REAL ESTATE & BUSINESS
THE REAL DEAL

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2008

Volume 7 Issue 340



R.I.P. HIP-HOP
SEE PAGE 5

Santa Monica Daily Press

Since 2001: A news odyssey

THE PAYING THE PRICE ISSUE



Brandon Wise *brandonw@smdp.com*

MAKING STRIDES: **Fourth grade teacher Sandra Brumer of Edison Language Academy goes over a lesson with her class on Tuesday morning. Edison was one of 200 California schools that received a Title I Academic Achievement Award. To meet the criteria for this distinction, the school must demonstrate that all students are making significant progress toward proficiency on California's academic content standards. Additionally, the school's socioeconomically disadvantaged students must have doubled the achievement targets set for them for two consecutive years.**

Edison recognized for academic achievement

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

KANSAS AVENUE Some students may come from families with a steady income, others from households where the next rent payment is in doubt, but all pupils at one elementary school are showing that achievement in the classroom is possible regardless of their economic background.

Edison Language Academy was named this week as one of 200 recipients of the 2008-09 Title I Academic Achievement Award by the California Department of Education, which every year honors schools where students have made strides toward reaching proficiency on state content standards.

The award is given only to Title I schools — institutions that receive federal funding and where at least 40 percent of students are on a free and reduced lunch program — that have gone above and beyond targets set for the yearly Academic Performance Index, which measures performance and growth. The school's socio-economically disadvantaged students must also perform well on their set targets for two consecutive years.

"These schools deserve high praise for improving student achievement," Jack O'Connell, the state superintendent of public instruction, said. "They have addressed barriers to student success and were able to create a school environment conducive to learning."

In general, the goal in California is for all schools — regardless of whether or not they're Title I — to achieve an API score of at least 800.

Located in the Pico Neighborhood, which has the highest concentration of low-income residents in the city, Edison Language Academy has received the award for the past four years and boasts an API growth of 130 points over the past five years. The scores for all subgroups, which include children from economically disadvantage families and English-language learners, has also increased over the past few years, according to Principal Lori Orum.

"We're a lean organization and all of our resources go to kids, teaching and learning," Orum said.

The school has adopted a focus on educating the whole child, looking at how they learn, what skills they have and strategies

SEE EDISON PAGE 7

City a pricey spot to set up business

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

DOWNTOWN The scenery might be beautiful, the amenities of world-class dining and entertainment plentiful, but all of that comes with a high price tag for businesses.

That's according to a survey released earlier this week by Claremont McKenna College, rating Santa Monica as one of the top 10 most expensive cities in the country to conduct a business.

The 14th annual Kosmont-Rose Institute Cost of Doing Business Survey compares 402 cities nationwide based on government fees and taxes that are imposed on businesses, finding that some of the most expensive places are in California, where Los Angeles and San Francisco are also in the top 10.

Santa Monica has always made a regular appearance on the list, mostly due to a combination of a high business license tax, Utility User Tax, and property tax that runs in the middle to high range relative to other municipalities in Los Angeles County, according to Larry Kosmont, who invented the survey and remains closely involved since signing it off to Claremont McKenna College.

The survey came out of Kosmont's economic development consulting business after he was approached by customers about how to compare the costs of conducting businesses in different cities.

He started with 75 cities and it soon blossomed to more than 400 nationwide.

One city that was always among the most expensive from the early years of the study was Santa Monica.

"The combined effect of high business license tax and utility tax and middle-range property tax keeps it at that high-cost category," Kosmont said.

He calls the survey a "first-cut analysis" that doesn't take into account other factors that companies look for when choosing a location, such as the education system, the quality of workforce and other amenities, all of which make Santa Monica a desirable city.

"Santa Monica remains a prime address for many businesses," he said. "It benefits from a good location, a pleasant urban envi-

SEE BUSINESS PAGE 7



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WHAT'S UP WESTSIDE

OUT AND ABOUT IN SANTA MONICA AND SURROUNDS



Los Angeles Veterans acupuncture

Emperors College
1807 Wilshire Blvd., 1:30 p.m. — 4:30 p.m.
LAVA offers $5 (cash/check) group acupuncture holistic treatments to military and war vets who have symptoms of stress or traumatic-stress, PTSD. This new clinic sponsored by Iraq Rose Inc. is on the second floor in Classroom C. Vets must call to reserve space: (818)359-6868.

Holiday craft extravaganza

Montana Branch Library
1704 Montana Ave., 3:45 p.m. — 4:30 p.m.
Bring your children, ages 4 and up, to the Montana Branch Library for a holiday craft extravaganza. All of the materials will be provided free of charge and your children will be able to create a holiday related gift for mom, dad or someone special. For more information call, (310) 829-7081.

Thursday, Dec. 18, 2008

Samohi for the holidays

Santa Monica High School's Barnum Hall
601 Pico Blvd., 7 p.m. — 10 p.m.
Students will sing from all corners of Barnum Hall during this winter concert of perpetual motion. Tickets are $5 for students and seniors; $10 for adults.

Staying out late

Montana Avenue
10 a.m. — 8 p.m.
The cool shops and boutiques located in this hip shopping district will be keeping their doors open for holiday shoppers until 8 p.m.

Time for stories

Montana Avenue Branch Library
1704 Montana Ave., 11:15 a.m. — 11:45 p.m.
Calling all preschoolers for story time.

In the news ...

Fairview Branch Library
2101 Ocean Park Blvd., 1 p.m. — 2:30 p.m.
Join this weekly discussion of the week's key news stories. The discussion covers everything from politics to culture. Jack Nordhaus, a former college history professor, moderates. For more information, call (310) 450-0443.

For more information on any of the events listed, log on to smdp.com and click the "Events" tab for the given day's calendar.

Stop the Grinch from stealing Christmas

BY ROB LAWRENCE
Special to the Daily Press

CITYWIDE Thieves and burglars seem to have no problem stealing and vandalizing holiday lawn displays this year. Not even the baby Jesus is sacred.

So it should come as no surprise that home burglaries are generally on the rise during the holiday season, a time when people leave their homes unattended while on extended vacations.

"During the holiday season there is usually a higher amount of property type crime," said Sgt. Renaldi Thruston of the Santa Monica Police Department. "Thefts are on the rise because people forget to take basic precautions."

While there has been a decline in overall home burglaries compared to 2007 (there have been 323 burglaries as of Dec. 1, a decline of 37 from last year), the SMPD is reminding residents to be vigilant, especially during these trying economic times.

