your social life. If single, you will certainly meet your share of mates or potential sweeties. Your circle of friends will expand. If attached, share more of your successes with your loved one. You become quite a team. Love flourishes in fall 2004. CANCER understands you.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Enthusiasm marks your professional and personal lives. How you say what you feel could make a big difference in how a superior, boss or even a mate responds. Be sensitive to those around you. Plunge into work, as you will get a lot done quickly. Tonight: Get physical.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ Reach out for a child, loved one or friend who might have been playing it rather low-key. Your way of verbalizing has much to do with the positive response you get. Start discussing a trip in the near future. Tonight: Away you go.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ A key partner might be overly enthusiastic about how to spend your money. You might want to say "no," but somehow, somehow, this person manipulates you into taking a strong action. Establish stronger boundaries. Tonight: Your treat.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ You're upbeat but nearly rigid that you have things your way. Consider more carefully your options that surround a loved one. A conversation doesn't have to spill the beans, but you might be able to pick up a clue about the right gift for this person. Tonight: As you like it. You won't tolerate anything else.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ What you might want to do or buy for someone close just might not suit this person. Know that everything doesn't have to happen yesterday. An easy, observing approach will take you in a new direction, if you're willing. Tonight: Get a good night's sleep.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ Take charge, as you are the most likely to get what you want and need. You have a special way of telling others what you expect. Associates respond, as well as your family. Results revolve around friendship and teamwork. A child needs extra time. Tonight: Where the crowds are.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Your way of approaching family and others in general draws some very positive results. Realize that you might need to take the lead, even if you would prefer not to. Your instincts guide you down the right path. Excitement surrounds you. Tonight: Join friends for a late meal.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Some simply like you, which is quite clear in what they say and what they do. Express your generous and giving side. Return calls. Your bright and happy manner could turn another's day around. Add more caring to your daily life. Tonight: Try a new restaurant.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22- Dec. 21)

★★★★ Others praise your work and your abilities. You might see this approval in the form of a bonus or a pay raise. Work with people individually, and you will gain as a result. Others appreciate your undivided attention. Tonight: Togetherness is the theme.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ Your ability to relate to others comes out. Your understanding, which to many appears as wisdom, gives you a gentleness or wholeness that others delight in. Sort through the many invitations. Everyone wants the Goat! Tonight: Out.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Realize when you have had enough of a situation and say "no." How you say no might make all the difference in the reception. A partner proves most instrumental as he or she explains what is on his or her mind. Tonight: Off to the gym.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Be careful about mixing business and pleasure. You might understand this fine line, but another might not. You find that others appreciate your efforts. Be as clear as possible with a special loved one. This person needs your attention. Tonight: Play as if the weekend was beginning.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Not too late to keep the flu at bay

By Daily Press staff

While hundreds of Santa Monicans received their flu shots last week, it's not too late to get one.

The Santa Monica Red Cross, in cooperation with the Los Angeles County Health Department, held its annual free flu clinic at the chapter headquarters last week. More than 250 senior citizens and others in high-risk categories took advantage of the shots. The recent deaths in Colorado attributed to this year's flu season have increased the public interest in getting the life-saving immunizations.

Residents who have not yet received a flu shot can still contact the LA County department of health services at 1 (800) 927-8700.

Each year, more than 36,000 deaths are attributed to the flu, mostly affecting seniors and children. The peak flu season is usually from January to March, but health officials are concerned that the Colorado deaths may indicate the season has started early this year. The first reported flu case in Los Angeles was in mid-October. This year's vaccine protects individuals against three types of flu strain — "A-Moscow," "A-Caledonian" and "B-Hong Kong." "A-Panama" is similar to the "A-Moscow" strain and is, therefore, covered by the current vaccine.

Buy a tree and help someone get sober

By Daily Press staff

A Christmas tree fundraising lot run by the Delancey Street Foundation has been closed, but two other local lots remain open for business this holiday season.

The tree lot at Pico and Cloverfield boulevards has closed after operating during several holiday seasons, but the non-profit organization will continue to use their lots at the corner of Abbott Kinney and Venice Boulevard in Venice and at Pacific and Main streets in Santa Monica.

Delancey is considered the nation's leading self-help, residential education center for former substance abusers and ex-convicts, officials say. For 32 years, Delancey Street has developed and refined a model residential educational facility to turn around the lives of the long-term substance abusers and felons.

Delancey Street provides academic and vocational skills, instruction on positive attitudes and values, and access to job opportunities that residents need to re-enter society and live legitimately, productively and successfully. All food, clothing, shelter, education, vocational training, emotional help and recreation are provided at no cost to the residents or taxpayers.

One of the most unique features of Delancey Street, officials say, is that they have never accepted any government funds. Instead, they generate most of their income from training school businesses, which serve to teach residents marketable skills and form donations, and help from businesses and friends.

Delancey Street's population has almost 2,000 residents in five locations, with facilities in New Mexico, North Carolina, New York and Los Angeles. The Los Angeles facility currently has about 300 residents.

Middle schoolers to give off some positive energy

By Daily Press staff

John Adams Middle School's Science Magnet Students will take to the streets on Saturday, dressing in red PEAK T-shirts and hats and arming themselves with holiday bags of — you guessed it — energy efficient light bulbs.

The students will be going from small business to small business in the Main Street shopping area, bringing bulbs as gifts to the shop owners, and letting them know about free energy efficiency tune-ups being made available through the Six Cities Energy Project.

Each Small Business tune-up is valued at \$1,000 in directly installed efficiency measures and, depending on the business, may be worth \$5,000 in savings over time. And that's before businesses leverage any of these savings through reinvestments based on the Six Cities Energy Project contractors' suggestions.

surf report

Look for a fading WNW wind and ground swell mix today. Many spots with decent WNW exposure see rather disorganized but good-sized surf. Winds will be lighter but still look to be onshore/NW for most of the day.

OUTLOOK: On Saturday, new long-period NW swell will be on the rise through the afternoon and into Sunday. Unfortunately, most spots miss it.

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

Today the
water is:

59°

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	LOW TIDE				HIGH TIDE			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	12:53	1.9	2:19	-0.1	7:13	5.9	8:36	3.7
SUNDAY	1:19	2.1	2:50	-0.3	7:38	6.0	9:15	3.7
MONDAY	1:45	2.3	3:23	-0.4	8:03	6.0	9:55	3.6
TUESDAY	2:11	2.4	3:57	-0.4	8:31	6.0	10:36	3.5
WEDNESDAY	2:38	2.6	4:34	-0.4	9:00	5.9	11:22	3.4
THURSDAY	3:07	2.7	5:43	-0.2	9:32	5.8	N/A	N/A
FRIDAY	3:40	2.9	5:56	-0.1	12:15	3.4	(10:07)	5.5

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See BRIEFS, page 5



Three retailers continue arraignments until January

GUILTY, from page 1

on the Promenade — and Sears on Colorado Avenue, continued their arraignments to Jan. 16.

"We take this law very seriously, because it's one of the few tools we have to fight this widespread consumer problem," said Deputy City Attorney Adam Radinsky, who prosecuted the charges.

The stores were targeted in an undercover retail sting conducted last summer by investigators from the LA County Weights and Measures bureau, a division of the LA County Department of Agriculture. About \$400 will be paid to the bureau for each of the charges, covering the costs of the investigation.

Clothier Diesel overcharged investigators the most, going a full \$101.10 over the posted price on a total of three items. David Peterson, an attorney for Diesel, called the overcharge a "glitch," and said it occurred as the store was installing a new computer-based pricing system. Josh Burell, general manager of Urban Outfitters, attributed the \$10 overcharge at his store to a worker not double-checking new sales promotions.