The SMPD has many guides on their Web site on how to prevent a home burglary and they urge residents who will be gone this holiday season to take a good look at those tips.

"Most important is securing all your doors and windows," Thruston said. "Stop your mail. That's the first sign that no one's home, when it starts to stack up. It's going to be obvious that no one is there."

To give the appearance that a home is occupied Thruston recommends purchasing and installing a light timer, which activates the lights to turn on and off throughout the day. Leaving a TV set on is another way to scare off thieves.

Thruston advises holiday travelers to move valuables out of sight so criminals have a harder time casing a house for potential items to steal.

"The number one cause [of robbery] is people leaving something visible inside of homes or vehicles," Thruston said.

Thruston also recommends breaking down any boxes that indicate valuables within the house, such as a large flat screen TV box left in front of a house.

To assure residents they aren't on their own, Thruston said SMPD officers will be out on the prowl for sneaky thieves.

"Our officers are on heightened alert. We have enough officers out in the field," Thruston said. "They are more diligent when it comes to thefts and burglaries, they are more aware of the potential."

Having an alarm system is another recommended way to protect homes and the valuables inside when on vacation.

"I would feel better if my family members had an alarm system. I don't feel good if my alarm system isn't working," said Jack Podolski, owner of Mar Vista Security.

For those with a system already in place, Podolski advises periodic check-ups, which can be done by putting the system in test mode and opening a door or window. Also remembering to change the batteries on the panel is an important chore.

"If you haven't changed your alarm battery in three years, replace it," Podolski said. "It's amazing how many people do not check their batteries."

One of Podolski's other suggestions is getting a panic button add-on to a home security system, which transmits a silent alarm to the local police.

"The best thing is to have a wireless panic button, it's an add on, it's worth it," Podolski

SEE CRIME PAGE 8



IT'S A WRAP

Fabian Lewkowicz *FabianLewkowicz.com*

(Left to right) Samantha O'Neil, director of Government Affairs for the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce, wraps a gift along with Lynne Thomas, director of Sales and Marketing of the Lobster, and Pete Thorson, board member of the Police Activities League (PAL), on Tuesday during the 'It's a Wrap Party' at Macerich Co.'s headquarters. Community leaders and volunteers from PAL, Bayside District Corp. and Macerich, wrapped more than 250 gifts which were collected during the Winterlit 'Best Gift Ever' community gift drive. Gifts collected will be distributed this Saturday at PAL to children who might otherwise go without presents this holiday season.

Temperatures in mid 40s expected

BY DAILY PRESS STAFF

CITYWIDE Public health officials issued a Cold Weather Advisory for coastal areas, which are expected to be in the mid 40s to low 50s until Friday.

"Because children and the elderly are especially vulnerable during such cold snaps, care should be taken to ensure they don't get too cold when they are outside," said Jonathan E. Fielding, director of public health. "There are places where people can go to stay warm, such as shelters or other public facilities. We also want to remind people not to use stoves, barbecues or ovens to heat their homes due to the risk of carbon monoxide poisoning."

A Winter Shelter Program is available for seniors and those looking for a place to stay warm. Locations and transportation information can be found on the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority's Web site at: www.lahsa.org, or by calling the county Information line at 211. For the deaf and hearing disabled, call the TDD line at (800) 660-4026.

Take precautions to protect yourself from the cold:

• Dress in layers of warm clothing if you

SEE COLD PAGE 8

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Convention donors seek aid

Editor:

It appears the more money you contribute to the political parties, the larger the bailout requests and the greater the chance of receiving the money. So here is an idea, let the taxpayers form a coalition. Let's call it Starving Debt Ridden U.S. Citizens. If 75 million join, we could contribute $375 million to each party and ask for bailout monies of, say, $50 billion. Since I head up the coalition, I will have my board of directors approve a $20 million bonus for myself, and in return I could authorize a $1 million bonus reward for each of my key appointed persons. To become a key appointed person, all you have to do is volunteer $250,000 to my favorite charity (me). Sounds like a plan to me.

Fred Alexander
Santa Monica

Good riddance, GOP

Editor:

The fall of the Grand Old Party, the demise of the GOP, as our fathers once knew it, is almost certain if Republicans continue to embrace the likes of Sarah Palin and the fundamentalist doctrine of its religious base.

The religious right is a dead end for the Republican Party with its agenda of deception, hypocrisy and intolerance that plays to anti-gay bigots, self-righteous anti-abortionists and a dwindling block of conservative white voters.

The extremes meet and have found a home and have a stranglehold on the Republican Party. C'est la vie and good riddance.

Ron Lowe
Nevada City, Calif.

LOL: laughing out loud
BRB: be right back
MUSM: miss you so much
A/S/L: age, sex, location
BF: boyfriend
OLL: online love
LULAS: love you like a sister
POS: parent over shoulder
WTGP: want to go private?
LMIRL: let's meet in real life

HDOP: help delete online predators

Every day, children are sexually solicited online.

Ad Council
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Going Postal

Steve "the Mailman" Breen — Send comments to editor@smdp.com

The times, they are a-changin'

AS WE MOVE INTO THE WINTER OF THE year, many Americans are moving into the December of their lives. As the "Greatest Generation" of WWII passes into the mists of legend, the "Boomers" are fast becoming the largest segment of our graying geritocracy. "Me Generation" Americans, as a lubricious sub-culture that celebrates youth, strength, beauty and Botox, has very little use for our wiser elders beyond greeting us at the local Wal-Mart.

As our culture dissolved from a predominantly bucolic agrarian lifestyle into the vicissitudes of post-modernist narcissism, our response to the impending denouement of our geezer population enshrines the ironic notion that "it will never happen to me." Folks, there are 12 Step meetings for this. Get a sponsor. The young routinely dismiss the old because, well, they're old. Being old demographically demonstrates that there's nothing much worthwhile or exciting that the Gen X/Y/Z'ers can't reasonably compare to online shopping, self-absorbed isolation on cell phones or downloading the latest Paris Hilton video.

We rarely, if ever, live in situations whereby the Mesolithic extended family of mom, dad, sister, brother and creepy Uncle Al entail taking care of Grammy and Gramps under the same roof. That era ended when the last remnants of the family farm conceded to the superior efficiency of Archer Daniel Midlands and Monsanto.

Culturally we surmise that the "new" is so much more superior to the "old." Say goodbye to inefficiently catching organic catfish, one at a time, with a bamboo pole by the lake on a lazy summer afternoon with Gramps. Now say hello to buying farm-raised organic catfish at Whole Foods with big brother who is now catching dollar bills, one at a time, as a pole-dancer at the Hootchie Koo Club to avoid farm chores. No muss and no fuss (the catfish, I mean). And your environmentally friendly catfish is then euphemistically "harvested" and packaged with such cranio-rectal environmental correctness so as to not offend your tender sensibilities as a nouveau green consumer.

So in this miasma of the warm and fuzzy New Age higher consciousness, we farm out the harvest of our seniors to a "full-assisted elder care facility" as it sounds so, well, efficient and convenient. It's sort of like abortion in reverse; efficient, convenient and solves a problem. In less enlightened times we cozily called an elder care facility "the home" in hopes that Grammy and Gramps hadn't enough remaining gray matter to figure out that Grammy's walker is clogging up the hall closet and Gramps' leaves his teeth in a glass jar in the kitchen. Obviously something is wrong so let's send them to a "home." Politically correct liberal fascists, however, invented a newer, more efficient sounding label as the term "home" just sounded too messy.

How's your housekeeping today?

Me? I personally like old people. They are a helluva [sic] lot of fun except for the multiple bathroom breaks, but I figure that I'm going to be one of them someday so I like to get a heads up on what's going down. Pass the Viagra. And geezers and wheezers are a gas … literally. Pass the Glade. Old people say things, uncensored, like a 4-year-old walking in on you while you're having sex. The explanations and discourse are usually quite hilarious, methinks [sic].

I PERSONALLY LIKE OLD PEOPLE. THEY ARE A HELLUVA [SIC] LOT OF FUN EXCEPT FOR THE MULTIPLE BATHROOM BREAKS, BUT I FIGURE THAT I'M GOING TO BE ONE OF THEM SOMEDAY SO I LIKE TO GET A HEADS UP ON WHAT'S GOING DOWN.

Kids and old people share this unique perverse palaver because kids don't know any better and old people don't really care. Both get to laugh and giggle at your discomfort. Gaffers have been there, done that, got the coffee mugs, T-shirts and Pepto-Bismol to prove it. Hang out with them. You might learn something. You don't get to be old if you're stupid and I've run into a lot of really stupid young people lately. It's a Darwinian thing.

Kids go to "day care" and old people go to "elder care." Why incarcerate the smarter blips on the reality radar?

And why do post-modernist middle-agers get all cutesy-poo and make snookey noises when baby Huey loads up a Pampers yet somehow transmogrify into Nurse Ratched when it happens to Gramps? What's the big deal? He changed your diaper once upon a many midnight dreary so now it's your turn, Mr. and Mrs. Middle Ager, to give back to the "village." Gramps still counts as part of the liberal "village" idiot.

My son tells me that when I devolve into senility, he is going to drop me off at Wal-Mart and tell me that it's my new apartment. Sounds good to me as I like my independence. Heck, they even have organic catfish there.

STEVE BREEN is still trying to find his glasses … they're around here somewhere, and is still the "best looking mailman at that, um, uh, that letter sending place." He can be reached at dulcamarax@yahoo.com.

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OPINIONS EXPRESSED are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect those of the Santa Monica Daily Press staff. Guest editorials from residents are encouraged, as are letters to the editor. Letters will be published on a space-available basis. It is our intention to publish all letters we receive, except those that are libelous or are unsigned. Preference will be given to those that are e-mailed to editor@smdp.com. All letters must include the author's name and telephone number for purposes of verification. Letters also may be mailed to our offices located at 410 Broadway, Suite B, Santa Monica, 90401, or faxed to (310) 576-9913. All letters and guest editorials are subject to editing for space and content.



Word in Edgewise

Kenny Mack
Send comments to editor@smdp.com

Hip-hop in need of a renaissance

I WAS RAISED ON RAP MUSIC. BEING born black in the 1970s in a major American city, it was unavoidable. Where there was a turntable or cassette deck, we blasted rap music — and at maximum decibels. Rap spoke to us in a way we had never been spoken to before. It was the truth. It was the musical expression of our collective cultural experience and we loved it because it felt so authentic. I now realize that back then, when the needle dropped on the latest record from the Sugar Hill Gang or Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five, I was witnessing the birth of a new American art form. It pains me to say that when I watched Kanye West on "Saturday Night Live" this past weekend, I was witnessing the death of that art form as I knew it — murdered by the gloved hands of its favorite son screaming into a ridiculous lipstick-red microphone.

If you aren't familiar with rap music, let me break down the elements for you: there's the beat and the rhymes, that's it. With the exception of live bands like The Roots, the beat is provided in one of two ways. Originally, it was by a highly-skilled DJ who would use two turntables and a mixer to repeat the best bits of a song over and over again like Jam Master Jay did with "Walk This Way." A beat can also come from a producer who creates it in a studio with drum machines, samplers, keyboards, etc. The rhymes only come one way and that's from the rapper. The best ones are lyrical artists with true rhyme skills and a message to deliver. When done right, the DJ/producer/rap artist combination can lead to classics comparable to the greats of any genre (like Pete Rock & CL Smooth's "T.R.O.Y.") and when done wrong, you get the hot messes Kanye gave us last Saturday.

Don't get me wrong, I'm feeling "Love Lockdown" and "Heartless" when they're playing in my car or on my iPod. But the true test of the quality of a piece of music is when it is performed for an audience. A real rap artist never fails that test precisely because the elements of this art form are so simple. Kanye failed miserably because the elements of his performance have become so complicated. In his personal style, his use of video, his insistence on singing when he knows he can't, and his reliance on the maddening Auto-Tune software and vocoder (the robot voice), he has embraced the avant-garde in so many areas that the music has almost become an afterthought. He can no longer walk on a stage, pick up a mic, and move a crowd (assuming he ever could) and that tells me that the biggest name in rap music has either forgotten or forsaken the art form that made him who he is — and would rather be a pop artist than a rap artist.

Kanye killed the music of my life and I'd like to thank him for it. Rap music has been dying for a long time and I'm glad he finally put it out of its misery. Because now that rap is dead I can do something I never thought I'd do and that's warn parents about the dangers of exposing their kids to it. One of the drawbacks of rap's popularity is that record companies have mastered the art of the catchy chorus or "hook" and too many of those hooks aren't exactly good for children to hear. For example, I know of a teenage scion of a famous family who couldn't stop singing the chorus of T-Pain's "Buy You A Drank" while her mom was in rehab for alcohol. And it starts much younger than that. A friend's 4-year-old can already recite the lyrics to Florida's "Low," and I'm sure a song about gluteal gymnastics isn't exactly the kind of thing her parents want her repeating around the schoolyard at Roosevelt Elementary.