Both said the mistakes are unlikely to occur again. Cato Fiksdal, commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, said that during the holiday season, shoppers need to be extra mindful of the prices they pay, and to always check their receipts. One reason for overcharges are mistakes made amid the holiday hustle-and-bustle, a time when items frequently change prices. Another reason

"We take this law very seriously, because it's one of the few tools we have to fight this widespread consumer problem."

— ADAM RADINSKY
Deputy City Attorney

may be the increased numbers of part-time employees, who are not as experienced with the money, he added.

Jeff Humphreys, deputy director of the Weights and Measures bureau, said his team of 14 inspectors regularly patrols all 8,400 LA stores that have scanners. Since February of 2002, stores have been required to pay a sliding-scale registration fee for scanners.

Of the 6,800 stores inspected thus far, 1,450 overcharged investigators on at least one item, Humphreys said, adding that merchants are seven times as likely to charge more than the posted price for an item than they are to charge less.

Consumer overcharge ...

Six stores paid nearly \$30,000 in fines

Diesel: **3 counts** — \$9,910.51

Carlton Cards: **2 counts** — \$4,110.51

Walgreens: **2 counts** — \$4,057.12

Urban Outfitters: **1 count** — \$3,722.27

Bebe: **1 count** — \$2,752.27

Coffee Bean: **1 count** — \$3,737.12

Not all Hispanics support boycott

BOYCOTT, from page 1

be spotty. Organizers have distributed at least 350,000 fliers during the past month urging people to join the effort, he said.

Some, however, have expressed reservations about the protest. Xavier Reyes, communications and education director at the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, said his group supports the goal of the strike but is worried about workers.

"Our concern is the folks that are going to leave their jobs and may not be able to come back to their jobs. There's basically no safety net for those people," Reyes said.

Reyes said he's unsure what impact the protest

will have.

"If we had a population that was totally homogeneous, there might be some significant showing," he said. But "we're not one homogeneous group that's marching in the same direction every time."

The strike, which coincides with the feast day of the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's patron saint, will remind legislators that the driver's license issue has not been forgotten, Headington said.

It's a matter of "respect and dignity for people who are hardworking and responsible and who need a license to drive to work, to drive their kids to school and to go shopping," he said.

The driver's license law was passed by the Legislature in September and signed by then-Gov. Gray Davis, fueling criticism he was pandering to Hispanic voters. Fulfilling a major campaign promise from the recall election, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger last week signed a measure repealing the law, which would have taken effect Jan. 1.

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Water main erupts

WATER MAIN, from page 1

Street gave way, sinking approximately 15 feet deep. Two days later, another section of Ocean Park Boulevard — near the intersection of 11th Street — also collapsed.

Officials believe the sand beneath the street was rapidly eroding when a 12-inch wide high-pressure water main erupted, releasing about 1.5 million gallons of water before it was ultimately contained.

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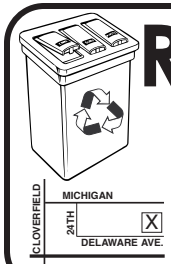
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UCLA study suggests allowing non-citizens to cast votes

BY GILLIAN FLACCUS

Associated Press Writer

LOS ANGELES — A UCLA study released this week says the state constitution should be amended so California's 4.6 million non-citizen adults can vote in local elections.

Nearly one-fifth of the state's adults are non-citizens and in 12 cities they form the majority, according to the study, which was commissioned by UCLA's Chicano Studies Research Center.

The study also found that non-citizens make up more than one-quarter of the population in 85 California cities and that 28 percent of the state's non-citizens are Hispanic.

"It's really a harbinger of things to come and unless we start to address this issue, we're going to have a political apartheid in California," said Joaquin Avila, the study's author and an instructor

at UCLA law school.

The study, based on 2000 Census data, comes days after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger repealed a law that would have allowed undocumented immigrants to obtain driver's licenses.

Anti-immigration rights groups reacted angrily, saying the study undermined the legal process for naturalization and essentially sanctioned illegal immigration.

"The distinction between citizens and non-citizens has been seriously eroded over the past generations and the only difference left is the ability to vote. That's not a trivial thing," said Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington, D.C.

"A person who isn't a citizen yet is essentially shacking up with America. It's important to the health of the body politic that that difference be preserved."

Avila said the proposed amendment

would not mandate the vote for non-citizens, but would give local governments the latitude to allow it if they choose. Any constitutional amendment would have to go to voters.

The study also recommends holding conferences to discuss non-citizens' voting status and including non-citizens on neighborhood councils and other local community groups.

Audrey Singer, an immigration expert with the Brookings Institution in Washington,

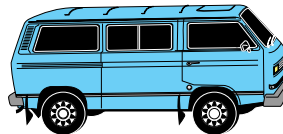
D.C., said cities and school boards in some states — including Maryland, Illinois and New York — already allow non-citizens to vote in local elections.

Until the 1920s, nearly half of all local elections included non-citizens — but an immigration backlash following World War II sharply curtailed the practice, she said.

"There's a long history of non-citizens having access to the franchise in local situations," she said. "Since then, it's popped up in various places at various times."

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

BRIEFS, from page 3

Santa Monica is one of the partners of the Six Cities Energy Project. Other partners are Irvine, Moreno Valley, Palm Desert, Brea and West Hollywood, and managing partner is The Energy Coalition. The Coalition's mission is to build partnerships between energy suppliers and users that foster smart energy management.

Fair lets kids build a menorah, chomp a latka

By Daily Press staff

Children can build their own menorahs at Santa Monica Place on Saturday as part of an annual arts and crafts fair.

On Dec. 14, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m., Chabad in Santa Monica will hold its annual Chanukah Crafts Fair. Children will enjoy creating menorahs using empty bullet casings. The menorah is a candelabra that is lit during the Jewish holiday of Chanukah to commemorate the miracle that happened 2,000 years ago. They will also be making dreidels (spinning tops) out of clay and wood. There also will be a continuous olive oil pressing demonstration and hot latkas (potato pancakes) will be handed out to all.

Jewish children used the Dreidel to deceive the Syrian-Greek soldiers into thinking that they were playing when indeed they were learning Jewish studies — a forbidden act at the time.

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DID YOU KNOW?: Triskaidekaphobia is the unnatural fear of the number "13".

LETTERS

Council flushed 58K down alley, er toilet

Editor:

The Santa Monica city council needed to pay a consultant \$58,000 to find out that the Third Street Promenade smells like a bum urinal (SMDP, Dec. 9, page 1). While we're wasting money on consultants, could we get one to explain to the taxpayers why the City Council has lost touch with reality?

Jeff Bender
Santa Monica

School donation 'tax' is divisive

Editor:

I write in opposition to the equity fund policy currently being proposed by SMMUSD Superintendent John Deasy. The policy calls for mandated entitlement by the district to a portion of private gifts to public schools, including all contributions to the PTA.

This policy fails to acknowledge that there are legitimate needs at every school in this district. The taking of resources from some students for the benefit of others assumes that some have more than they deserve. An appropriate manner to pursue the stated goals would promote the creation of additional funds for specific needs of students.

This policy fails to service the proficient and advanced students in the district. The weighted student formula for the redistribution of funds offers no prize for successful students and thereby penalizes the successful schools. The implication is that proficient and advanced students are less important to the public school system than are the struggling students.