Hip-hop as a culture will endure, but rap music as an art form is in need of a renaissance. Like me, millions of young people have grown up with rap as the soundtrack of their lives. Any true fan who doesn't should own "By All Means Necessary" by BDP, "Paid In Full" by Eric B. & Rakim, "It Takes A Nation Of Millions …" by Public Enemy, "Stakes Is High" by De La Soul, "Do You Want More" by The Roots, and "The Low End Theory" by A Tribe Called Quest so they can get to know great rap music. Because when an art form becomes pop art, it loses its authenticity. In that case, the only thing you can do is return to the classics. Some of us have never left.

Kenny Mack is a writer, comedian, and social commentator living in Santa Monica who is shopping his book, "Word In Edgewise: The Collected Opinions of America's Smartest Columnist" to forward-thinking publishers. He can be reached at kennymack@gmail.com

The Q Line

Big Blue question

Big Blue Bus officials are currently seeking the public's input on a number of issues. Should schedules change? How about where the bus lines run?

So this week's Q-Line question asks:

What advice would you have for BBB officials?

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your answers in the weekend edition of the Daily Press. Please limit responses to a minute or less.

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Stocks surge as Fed pledges economic support

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK A surprised Wall Street bolted higher Tuesday after the Federal Reserve's historic decision to further slash interest rates and provide broad support to revive the troubled economy.

The Dow Jones industrials surged 360 points, or 4.2 percent, and broader indexes jumped more than 5 percent after the central bank said it will use "all available tools" to jump-start the economy. It also set its target for the rate at which banks lend to each other to a range of zero to 0.25 percent, the lowest level on record.

Demand for long-term government bonds increased and pushed yields to record lows.

The promise of further government action and a Swiss-army-knife approach for mending the economy damped concerns that policymakers were running low on tools to fan the economy by further lowering interest rates.

The idea that the Fed will likely proceed with plans to snap up government and mortgage debt made it easier for investors to place bets that the central bank will do what is necessary to help bring an end to the longest recession in a quarter-century.

"Today was a reminder that the Fed was on the case," said Jim McDonald, director of equity research at Northern Trust in Chicago. "It was a reaffirmation of their willingness to be very aggressive."

"What we heard today was not revolutionarily different but it was a reminder that they are committed to using their balance sheet to the fullest extent to repair the financial markets and stimulate the economy."

The Fed's unprecedented move to lower its fed funds target rate to a range of zero to 0.25 percent rather than a fixed point was a surprise. The move is an acknowledgment that rates in the marketplace had been well below the Fed's 1 percent target, which it set at its previous meeting on Oct. 29. The central bank also cut the lending rate for loans directly to banks.

Many analysts had expected the Fed would cut its fed funds rate to 0.5 percent from 1 percent.

"In some senses the whole point of this meeting was to say 'Quit watching interest rates, watch the other things that we can and will do,'" said Bruce McCain, chief investment strategist at Key Private Bank in Cleveland.

Jack A. Ablin, chief investment officer at Harris Private Bank, said the fact that the Fed targeted a range for its fed fund rate indicates that policy makers did not want to bring the rate all the way to zero. Such a move could have had problematic implications for money market funds, whose fees could then outpace yields.

The Dow rose 359.61, or 4.20 percent, to 8,924.14 after having been up about 100 in subdued trading ahead of the Fed's announcement.

Broader stock indicators also rose. The Standard & Poor's 500 index advanced 44.61, or 5.14 percent, to 913.18, and the Nasdaq composite index rose 81.55, or 5.41 percent, to 1,589.89.

The Russell 2000 index of smaller companies rose 30.28, or 6.69 percent, to 482.85.

The number of stocks advancing outnumbered those declining by 5-to-1 on the New York Stock Exchange, where consolidated volume came to 5.81 billion shares, up from 4.37 billion on Monday.

Demand for government bonds surged. The yield on the benchmark 10-year Treasury note, which moves opposite its price, fell to 2.27 percent from 2.53 percent late Monday. The yield on the 30-year fell to 2.78 percent from 2.99 percent late Monday.

The yield on the three-month T-bill — whose yield has at times gone negative due to frenzied buying — was at 0.02, flat with late Monday.

The dollar was mostly lower against other major currencies, particularly the euro. Gold prices rose.

Light, sweet crude fell 91 cents to settle at $43.60 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

Battered financial stocks led the market's advance. Goldman Sachs Group Inc. reported its first quarterly loss since it went public in 1999, losing $2.29 billion during its fiscal fourth quarter. But investors were apparently relieved that the loss wasn't wider and sent the stock up $9.54, or 14 percent, to $76.

Other financial names jumped. JPMorgan Chase & Co. rose $3.72, or 13 percent, to $32.35, while Wells Fargo & Co. gained $3.71, or 14 percent, to $29.78.

For the gains in stocks to hold, McDonald said the credit markets need to show signs that fear is dissipating.

"The credit markets now need to show some improvement," he said.

Stocks have shown advances since their Nov. 20 low. Trading has been less volatile than it had in the previous three months. In the past 54 trading days, 18 had moves of at least a 5 percent. In the previous 53 years there had been only 17 days with moves greater than 5 percent.

Since Nov. 20, the Dow is up 18.2 percent, the S&P 500 is up 21.4 percent and the Nasdaq is up 20.8 percent.

The rate decision came on a day when investors received two more pieces of evidence on Tuesday that the economy was worsening: The Commerce Department reported a 18.9 percent drop in new home construction in November, while the Labor Department said consumer prices sank by 1.7 percent.

Richard E. Cripps, chief market strategist for Stifel Nicolaus, said the recent string of downbeat economic readings could eventually convince Wall Street that the economy has hit a bottom and could be poised for a modest recovery. In past downturns, the data remain weak long after the economy has began to recover.

"The idea is it's so bad that maybe it doesn't take much to go up from here," he said.

Wall Street remained nervous about the growing list of firms and individual investors affected by investment manager Bernard Madoff, who is accused of scamming investors.

Madoff, former chairman of the Nasdaq stock market, was arrested Thursday in what the Securities and Exchange Commission is calling one of the biggest Ponzi schemes on record. Investors of all sizes — from major banks to small charities — may record losses of more than $50 billion. Firms invested in his fund include such major European banks as HSBC Holdings PLC, Banco Santander, BNP Paribas, and Royal Bank of Scotland Group PLC.

Markets overseas were mixed. Japan's Nikkei stock average fell 1.12 percent, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index rose 0.55 percent. Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.74 percent, Germany's DAX index rose 1.61 percent, and France's CAC-40 rose 2.07 percent.