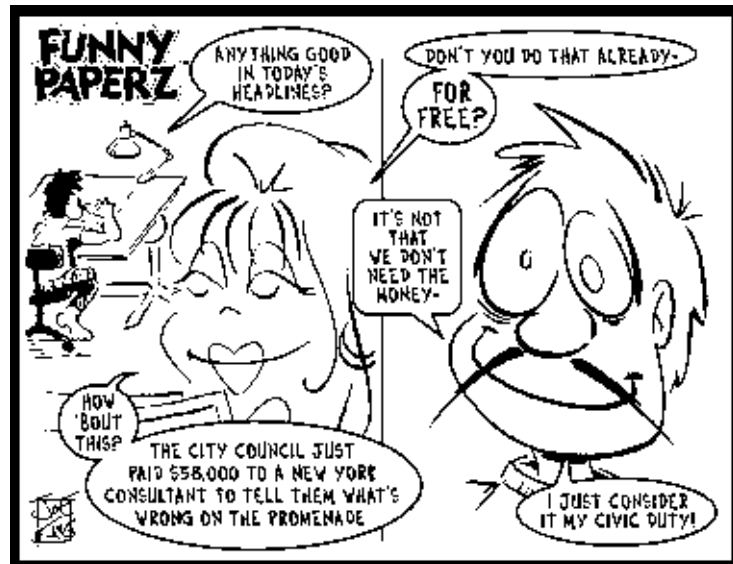
The policy, however it is administered, adds overhead and thereby reduces the amount of available resources. To attempt to promote equity, the policy will require extensive comparison between schools; of what is currently being funded and how. Let's avoid this expensive exercise.

Further, mandated entitlements to donations, are not donations — they are taxes — and will stimulate changes in the market related to price increases: Loss of customer support, either to private schools or reduced giving, or both. These changes place school budgets at risk.

Let's not underestimate the value of unfettered giving. The inherent elements of ownership and caring create an environment wherein the sum of the parts is truly greater than the whole. This has been diligently fostered by PTAs for years.

Ultimately the district must continue to inspire donations, with or without this new policy. Let's forgo this divisive gesture.

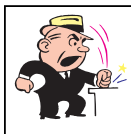
Deborah Griffin, PTA, co-president
Webster Elementary School



Member: APEC & NCS & CCS & SCS

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School tax plan, smoking ban prime for trash heap



**MY
WRITE**
By Bill Bauer

School Superintendent John Deasy wants 15 percent of gifts and donations raised by individual schools to be shared by all the schools in the district.

Deasy proposes a 15-percent "tax" to be put in an equity fund which would be doled out as grants to individual schools based on a complicated formula utilizing a number of factors built around school size and need.

It's a plan that Karl Marx would have loved. A school board-appointed and supervised Robin Hood takes from the rich and gives to the poor.

The question is why should Edison School give up 15 percent of the money it raises at its spring carnival? Should a parent who donates a \$1,000 computer to Franklin School pay the \$150 tax, or must the school come up with \$150 before it accepts the gift?

Despite details that need to be worked out, I think Deasy is on a slippery slope. While there's a need to compensate for

inequities in the district, this ill-advised scheme reeks of political over-correctness and could cost our schools much of the support and goodwill of their most generous contributors.

Then there's the development agreement City Council just voted on to hammer out with representatives of the Fairmont Miramar Hotel — one of Santa Monica's three unionized hotels. Hotel developers propose to build a 200-room addition, complete with retail space and lots of public parking on hotel property at Ocean Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard.

Although their proposal is vague, developers would be allowed to skirt many zoning restrictions, including an existing 43-foot (three floor) height limit.

The agreement allows city staff and developers to negotiate the conditions of the project — while potentially reducing annoying public input to a few scoping meetings.

In addition to the new building, close to 40 units of affordable rental housing units would be built on another hotel property east of Second Street.

With the affordable housing carrot dangling in front of City Council's nose, I'm predicting that this project, like the new homeless shelter on Cloverfield Boulevard, is a done deal.

Developers originally proposed a 16-floor tower, but will likely concede to a shorter 10-, 12- or 14-floor building. Then our politicians will brag about how they mitigated size, density, traffic concerns and created a magnificent new addition to downtown — all while saying, "We heard you."

■ The "What are they smoking?" award goes to Mayor Richard Bloom and the rest of City Council, with the exception of Pam O'Connor, for recently requesting an ordinance that would extend Santa Monica's "no smoking" bans to the Santa Monica Pier and beach.

I'm not a smoker, but do you get the idea that this City Council is becoming too intrusive in our private lives?

I'm sick and tired of politicians who try to tell me what's good for me. Next thing, they'll ban smoking in a car if it's on a public street or ban smoking within city limits all together, or maybe ban chewing gum.

■ Last month, the City Council finally got around to requiring "officially recognized" neighborhood associations to sign a contract before accepting funding from the city. Groups must state how city funds are spent and certify that grants were not spent on political causes.

According to the Santa Monica Daily Press (Dec. 17), since 1999, eight "officially recognized" neighborhood groups received nearly \$60,000 in funds, ranging from \$1,080 to the maximum \$4,000.

Earlier this year, the North of Montana Association and Friends of Sunset Park got into hot water for allegedly using city grant monies to campaign against Proposition A, an initiative that would have permitted single family homeowners to decline historical landmark designations of their homes.

There are other embarrassments. The Ocean Park Community Organization's chair has refused, or is unwilling, to deliver the organization's financial data to its members. There are questions about how other groups spend their monies and whether these associations really deal with neighborhood issues or are political platforms to promote the agendas of those who control the groups.

The City Council should quit fooling around and terminate the giveaway. Most neighborhood groups are irrelevant and would immediately collapse without city support. Would anyone would miss 'em? I don't think so.

(Bill Bauer is a longtime Santa Monica resident and a freelance writer).

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.

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

OPINION

The Q-Line

Jury still out on school gift-sharing plan

This past week, Q-line asked:

"Is it fair that 15 percent of cash donations be distributed throughout all schools in the district?"

Here are your responses:

(Editor's note: Due to the overwhelming number of responses to this question, not all comments received could be printed. We thank you for calling, and if your response doesn't appear, we encourage you to write a letter to the editor.)

■ "The 15 percent of donations (that would be distributed) to all schools is the most ludicrous thing I have ever heard of. The United Fund is readily available for even distribution of funds for certain efforts. This proposal means that the 'haves' are supporting the 'have-nots' with their own money, as well as their tax money. The tax money is plenty to take care of these schools that are not getting contributions from the parents or supporters in their district. Do not further burden taxpayers with supporting schools other than their own."

■ "With the exception of the Santa Monica School District parcel tax that charges the less-affluent homeowner the same amount of tax that the affluent pay, the affluent, for the most part, pay higher property taxes than the less-affluent property owner. As a result, the less-affluent tax dollars end up with the various school districts. If the affluent donations are distributed throughout the dis-

trict schools, the gifts will drop off dramatically. A fact of life is that the affluent get perks and the less affluent work towards becoming affluent and get welfare. It has always been that way."

■ "I am an assistant principal at Lincoln Middle School, the parent of four kids attending Santa Monica schools and a long-term member of this community. I feel very strongly that it is not only fair that 15 percent of donations be shared out among the less-affluent schools, but I think it is perfectly in keeping with board policy to close the achievement gap, which I think is a very laudable, noble and appropriate goal, as well as a very difficult goal for a school district to achieve. The notion that the new proposal could be used for that purpose makes it the right thing to do. I'm fully in support of the proposal, targeted at closing the achievement gap between students achieving at or above grade level and those who are achieving below their grade level."

■ "Yes, the proposal is fair. It is the fair thing to do. We should start acting like a community and support each other."