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Beauty, convenience come at a high price

FROM **BUSINESS** PAGE 1

ronment by the water with good retail and quality housing."

The business license tax in Santa Monica is based on a percentage of gross receipts with a rate that differs according to business type, according to Miriam Mack, the economic development manager for City Hall.

The revenues support services such as public safety, parks and recreation and street and sidewalk maintenance.

Auto dealers pay $1.25 per each $1,000 gross reciepts, whereas an agent/broker/contractor pays $3 per each $1,000 gross reciepts.

Voters also recently approved an expansion of the Utility Users Tax to include T-1 Internet for businesses.

Mack said the taxes do not typically play a role in decisions to locate in Santa Monica, adding that it is a small portion of the total cost of doing business overall.

"We don't feel that we have necessarily suffered as a result of the fees that we have to charge for our services," she said. "I think some cities may artificially work to adjust their fee structure in order to attract businesses when in fact business decisions are rarely made based on the fees that they're charged."

The decision is rather based on the land availability, proximity to where existing employees and owners live and adjacency to similar businesses, Mack said.

While the study states that Santa Monica is a costly city, City Hall has tried to maintain a stronger relationship with the business community, establishing improvement districts, working with merchant associations and collaborating with Santa Monica College for its Small Business Development Center, which provides resources for start-ups.

"The important thing is that our city has the revenues to support the level of service that our residents and businesses expect and that is the quality of life which businesses enjoy," Mack said. "The fees associated with getting set up or doing business are such a small part of the business economic picture that it really almost isn't a factor."

Robert Kronovet, the chairman of the Pico Improvement Organization, said that doing business in Santa Monica isn't any more expensive than in Los Angeles.

"I don't think the expenses the city puts on the merchants prohibits them from having a business," he said. "A business failing or succeeding is based on their ability to provide a service or goods that consumers want."

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Edison working fast to close achievement gap

FROM **EDISON** PAGE 1

that educators could use to make students more successful.

"We believe an awful lot of achievement is related to how hard you work," Orum said. "We've been working hard to teach those skills and to support them."

Edison is unique in that it is a dual language academy, teaching students the curriculum in both English and Spanish. The school has approximately 425 students.

It is one of four elementary schools in the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District that receive Title I funding, along with Will Rogers, John Muir and McKinley. Will Rogers has the highest concentration of students on the free and reduced lunch program with approximately 61.7 percent, according to Dr. Sally Chou, the district's chief academic officer.

McKinley previously won the award in the 2005-06 and 2006-07 school years.

The district receives about $900,000 in Title I funding, which is divided among the schools based on need.

The money helps pay for reading specialists and other resources that can help the students with state testing preparations.

Officials with Edison are also planning on applying for the Blue Ribbon Schools Program, which is one of the highest honors for K-12 institutions.

"Not only are we increasing the achievement for all students, but we're narrowing the achievement gap," Orum said. "The thing that pleases us the most is all of our children are making progress."

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DIGGING DEEP

Fabian Lewkowicz *FabianLewkowicz.com*

In preparation for a coming storm, and to avoid getting flooded again, Los Angeles County Lifeguards, Cpt. Brent Katzer, 39, (left) and Jay Hopkins, 45, shovel dirt to form a berm to divert water from their headquarters on Tuesday. Showers have been forecast for today.

SMPD issues new holiday safety brochure on crime

FROM **CRIME** PAGE 3

said. "Just to know that you have it, even if you use it once in a blue moon, it's really worth it."

It may seem like a lot of work to identify the weak points of a home and how to secure them, which is why the SMPD has a free service available to help asses at-risk homes.

At no cost, a crime prevention coordinator can visit homes and neighborhoods to conduct residential and business security surveys. They come prepared with a checklist that identifies vulnerabilities and they advise on how to secure them.

"Anything regarding crime prevention they are a part of," Thruston said. "I recommend for anyone who is concerned about safety in their area to call and make arrangements to have a coordinator come out."

In addition, the coordinators can help residents form neighborhood watches and hold meetings to discuss crime trends and other concerns.

The SMPD has, for the first time, issued a holiday safety brochure outlining many of their tips. It can be found on their Web site (www.santamonicapd.org/crimeprevention) as well as their community relations department at 333 Olympic Dr.

Last year, during the month of December, there were only 28 reported attempted and successful burglaries, an average number. Thruston said that burglars are opportunistic and it is up to the community to keep the numbers down and to make sure burglars don't have any opportunities this holiday season.

"It's a team effort, and if people will take the time to secure their residences and vehicles, and educate themselves on how not to be a victim the number can stay relatively low," Thruston said. "We're actually down 10 percent [in burglaries from last year], but that could easily change."

news@smdp.com

Cold weather prompts county to reach out

FROM **COLD** PAGE 3

plan to be outdoors.

• Protect extremities from the cold by wearing a hat, scarf, gloves, and socks.

• Offer to help those in your neighborhood with limited access to heat, such as seniors or those who are ill. Check on them frequently.

• During peak cold times, if you don't have a heater in your home, visit indoor public facilities such as shopping malls, libraries or senior centers.

• If you use an outdoor generator, place it as far away from the home as possible.

• Stoves, barbecues and ovens can produce a deadly gas known as carbon monoxide when used to heat a home. Never use these appliances in place of approved heaters such as electric, natural gas, or fireplaces. Install a carbon monoxide detector in your home to reduce the risk of poisoning.

Symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include shortness of breath, headaches, muscle and joint pain, and nausea. Exposure to high levels of carbon monoxide could lead to death within minutes. Those suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning should be taken outside, into fresh air, immediately, and should be taken to an emergency room for immediate medical treatment.

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SURF REPORT

Surf Conditions **Water Temp:** 58°

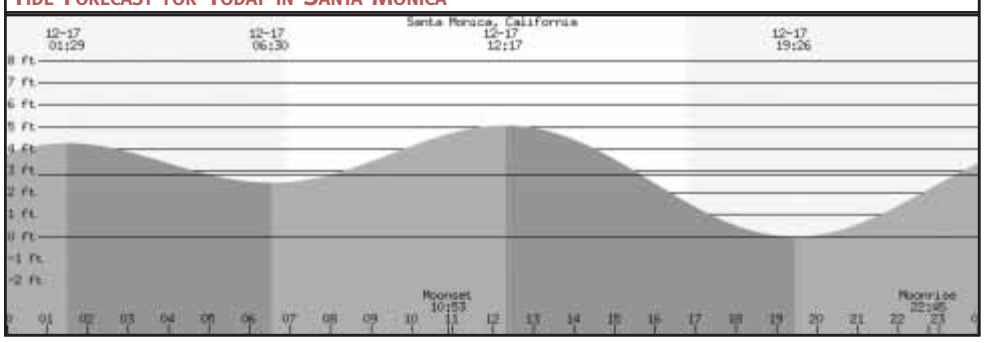
Swell Forecast (2-3 FT)

More small and sloppy surf with stormy conditions, perhaps waist+ around west facing breaks, and smaller at south facing spots.