■ "I am a former president of the Santa

Monica High School Student Council and a current resident of Santa Monica. I would like to say that I am currently in favor of the 15-percent gift policy and that nothing is more important in this district than equity. I hope we vote for it."

■ "I am a parent of two children at schools in the district. I am in favor of the proposed policy because I think it instills the values of looking at the world globally, with generosity. I want my children to see us acting to support other parts of our community. I think that is very important. I also think that more time needs to be spent realizing that, while at present our children might be at an affluent elementary, they ultimately feed through a middle school to one of two high schools. So any time that we are contributing will benefit our children further down the line. I look at, eventually, strengthening our high schools in the future."

■ "Our kids are in their last years of high school, and all along we've donated and the process was simple. No attempt was ever made to bypass any rules or regulations — it was simply, 'If there is a need, solve it.' Distributing 15 percent of donations is absurd. Realistically, the parents who are donating the most, oftentimes, are parents who could afford to send their children to private schools. If a bureaucracy is created where you micro-manage gifts, certainly some of those people are going to bail out and say, 'Good-bye, Santa Monica school system.' It is obvious that these ideas are not beneficial to kids, and the administration needs to stop fiddling around with them."

■ "People should be able to contribute to specific schools. For starters, Malibu

should pay for their own schools, instead of being subsidized by Santa Monica taxpayers. That would free up money for Santa Monica schools, which should be the primary concern. The affluent Malibu residents can support their schools without Santa Monica's help."

■ "As a parent of a school-aged child living on the south side of Santa Monica, I wholeheartedly support the distribution proposal. The south side typically has and gets less of the school district's resources. In fact, I think that the 15 percent does not go far enough in addressing the inequities."

■ "I think that it is not fair that the cash be distributed throughout the district. I think that if you make a donation, you should be able to choose the school which you want to donate to."

■ "I absolutely believe the new donation distribution proposal is the right decision. We have extremely rich resources in our community and I think that they need to be shared amongst our students so that we don't have a red line for poor schools and rich ones. The whole community should be able to benefit from the good graces of those who are able to contribute."

■ "I have a child at an elementary school in the district and I believe that it is fair, without question, that 15 percent of (donations) be distributed throughout the district. I can't imagine living in a community where those kinds of inequities would be allowed to continue to exist. I am happy to have the opportunity to see them changed."

Seize this chance to free yourselves from darkness

In framing a new constitution, Iraqis should embrace the ideals of America's founding

On Dec. 15, 1791, 212 years ago, the American Bill of Rights was ratified. Thus ended a long and difficult process by which the American people first liberated themselves from tyranny and then established the first government in history founded on individual rights protected by a written constitution. Now you, the Iraqi people, liberated from the despotism of Saddam Hussein, must assume the daunting task of framing a constitution, instituting a new government, and rebuilding a civil society. The challenges that confront you are formidable.

Modern history teaches that constitutions are easy to write. Over the course of the last 200 years, almost every nation in the world, including communist dictatorships and Islamic theocracies, has drafted a constitution. The sad reality, however, is that few have brought freedom.

The particular difficulties that you face in establishing a new constitution are awesome. If you are to have any chance at creating a prosperous, just and free Iraqi future, you must confront and overcome your own history. This means two things. First, you must face directly the uncomfortable fact that you have no useable tradition of self-government. Yours is a nation long governed by traditions of fascist-like political rulers, medieval forms of tribal and ethnic justice, and warring religions that are hostile to freedom. Second, you must reject the political anar-

chy of your ethnic chieftains and the religious tyranny of your Islamic mullahs. In a free Iraqi society, neither tribe nor mosque must be able to gain governmental power.

More important, you must discover and accept the moral preconditions of a free society. Iraq's political, social, and economic reconstruction will require an ideological reconstruction. Bad ideas destroyed your society and only good ones can save it.

Once freed from the political grip of the twin evils of ethnic collectivism and religious oppression, it is imperative that you import and accept the ideas of the Western Enlightenment. Philosophers such as John Locke and America's founding statesmen discovered the moral foundations and the political institutions necessary to establish a free and just society. You must begin, as we did in our revolution, by recognizing the moral sovereignty of the individual. A free society recognizes that each and every man is capable of rational "self" government in the fullest sense. You must enshrine as inalienable the rights of all men and women to their lives, liberty and property.

Through our revolutionary experience, we learned that the protection of man's individual rights is the only legitimate function of government. This means that you must design a government limited to making and enforcing objective laws of social conduct. This is no easy task.

According to James Madison, the

father of our constitution, the great problem in framing a government that is to be administered by men over men is this: "You must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place, oblige it to control itself." The genius of America's founding fathers was to have discovered a solution to this perennial problem — i.e., the idea of a written constitution as fundamental law. Men such as John Adams and James Madison learned through experience that a

written constitution must stand above government as a higher law that creates, defines, and limits the powers of government. Politically, your supreme law must be the constitution and not the Koran or "sharia" law. Otherwise, your constitution will be little more than a parchment barrier against the encroachments of power-lusting mullahs.

In order to elevate the rule of law over the rule of men, America's founding statesmen designed a constitutional system that curbed power in two important ways. First, they limited the role of government to making and enforcing laws that define crimes and punishments objectively, resolve civil disputes between individuals, and enforce the sanctity of contracts. These functions serve to protect the rights of the individual from the arbitrary power of other men. Second, they built into our constitution several crucial principles, procedures, and institutions that are necessary barriers to the concentration and abuse of political power: e.g., separation

of powers, checks and balances, and federalism. These mechanisms serve to protect the rights of the individual from the arbitrary use of government power.

In addition to these general principles of constitutional construction, Iraq's founding fathers should add a double security to the freedom of the Iraqi people by explicitly identifying and protecting individual rights in two crucial areas: Freedom of thought and freedom of production and trade. The Iraqi state must be barred from interfering in the intellectual and moral lives of its citizens, and it must not attempt to regulate wealth creation or redistribute the fruits of a man's labor. In other words, there must be a strict separation of mosque and state, as well as a strict separation between the economy and the state.

In stark contrast to your Arab and Persian neighbors, you have a unique opportunity to liberate yourself from the darkness of your past. The United States of America has freed you from the tyranny of a brutal and wicked despot, but its greatest and most enduring gift is contained in two old and dusty documents written more than 200 years ago — the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. It is here that you will find the true meaning of freedom.

(C. Bradley Thompson, the author of *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty*, is a senior writer for the Ayn Rand Institute (www.aynrand.org) in Irvine, Calif. The Institute promotes the philosophy of Ayn Rand, author of *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*. Send reactions to reaction@aynrand.org.)

Guest Commentary

By Naia Sheffield

Entertainment

Farrelly brothers sticking together, on best behavior

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

From the guys who brought us "There's Something About Mary" and "Dumb And Dumber" comes a film that redefines the term "double feature." Matt Damon and Greg Kinnear share the marquee as conjoined twins Bob and Walt Tenor in the Farrelly brothers' latest twisted comedy, "Stuck On You." While it isn't the writing-directing duo's best effort, the film contains several laugh-out-loud moments and some

surprisingly deft comedic performances (who knew Damon was such a joker?). Though replete with the Farrelly's trademark outlandish characters and absurd situations, "Stuck On You" is appreciably short on the gross-out humor and political incorrectness so prevalent in much of their previous work. This is the Farrellys on their best behavior, which some will no doubt find refreshing, others slightly disappointing.

The Tenor brothers are literally joined at the hip, but that hasn't stopped them from excelling in sports, romance and business on Martha's Vineyard, where they own and operate a successful burger joint. Certain he has the acting chops to be a star, the uber-confident Walt (Kinnear) convinces his brother to head west to Hollywood. There, they befriend a sexy neighbor (Eva Mendes), Walt lands a septuagenarian agent (a hilarious Seymour Cassel) who sends him to auditions for porn films, and Bob finally meets his longtime Internet girlfriend May Fong (Wen Yann Shih), who had no idea he's a conjoined twin. Academy Award-winners Cher and Meryl Streep make extended cameo appearances as themselves (Streep is uncredited), and prove quite adept at self-deprecating humor. Cher, in particular, generates lots of laughs poking fun at her diva persona.

Kinnear and Damon are well-cast as, respectively, the dreamer and the pragmatist. Not only are they convincing brothers, they



(L-R) Jessica Cauffiel, Matt Damon and Greg Kinnear in "Stuck on You."

rise to the many physical challenges posed in working so closely together. The Farrellys clearly went out of their way to avoid making the Tenors and their condition the direct butt of any jokes, with mixed results. The kid gloves approach ensures nobody gets hurt, but it also serves to soften the blow of the comedic spit-

balls they fire our way. All in all, however, this is another solid offering from Hollywood's crown princes of irreverent comedy.

(Rated PG-13 for crude and sexual humor, and some language. Running time: 128 minutes)

Audiences, characters find comfort 'In America'

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

The skeptic in me was certain this tale of Irish immigrants who come to the United States seeking refuge from a tragic past was going to implode under the weight of its own shameless sentimentality. The skeptic in me was wrong. Very, very wrong. Yes, "In America" unabashedly wears its broken heart on its tattered sleeve, but no, it isn't the maudlin mess it might have been had it been hatched by a lesser talent. With masterful efficacy, Jim Sheridan ("In The Name Of The Father," "My Left Foot") has wrought an inescapably moving elegy about pain and loss and hope and renewal as seen through the eyes of two immeasurably adorable little girls.

Christy and Ariel (sisters Sarah and Emma Bolger, making remarkable film debuts) are whisked away to New York by their parents Johnny and Sarah (Paddy Considine and Samantha Morton) in the wake of the devastating death of their infant brother, Frankie. The family is clearly in need of the change of scenery, yet their new life stalls before it begins, as Johnny and Sarah struggle to keep it together in the face of poverty, the Hells Kitchen summer heat and an erosive cycle of grief. Johnny, in particular, bears the scars of Frankie's passing — a burden made all the more unendurable because his inability to muster any passion prevents him from landing the acting jobs he needs to support his family. Rising British star Considine brings great emotional power to the role of Johnny, and Morton's quiet intensity is a most effective equipoise. It should be noted that after uttering nary a word in "Minority Report" and nothing at all in "The Sweet and Lowdown," the gifted actress proves to be even better when given something to say.

And you read it here first: One of the Bolger sisters is going to be a surprise nominee for a Best Supporting Actress Oscar. Kudos to Sheridan, not only for coaxing amazing performances out of two inexperienced girls, but for having the confidence to place his semi-autobiographical tale squarely on their little shoulders.

(Rated PG-13 for some sexuality, drug references, brief violence and language. Running time: 103 minutes)

Damon, Kinnear do some serious bonding

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

Matt Damon and Greg Kinnear play conjoined twins in the Farrelly Brothers' latest irreverent comedy, "Stuck on You." In the spirit of their close-knit characters, they recently appeared side by side for a very tongue-in-cheek discussion of this most unusual film.

QUESTION: What was your reaction when you were first approached to play conjoined twins?

MATT DAMON: When we first got the script, it was just a story about two brothers. The night before we started shooting, I kind of wondered what it would be like to be really close to Greg, so I suggested to the Farrelly Brothers, just kind of off the cuff, that we make this a conjoined twin movie, so I could feel that sweet, sweet sensation of Greg's flesh against my flesh.

GREG KINNEAR: I got what Matt was talking about immediately, but the Farrellys, well, they didn't get it right away.

Q: You wore a harness that connected you, sometimes for 14 hours or more. Was it difficult to work under those conditions?

MD: The scenes where we're in swim trunks — all of that is fake. The chest, the backs and, obviously, the piece connecting us in the middle is all sculpted on by (make-up artists). We would get up at three in the morning and just kind of stand there and not move for 12 hours, which was an exercise in patience. But I hate it when actors sit and complain about ...

GK: Sounds like that's what you're doing, Damon. I liked it. I was just happy to have the opportunity to work.

Q: The roles called for you to convinc-



Matt Damon and Greg Kinnear.

ingly play sports together, flip burgers, have sex and whatnot. Did it take long to get your timing down?

GK: That was just great work on our part. **MD:** Months and months of training. There was no computer-generated stuff in this movie.

GK: You'll hear that there was — rumors and suggestions — but don't buy into that BS. We practiced and we trained and we got it down to where we could knock out a 20-pack of burgers in about 30 seconds.

Q: Speaking of being conjoined, Matt, there was a period where you and Ben

Affleck appeared to be inseparable. Now he's connected with somebody else ...

MD: Really? Who's that? (laughs)

Q: Is it good to finally have him off your back?

MD: Let's be very clear. Ben was never on my back. In our eyes, we always had our own identities. I never felt like, God, this guy's really crowding me. He's been my best friend for 20 years, so I never felt infringed upon, and I don't think he did either.

Q: What was it like working with a superstar like Cher?

MD: In her trailer, when you walked in, there were all these costumes and stuff. And she'd put one of them on, with some crazy wig, and come out and do these scenes.

Q: She really pokes fun at her diva image. Do you think she was completely comfortable doing it?

MD: There are very few people that have ever achieved that level of insane fame, and I don't know of any of them who would have a good enough sense of humor to do something like that.

GK: What were you doing in her trailer?

MD: I specified before this interview that there would be no personal questions.

Q: What's a Farrelly Brothers set like? Is it as much fun as it appears to be?

GK: It's more like they're hosting a party than directing. It's really a great environment. A lot of the people who are in their movies aren't actors. I know their postman now, their uncle's brother ...

MD: We did a scene with the woman who drives the ferry over at Martha's Vineyard. She was like, "Hi, boys. I'm Bridget. If you ever come to the Vineyard, just look me up. I'll be driving the ferry."

ENTERTAINMENT

Nicholson's 'Gotta Give' puts us in another world

Review

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

The characters in Nancy Meyers' films usually lead idealized lives many of the good burghers of this country find appealing. This would explain why her movies, which include "What Women Want" and "Father Of The Bride," have grossed upwards of a billion dollars — ordinary people with extraordinary fancies, women especially, seem to really enjoy spending 10 bucks on a movie so that they can watch the idle rich (who routinely spend 10 bucks on, say, a small bottle of designer water) engage one another in lots of psychoanalytic babble while picking at exotic field greens and sipping unpronounceable French wines in expensive restaurants. For two hours, the hoi polloi stare at the screen and, in some small way, attain the unattainable.

And so it goes in Meyers' latest flick, "Something's Gotta Give," which features Jack Nicholson as an obscenely wealthy, chubby, balding playboy who shacks up exclusively with young models (we all know one of THOSE guys, right?). Diane Keaton co-stars as a fabulously successful playwright with a spread in the Hamptons that seems to have been plucked from the cover of House Beautiful. Amanda Peet plays Keaton's daughter, a fine art auctioneer at Christie's, and Keanu Reeves serves as the theater-loving studly doctor who's got the cure for whatever's ailing his pecunious patients. All of them speak French, too. Not that these people don't have problems, mind you. Everyone in a Meyers pic has problems. Nicholson can't commit, and his ticker's not right. Keaton's a lonely divorcee who is ultimately forced to choose between a hot young physician and one of the world's all-time smooth operators. Peet's looking



Jack Nicholson

for love in all the wrong places (plus, she loses Jack to her mother). And Reeves, well, he ain't in The Matrix anymore.