Long Range Synopsis

Thursday the 18th NW wind swell should back off to knee to waist around west facing breaks, smaller at south facing spots.

Tide Forecast for Today in Santa Monica



BEACH REPORT CARD

NORTH LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Grades for this report are based on monitoring data from the previous four weeks up to the ending date of **December 9, 2008**

HEAL THE BAY - 1444 9th Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401 - www.healthebay.org - brc@healthebay.org - 800 HEAL BAY

QUICK STATS (for the last 28 days)

- Number of sewage spills -- 0
- Number of beach closures due to a sewage spill -- 0
- Number of wet days -- 5
- Number of A grades for dry/wet weather -- 29 / 16
- Number of (C,D,F) grades for dry/wet weather -- 15 / 11

The Beach Report Card is made possible by simplehuman, The Goldhirsh Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, Ford

Heal the Bay reminds you not to swim or surf within 100 yards of any flowing storm drain or for 3 days after a rainstorm. After a rain, indicator bacteria counts at beaches throughout California usually far exceed health criteria in the state's Beach Closure and Health Warning Protocol.

LOCATION	DRY	WET
Leo Carrillo Beach, at Arroyo Sequit Creek mouth	A+	ns
Nicholas Beach at San Nicholas Canyon Creek mouth	A+	ns
El Pescador State Beach, between Lechusa and Las Alisos creeks	A+	A+
Encinal Canyon at El Matador State Beach	A+	A+
Broad Beach at Trancas Creek mouth	A+	ns
Zuma Beach at Zuma Creek mouth	A+	ns
Walnut Creek, projection of Wildlife Rd. (private)	A	A+
Paradise Cove Pier at Ramirez Canyon Creek mouth	A	ns
Escondido Creek, just east of Escondido State Beach	A+	A+
Latigo Canyon Creek mouth	F	ns
Solstice Canyon at Don Blocker County Beach	F	F
Puerco State Beach at creek mouth	A	ns
Marie Canyon storm drain at Puerco Beach, at 24572 Malibu Rd.	A+	A+
Surfrider Beach at Malibu Colony fence	B	ns
Surfrider Beach (breach location)- daily	C	F
Malibu Pier - 50 yards east	F	ns
Carbon Beach at Sweetwater Canyon	A+	A+
Las Flores State Beach at Las Flores Creek (point zero)	A+	A+
Big Rock Beach at 19948 PCH stairs	C	ns
Pena Creek at Las Tunas County Beach	A+	A+
Tuna Canyon	A+	A+
Topanga State Beach at creek mouth	A	A
Castlerock Storm Drain at Castle Rock Beach	F	ns
Santa Ynez Storm Drain at Castle Rock Beach	F	F
Will Rogers State Beach at 17200 PCH (1/4 mile east of Sunset drain)	A+	ns

LOCATION	DRY	WET
Will Rogers State Beach at Bel Air Bay Club drain near fence	C	ns
Will Rogers State Beach at Pulga Canyon storm drain	B	A+
Will Rogers State Beach at Temescal Canyon drain	A	ns
Will Rogers State Beach at Santa Monica Canyon drain (Chautauqua)	F	F
Santa Monica Beach at Montana Ave. drain	D	F
Santa Monica Beach at Wilshire Blvd. drain	D	ns
Santa Monica Municipal Pier	F	F
Santa Monica Beach at Pico/Kenter storm drain	B	F
Santa Monica Beach at Strand St. (in front of the restrooms)	C	ns
Ocean Park Beach at Ashland Ave. drain	A	C
Venice City Beach, at the Rose Ave. storm drain	A	A+
Venice Beach at Brooks Ave. drain	D	F
Venice Beach at Windward Ave. drain	B	A+
Venice Fishing Pier - 50 yards south	A+	ns
Venice Beach- projection of Topsail St.	A	ns
Marina del Rey, Mothers' Beach- lifeguard tower	A	F
Dockweiler State Beach at Ballona Creek mouth	F	F
Dockweiler State Beach at Culver Blvd. drain	A+	A+
North Westchester Storm Drain at Dockweiler State Beach	A+	A+
Dockweiler State Beach at World Way (south of D&W jetty)	A	ns
Dockweiler State Beach at Imperial Hwy drain	A+	A+
Dockweiler Beach- opposite Hyperion Treatment Plant	A+	ns
Dockweiler State Beach at Grand Ave. drain	A+	ns

LEGEND

DRY -- each location is graded on an A – F scale based on bacterial pollution levels present in the surf zone
WET – grades for days of recorded rainfall and the following 3 days
ns -- no sample taken

Heal the Bay's Beach Report Card© is based on weekly water quality monitoring data provided by the City of Los Angeles' Environmental Monitoring Division and the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services. Data is analyzed as soon as it is made available to us by the public agencies. Beaches are graded on an A–F scale based on the risk of ocean users becoming ill. Samples are analyzed for bacteria—enterococcus, total and fecal coliforms—that indicate biological pollution. A fact sheet detailing the exact methodology used in determining grades for each location is available from the office or on our web site. The report is not designed to measure the amount of trash or toxins found at local beaches.

The Beach Report Card is an indication of past water quality and is not a warranty of the current safety of those areas surveyed. Our lawyers are happy.

Heal the Bay is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to making Santa Monica Bay and Southern California coastal waters safe and healthy for people and marine life.

Heal the Bay

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SOCCER

Women's soccer league set to go

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Women's Professional Soccer league took the next step toward its inaugural season Tuesday when it announced the home openers for all seven teams.

The economic downturn forced the Arena Football League to cancel its 2009 season a day earlier, but WPS commissioner Tonya Antonucci said her league remains on track to make its debut.

The WPS has yet to complete its contract with the U.S. national team players association, something Antonucci had been hopeful to have done months ago.

"I think we really are down to the final, final issues here," she said.

Antonucci would like to reach a deal by the end of the year before the league starts announcing the signings of international players.

The WPS recently signed Puma as a major sponsor. Other potential sponsors have pushed back their decisions because of the economy until February or March.