The story goes like this: Jack's dating Amanda, meets her mom, falls for mom. It's paradise. Then it's paradise lost. Then it's paradise found again. There are lots of jokes about May-December romances and erectile dysfunction, and many of them are funny. Jack and Diane both get naked onscreen, which is also funny in an uncomfortable sort of way. Frances McDormand, who is always great, plays Keaton's sister — a women's studies professor, of course — and Jon Favreau is on board as Nicholson's trusted assistant.

If two hours of that sounds to you like a good excuse to drop 10 bucks — and YOU know who you are — then, by all means, see "Something's Gotta Give."

(Rated PG-13 for sexual content, brief nudity and strong language. Running time: 117 minutes)

Before laying down that 10 bucks...

BY DAN DUNN

Special to the Daily Press

THE LAST SAMURAI

An entertaining film, but highly derivative of superior antecedents such as "Dances With Wolves" and "Unforgiven."

HONEY

With Jessica Alba leading the way, it's only a matter of time before the Crips and the Bloods trade in their colors and guns for tap shoes and ballet slippers.

THE CAT IN THE HAT

The cinematic equivalent of a massive flea infestation. For the crime they committed against Seuss' compact classic, everyone associated with this film should be neutered without anesthesia.

THE HAUNTED MANSION

Even the best CGI wizardry cannot compensate for shoddy storytelling, which is precisely what haunts "The Haunted Mansion."

THE MISSING

Ron Howard had the key elements of an extraordinary film at his disposal — great premise, cast — yet, frustratingly, it never quite realizes its potential.

BAD SANTA

If you're game for a little R-rated Christmas fun, this is a great holi-

day gift, all wrapped up in F-bombs and slaughtered sacred cows.

TIMELINE

Quite possibly the most unintentionally funny film of the year.

MASTER AND COMMANDER: THE FAR SIDE OF THE WORLD

Russell Crowe makes a strong case for a fourth consecutive Oscar nomination in a thinking person's action-adventure movie.

SHATTERED GLASS

Strong film that meticulously connects the dots of the real events surrounding New Republic writer Stephen Glass' incredible fall from grace.

ELF

A fantastic early Christmas present for moviegoers of all ages. Will Ferrell is one of the very best comedic actors working today.

THE MATRIX: REVOLUTIONS

You'll stagger out of the theater feeling as though you just failed a calculus exam.

LOVE ACTUALLY

Ten different storylines running concurrently is too hard to follow, especially when only half of them are all that interesting.

THE HUMAN STAIN

Everyone in the film is dreadfully

miscast, and the film fails to live up to anything but the most modest expectations.

IN THE CUT

Fuzzy as the visuals and performances are, one thing is crystal clear: This crime thriller fails, at every shadowy turn, to thrill.

SYLVIA

Surely the tragic love affair upon which the film is based was a lot more complex (and interesting) than the one the makers of this plodding biopic conjured up.

SCARY MOVIE 3

Isn't as funny as the original, but it's a major step up from the lowly first sequel.

PIECES OF APRIL

Inspired performances help make this an engaging dramedy that has a little something for everybody.

RUNAWAY JURY

This is, arguably, the best adaptation of a Grisham novel yet. A stellar cast carries the day.

VERONICA GUERIN

Joel Shumacher delivers the flesh and bones of Guerin's noble crusade, but the heart is missing.

KILL BILL

What stands out most isn't what happens in this incomplete film, it's what doesn't happen. A subpar outing from a talented filmmaker.



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NATIONAL

Flu now widespread in 24 states; West hit hardest

BY DANIEL YEE

Associated Press Writer

ATLANTA — The number of states hit hard by the flu has nearly doubled to 24 in the past week, with the West hit hardest, the government said Thursday. It rushed to ship 100,000 doses of the vaccine to combat shortages and head off what could become one of the worst flu seasons in years.

The outbreak has taken an enormous toll nationwide: At least 23 children have died. Schools have shut down. Emergency rooms have been filled with sick children. And doctors' offices have been forced to turn away droves of people seeking flu shots.

Some experts predict this year's death toll easily could surpass the annual average of 36,000 flu deaths. Health officials are unsure why the outbreak has hit so early, why it has caused so many problems in the West, and why it seems to be so lethal in children.

"If it were me, I'd be on the phone to your doctor, calling around to see if you

"It's the worst I've seen in many years. We think we're OK here, and it hit us hard."

—LYNN SCHOW
School Superintendent
Malad county, Idaho

could find some" vaccine, said Dr. Randall Todd, Nevada's epidemiologist.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the flu has hit all 50 states at least sporadically, and the season has not yet peaked nationally. Nearly the entire western half of the country — California being the major exception — is now considered to have widespread flu. Last week, 13 states had widespread outbreaks.

Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson said the government had arranged for 100,000 doses of adult vaccine to be shipped from Aventis

Pasteur immediately and distributed based on each state's population. In addition, 150,000 doses of children's vaccine are expected to be shipped to the states by January, Thompson said.

Dr. Julie Gerberding, director of the CDC, said the center is recommending that doctors give high-risk groups top priority for flu shots. That means the elderly, children under 2, those with chronic medical conditions, and women in the second and third trimester of pregnancy.

"The flu season is far from over, we are going to have to prioritize," Gerberding said.

Around the country, several schools closed because so many students are out with the flu.

In Colchester, Conn., the public Bacon Academy closed Thursday after more than 300 students — more than one-third of the student body — stayed home with flu-like symptoms. Madison Junior High in Mansfield, Ohio, also closed for the rest of the week after 250 of 900 students were out sick Wednesday, principal Timothy Rupert said.

"We've never closed down for flu," said Rupert, who has worked at the school about 60 miles north of Columbus for 23 years.

One of the hardest hit communities was Malad, Idaho, a town of about 2,000 people near the Utah state line that virtually shut down in the past week because so many people were ill. Church services and Christmas programs were canceled, as was the wrestling match and drill team

show. Even Santa had to postpone his visit with the children.

Students in Malad returned to class on Thursday, but 15 percent of the 860 students were still out sick.

"It's the worst I've seen in many years," said School Superintendent Lynn Schow. "We think we're OK here, and it hit us hard."

In Las Vegas, residents had to wait hours to get flu shots.

"We are out of the vaccine," said Jennifer Sizemore, spokeswoman for the Clark County Health District. "We are working hard to get some more because there's still a demand out there."

Despite the severity of the early outbreak, health experts are not ready to predict just how bad the flu season will be. The season still may peak as early as December, rather than February, which is the norm.

On Thursday, the CDC added Arizona, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island and Virginia to the list of states with widespread flu activity.

Last week, only Alaska, Arkansas, Colorado, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington and Wyoming were listed as having widespread activity by the CDC.

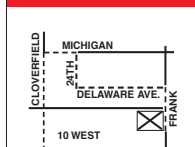
As for why the West is having the most cases, Dr. Kimberley Shoaf, assistant director for the UCLA Center for Public Health and Disasters, said one reason might be that the flu strain changed as it moved West.

"I think it mutated just as it got here, and we have this different strain," she said.

Anecdotal, this flu season seems to be worse for children, and the CDC said it plans to watch flu complications among them closely. Flu and its complications are the sixth-leading cause of death nationally among children age 4 and younger, according to the CDC.

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U.S. allies are up in arms over work ban in Iraq

BY ROBERT H. REID

Associated Press Writer

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Europe's foreign affairs chief, adding his voice Thursday to criticism of Washington, called the U.S. decision to bar opponents of the war in Iraq from reconstruction contracts "gratuitous and unhelpful" when unity is needed.

The British government said Washington was fully entitled to limit construction contracts in Iraq to countries that were part of the U.S.-led coalition.

The White House said the ban was not up for reconsideration, though the Bush administration told critics it "will welcome the opportunity to talk to them and explain to them about why this decision was made."

Amid the furor, the United States postponed a conference that was to have taken place Thursday for companies seeking reconstruction contracts in Iraq. The conference, at which the contract requests were to have been made public, is now scheduled for Dec. 19 at a hotel near Washington Dulles International Airport. The delay was blamed on scheduling conflicts.

A Pentagon directive says countries wanting a share of the \$18.6 billion in reconstruction contracts in the 2004 U.S. budget must participate militarily in the postwar effort.

The European Commission called the contract ban a "political mistake," and

said it would examine the contracts to see if Washington had violated its commitments to the World Trade Organization.

"This is a gratuitous and extremely unhelpful decision at a time when there is a general recognition of the need for the international community to work together for stability and reconstruction in Iraq," Chris Patten, the European Union's commissioner for international relations, said through a spokesman.

French President Jacques Chirac, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and Russian President Vladimir Putin all raised the contracting issue during previously scheduled telephone calls with President Bush on Wednesday.

The French Foreign Ministry has declined to comment on the U.S. decision. However, the conservative French newspaper *Le Figaro* said Thursday the exclusion was "bordering on provocation."

"For the United States, it is truly a shame that the politics of George W. Bush be presented, once again, in such a petty manner," the newspaper said. "The anti-Americanism that needs to be combatted is going to be revived."

Britain expressed support for the U.S. policy. Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said it was up to the United States to decide how it spent its tax revenue.

"The United States Congress is fully entitled to say the tax dollars are spent in one way, which in this particular case is contracts limited to those active allies in

Iraq, rather than another way," said Straw. "We have talked to them about it but the decision is for them, not ours."

The ban could complicate American efforts to restructure Iraq's estimated \$125 billion debt, largely owed to France, Germany, Russia.

Russia signaled it would take a hard line on restructuring after being excluded from contracts.

"Iraq's debt to the Russia Federation comes to \$8 billion and as far as the Russian government's position on this, it is not planning any kind of a write-off of that debt," Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov told reporters. "Iraq is not a poor country."

Russia's foreign minister suggested the contract ban could undermine the international campaign against terrorism.

"The activities in Iraq split the international community and reduced its possibilities in the fight against international terrorism," Igor Ivanov said at a news conference in Munich.

"No further steps or activities that would lead to a further division can be allowed today," Ivanov said.

Germany said there was "no direct link" between debt relief and the U.S. exclusion of German companies from reconstruction contracts.

"The stabilization of Iraq is also in Germany's strategic interest," Bela Anda, spokesman for German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, told *The Associated Press*.

France has made no official comment

on the contract ban, but political analysts said the French government was stunned, after what appeared to be months of warming ties between Paris and Washington following France's opposition to the U.S.-led war.

"Paris has the feeling that the (U.S.) Secretary of Defense has decided to use some kind of retaliation, which was considered four or five months ago, but didn't seem to be on the agenda right now," said Francois Gere, director of the Paris-based Diplomatic and Defense Institute.

President Bush is sending James A. Baker abroad to lobby for restructuring and reducing Iraq's debt. Baker is expected to hold talks in Berlin before Christmas, the German government statement said.

"If additional countries want to participate with our efforts in Iraq, then circumstances can change," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said.

He said companies from anti-war countries could compete for contracts being financed by a separate international fund that the White House estimates will be worth \$13 billion. Also, the ban does not prevent companies from winning subcontracts.

Such prospects did little to assuage international anger over the directive issued by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz in a memo dated Friday and posted on a Pentagon Web site Tuesday.



WORLD BRIEFLY

Military defends attack that killed kids

By The Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. military defended its raid on a suspected renegade commander's compound that resulted in the deaths of six Afghan children, saying Thursday the site was packed with weapons and soldiers were fired on from inside.

News of the Dec. 5 raid in eastern Paktia province emerged Wednesday, just days after a botched weekend attack in neighboring Ghazni in which nine children, all under 12 years old, were killed. The children and two adults in the Paktia compound were found crushed to death under a wall.

The twin operations have provoked outrage and expressions of concern from ordinary Afghans all the way to U.N. Secretary-general Kofi Annan. But U.S. military spokesman Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said American forces exercised proper restraint in the Paktia operation against a weapons storage depot allegedly used by Mullah Jalani, a suspected associate of Taliban ally Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

"Certainly, we followed the law of proportionality in this compound," Hilferty said Thursday. "From the compound, they were shooting at us with machine guns. Jalani has more ammunition at his house than the coalition keeps at Bagram," the U.S. headquarters.

Storage compartments containing hundreds of 107mm rockets, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank and anti-personnel mines and several howitzers were found at the compound.

Prime Minister: 'The terror will grow'

By The Associated Press

JERUSALEM — An explosion at a Tel Aviv coffee shop on Thursday afternoon killed three people, police sources said. The Palestinian prime minister also warned Israel against unilateral moves, such as seizing parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, saying it will never be accepted by the Palestinians.

"The fire will burn, the terror will grow," Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia said in newspaper remarks published Thursday.

Details were sketchy, but the explosion in Tel Aviv took place during lunchtime at a popular coffee shop in a busy business district.

The explosion, if a bombing, would be the first major attack on Israeli civilians since the bombing of a restaurant in the northern Israeli city of Haifa in October, which killed 21 people.

Qureia's comments marked the harshest Palestinian response yet to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's emerging plan of unilateral moves if peace efforts fail.

Missing girl's mom turns to suspect's mom

By The Associated Press

GRAND FORKS, N.D. — While officials and friends searched without success for Dru Sjodin, her mother went looking for help from the mother of the man charged with kidnapping the missing college student.

"I asked her to reach out to her son and please ask him to lead us to Dru," Linda Walker told the Grand Forks Herald for its Thursday editions. "I asked mother-to-mother."

Alfonso Rodriguez Jr., 50, of Crookston, Minn., is being held on \$5 million bond. Rodriguez has said through his attorney that he had nothing to do with the Nov. 22 disappearance of Sjodin, who is enrolled at the University of North Dakota.

Meanwhile, National Guard soldiers from North Dakota and Minnesota will help scour the countryside for Sjodin beginning Friday.

Sniper suspect said to be 'numb'

By The Associated Press

CHESAPEAKE, Va. — Sniper suspect Lee Boyd Malvo has mental diseases that left him "psychologically numb" and legally insane because he couldn't tell right from wrong, a defense psychiatrist said.

During the months he lived with convicted sniper John Allen Muhammad starting in 2000, Malvo lost his sense of identity and became vulnerable to Muhammad's wishes and "intense, coercive persuasion," psychiatrist Neil Blumberg testified Wednesday in Malvo's murder trial.

Malvo's dissociative disorder that allowed him to tune out reality, his depression and a childhood "conduct disorder" of shoplifting and cat-killing all meant Malvo was "unable to distinguish between right and wrong and was unable to resist the impulse" to commit the sniper killings in 2002, Blumberg testified.

Blumberg, who spent 50 hours with Malvo over 20 interviews, said he believed Malvo was legally insane. The standard for legal insanity in Virginia is an inability to distinguish right from wrong at the time of the crime.

Psychiatrist Diane Schetky, who twice interviewed Malvo, also testified that she believed Malvo was unable to tell right from wrong.