Seeking to learn from the lessons of the failed Women's United Soccer Association, the WPS has tried to be more fiscally conservative than its predecessor was. Antonucci believes that will allow the league to weather the tough economy.

"The business model is built on pretty modest expectations in the early years," she said. "Our costs are in line with those modest expectations. You could say in financial terms it's already priced in."

All seven teams still plan to play when the league launches this spring, Antonucci said. Several clubs are meeting ticket sales goals, she said, and owners understand that the league's growth will take time.

The first game matches the Los Angeles Sol against the Washington Freedom in Carson, Calif., on March 29.

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MOVIE TIMES

AERO THEATRE
1328 Montana Ave.
(323) 466-FILM

A Christmas Story (PG) 1hr 34min
7:30

AMC LOEWS BROADWAY 4
1441 Third Street Promenade
(310) 458-1506

Day the Earth Stood Still, The (PG-13) 1hr 50min
2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30

Nothing Like the Holidays (PG-13) 1hr 39min
2:15, 4:40, 7:20, 9:40

Milk (R) 2hrs 08min
1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00

Transporter 3 (PG-13) 1hr 40min
1:45, 4:50, 7:30, 9:50

AMC 7 SANTA MONICA
1310 Third St.
(310) 289-4262

Quantum of Solace (PG-13) 1 hr 46min
2:00, 4:30, 7:00, 9:30

Role Models (R) 1hr 35min
1:55, 4:40, 7:20, 9:45

Bolt in Disney Digital 3D (PG) 1hr 36min
1:45, 4:10, 6:45, 9:15

The Day the Earth Stood Still (PG-13) 1hr 50min
1:30, 2:20, 4:50, 6:30, 7:30, 10:00

Punisher: War Zone (R) 1hr 47min
4:00, 9:20

Frost/Nixon (R) 2hrs 02min
1:15, 2:10, 4:20, 5:00, 7:10, 8:00, 9:55

LAEMMLE'S MONICA FOURPLEX
1332 Second St.
(310) 394-9741

The Reader (R) 2hrs 02min
1:00, 2:00, 4:00, 5:00, 7:00, 8:00, 9:55

I've Loved You So Long (Il y a longtemps que je t'aime) (PG-13) 1hr 55min
1:20, 4:20, 7:20, 10:00

Slumdog Millionaire (R) 2hr 1min
1:10, 4:10, 7:10, 10:00

MANN'S CRITERION THEATRE
1313 Third St.
(310) 395-1599

Australia (PG-13) 2hr 45min
11:30am, 3:10, 6:40, 10:10

Gran Torino (R)
11:20am, 1:30, 2:30, 4:20, 5:20, 7:00, 8:00, 9:40, 10:40

Cadillac Records (R) 1hr 48min
11:40am, 2:20, 5:00, 7:30, 10:20

Twilight (PG-13) 2hrs
1:20, 4:30, 7:20, 10:30

Four Christmases (PG-13) 1hr 22min Digital Projection
11:50am, 2:10, 4:40, 7:10, 9:30

For more information, e-mail news@smdp.com

As you like it, Aries

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★★ Remain even and steady. You could wonder about what needs to be done to make a situation work or to clear out a problem. Don't fret if you don't come up with the right idea immediately. Tonight: As you like it.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★★ Creativity flourishes, especially when others approach you without an agenda and/or with kindness. Nearly anything you want could happen. Loosen up and understand what you want from a situation. Tonight: Flirt.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★ Home and security might be more important than you realize or want others to know. Investigate options, and allow a new adjustment or change. Stay centered, knowing what is important. Check out your investments. Tonight: Be optimistic.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★ Your possessive side emerges, making you wonder if someone really is telling it like it is. Pull away from your perspective, and finally you'll see and understand the other side of an issue. Communication flourishes. Tonight: Talk up a storm.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★ Be aware of exactly what you can offer as opposed to what is feasible. Realize you need to move in a new direction. Holding on to an outdated model could cause more stress than you might like. Be willing to back out of plans. Tonight: Let your hair down.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★★★ You can call the shots. You need to tap into your creativity. Learn to let go of a problem that cannot be resolved. Share your feelings and be more open. Often you have a hard shell around you. Tonight: Wish upon a star.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★★ Know when to back down. A risk or an enticing offer might be too good to say no to. But on the other hand, don't publicize what you are up to. Keep your own counsel. Try to reframe a difficult situation. Tonight: Vanish time.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★★ Zero in on what you want. Investigate what needs to happen with a neighbor or sibling. Both of you are likely to change your mind on a much deeper level. Sharing your feelings with others helps them relate to you. Tonight: Where the action is.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★ You are on center stage, and no one can prevent you from assuming leadership. You might want to readjust your finances if you feel uncomfortable. Others seek you out. They want your opinions. Tonight: Your treat.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★ Take an overview. Detach, especially if you feel triggered. There is a whole other way of looking at a situation. Get feedback from others. You might be questioning a decision more carefully. Tonight: Put on some Christmas music.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★★★ Defer. A partner needs and accepts your attention. Make it your pleasure. You are on top of your game, but supporting this person is more significant than you realize. Step out of a money matter. Tonight: Be with your favorite person.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★★ Partners need attention. Listen to news that heads in your direction. You have a way with friends and groups. Everyone will naturally tend to agree. You hear news. Make sure it is not gossip. Tonight: The only answer is yes.

Happy birthday

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

Often this year you feel impelled to take a stand or try something out. Stop, and don't let this behavior become second nature. Judge each situation individually. Often you wonder if you could lighten your responsibilities. The truth be told, if you are honest with yourself, you like the limelight and power. Many look to you as a role model. If you are single, you'll meet someone through your work and your ability to help others be comfortable. The trademark of this relationship will be a lot of communication. If you are attached, the two of you might want to work more on your relationship through a mutual commitment to a key cause. VIRGO can be fussy and picky.





Sudoku

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column, and 3x3 block. Use logic and process of elimination to solve the puzzle. The difficulty level ranges from ★ (easiest) to ★★★★★ (hardest).