Malvo's defense is expected to rest Thursday, and prosecutors are expected to call their own mental health expert.

Drug suit spares another from death row

By The Associated Press

HUNTSVILLE, Texas — For the second time in as many days, the same lawsuit spared a condemned Texas inmate from the death chamber.

The U.S. Supreme Court halted the execution Wednesday of Kevin Lee Zimmerman, who was part of a lawsuit that challenged one of the drugs used to carry out the death penalty.

Eighteen hours earlier, the lawsuit had allowed Billy Frank Vickers to avoid the death chamber Tuesday.

Zimmerman's reprieve came about 20 minutes before he could have been put to death for a fatal stabbing and robbery at a Beaumont motel in 1987.

In a brief order, Justice Antonin Scalia stopped the punishment pending an additional order from him or the court. The lawsuit was filed on Zimmerman's behalf, despite his opposition.

Citing the constitutional protection against cruel and unusual punishment, the lawsuit sought to stop use of pancuronium bromide — a drug that paralyzes muscles.

The lawsuit was patterned after a Tennessee death row inmate's suit, now on appeal, that cites an American Veterinary Medical Association condemnation of the drug.

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ACROSS

- 1 Benefits
- 6 Discover
- 11 Belief
- 12 Marie Curie's daughter
- 13 — Gay (historic plane)
- 14 State game
- 15 Actor Ayres
- 16 Include
- 18 Bar topic
- 19 Crazy —
- 20 "Yo!"
- 21 Tennis legend
- 23 Get hitched anew
- 25 Writer Radcliffe
- 27 Party staple
- 28 Impassive one
- 30 Mint containers
- 33 X lookalike
- 34 Stephen of "The Crying Game"
- 36 Member of the force
- 37 Expunged
- 39 Draw
- 40 Fight site

- 41 Serviceable
- 43 Andorra neighbor
- 44 Did kitchen work
- 45 Annual traveler
- 46 Lock

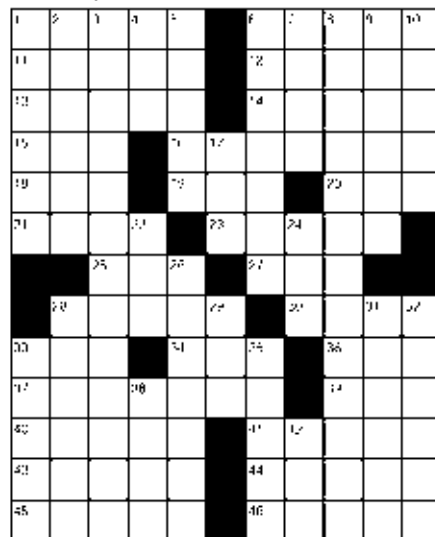
DOWN

- 1 "Streetcar" name
- 2 Trojan hero
- 3 "Understand?"
- 4 Conger, e.g.
- 5 Pancake order
- 6 Watered down
- 7 Press
- 8 "Understand?"
- 9 Loosened
- 10 Indiana's state flower
- 17 Crew need
- 22 Rock's Brian
- 24 Humor



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PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Hall and Oates hailed as heroes by music industry

By The Associated Press

■ **NEW YORK** — Daryl Hall and John Oates, Ruben Blades and Nile Rodgers have been deemed "heroes" by the Recording Academy for their musical contributions.

The artists, along with BMI President Frances Preston, songwriting team Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, and rapper-producer Timbaland, were to be feted Thursday by the New York chapter of the Recording Academy at the eighth annual Heroes Awards.

The Recording Academy hands out the annual Grammy Awards. The Heroes Awards honor the achievements of "outstanding individuals whose creative talents and accomplishments cross all musical boundaries and who are integral to the vitality of the music community."

Rodgers, the producer/songwriter and former member of the disco group Chic, said in a statement: "Especially as a New Yorker, receiving the New York chapter of the NARAS Heroes Award is one of the coolest things that's happened in my long-standing career."

Timbaland, who has produced artists ranging from Missy Elliott to Justin Timberlake, will receive a special Heroes Impact Award, given for special achievement in the early stages of an individual's career.

■ **NEW YORK** — Michael Jackson's parents say he's innocent of the child molestation allegations against him, and have offered to adopt his children if they're taken away from him.

"Some people are trying to accuse him of being a pedophile, and that is not true," Katherine Jackson said in an interview airing at 10 p.m. EST Friday on ABC's "20/20."

"You know he was strong, he said, 'Mother, don't

worry, it's not the truth,'" Mrs. Jackson said. "But I told him you don't know these wicked people, the people are just mean and wicked."

"Knowing Michael, as a father, I know that he doesn't do things like that," Joe Jackson added. "His mother knows it, too."

The pop singer was booked Nov. 20 on suspicion of molesting a boy at his Neverland Ranch outside Santa Barbara, Calif. He has denied the allegations and was released on \$3 million bail. He has not been charged.

In the interview, which is part of a documentary airing Monday night in the United Kingdom on ITV, Jackson's parents said they hoped authorities wouldn't take the singer's three children away from him.

When asked whether they would try to adopt the two boys and a girl if that happens, his mother answered, "Oh yes. Oh yes."

Joe Jackson added, "Well ... they're my grandkids. I have to."

■ **LOS ANGELES** — Snoop Dogg's mother and rapper Daz Dillinger's wife have sued Marion "Suge" Knight for allegedly slandering them in a song he produced.

Beverly Green and Maria Watkins filed the lawsuit against the rap mogul Tuesday in Superior Court.

They claim the song "Tha Row," from the movie soundtrack for "Dysfunktional Family," contains graphic lyrics saying Knight was sleeping with Watkins, the wife of rapper Delmar "Daz" Dillinger Arnaud.

The lyrics said Knight fathered her unborn child, a claim which resulted in Arnaud divorcing his wife and insisting on a paternity test, according to the lawsuit.

The song also states that Knight was sleeping with Green, a Baptist minister who's Snoop Dogg's mother

and Arnaud's aunt.

Watkins and Green claim Knight is retaliating against them after Arnaud sued Knight in civil court.

Knight, the co-founder of the pioneering rap label Death Row Records, is serving a 10-month prison sentence for violating his parole and striking a Hollywood nightclub valet.

A call to Knight's lawyer and publicist after hours Wednesday was not returned.

The women seek damages for slander and intentional infliction of emotional distress and a temporary restraining order against the defendants, claiming that agents of Knight have threatened them over the telephone.

The lawsuit also names as defendants Knight's record label, Tha Row, music publisher Warner/Chappell Music, Inc., Miramax Films and the songwriters, among others.

■ **NEW YORK** — Zooey Deschanel and Jake Gyllenhaal, who played discontented discount store employees last year in the independent film "The Good Girl," will team up again to co-host the Sundance Film Festival Awards.

The ceremony is scheduled to air live from Park City, Utah, on the Sundance Channel at 9 p.m. EST Jan. 24.

The 2004 Sundance Film Festival is set for Jan. 15-25. Among the films playing are "The Woodsman," starring husband-and-wife Kevin Bacon and Kyra Sedgwick, and "We Don't Live Here Anymore," with Mark Ruffalo, Laura Dern, Peter Krause and Naomi Watts.

Deschanel, 23, stars with Will Ferrell in the Christmas comedy "Elf." Gyllenhaal, 22, has appeared in films including "Donnie Darko" and "Moonlight Mile." His sister, actress Maggie Gyllenhaal, hosted the 2003 Sundance awards with Steve Zahn.

DID YOU KNOW?: Kenneth Edmonds was nicknamed 'Babyface' by funk guitarist Bootsy Collins.

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