Difficulty Level ★★★

		1	6	9				
	2				7			
6		4				8		
5		7				6		
9			7			1		
	6				8	2		
		9	1	7	6	5	2	
						9	1	6
							4	3

King Features Syndicate

GETTING STARTED

There are many strategies to solving Sudoku. One way to begin is to examine each 3x3 grid and figure out which numbers are missing. Then, based on the other numbers in the row and column of each blank cell, find which of the missing numbers will work. Eliminating numbers will eventually lead you to the answer.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S PUZZLE

1	3	8	5	2	6	7	9	4
9	2	6	4	7	3	1	5	8
7	4	5	9	8	1	6	3	2
5	6	7	2	1	8	9	4	3
4	9	1	6	3	5	8	2	7
2	8	3	7	9	4	5	1	6
3	1	2	8	6	9	4	7	5
8	7	4	1	5	2	3	6	9
6	5	9	3	4	7	2	8	1

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Bus: 310-315-1955
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Friday 8:30am-5pm
Saturday 10am-2pm

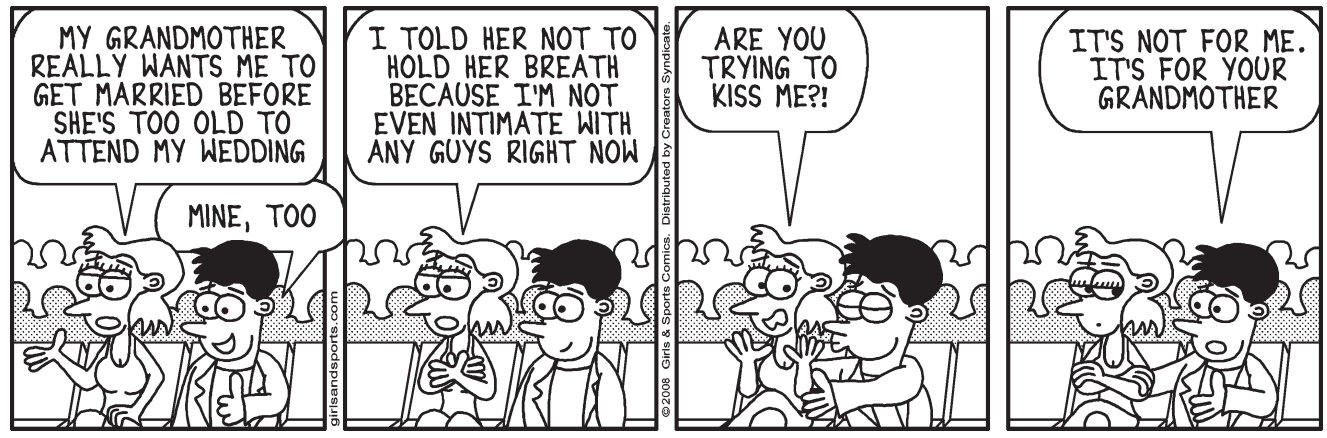
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Insurance Lic. #:0164884
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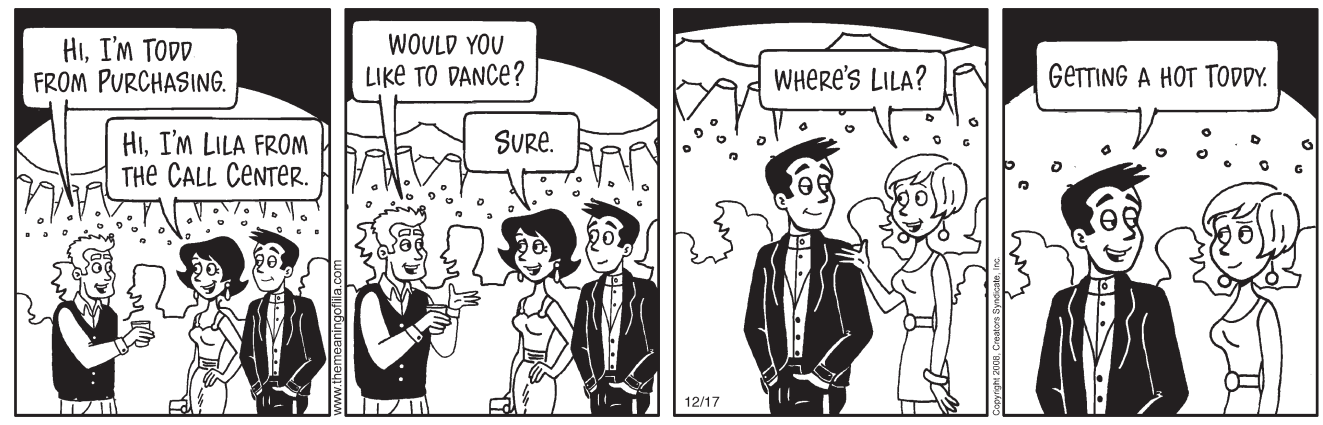
Girls and Sports

By Justin Borus and Andrew Feinstein



The Meaning of Lila

By John Forgetta & L.A. Rose



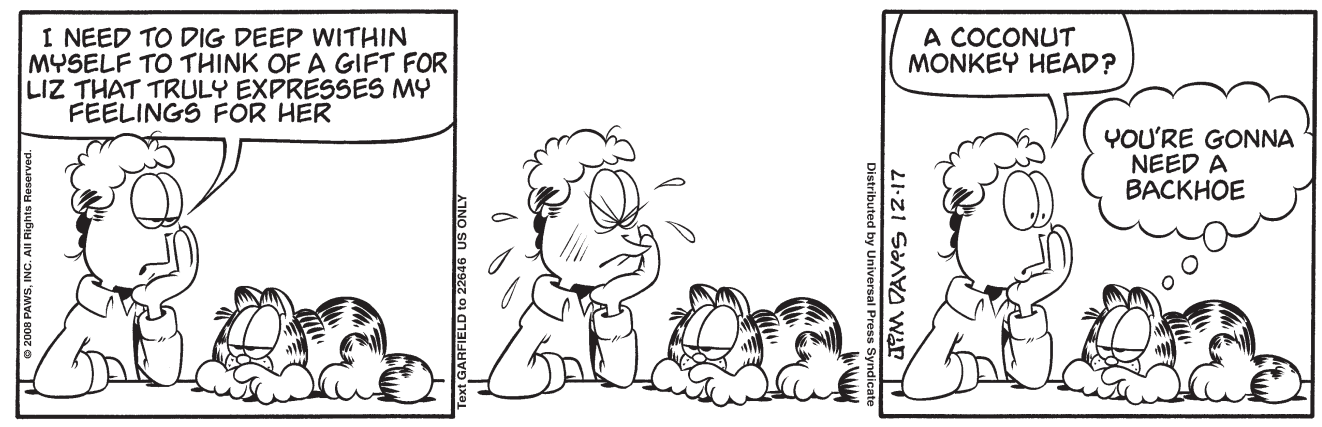
The Other Coast

By Adrian Raeside



Garfield

By Jim Davis

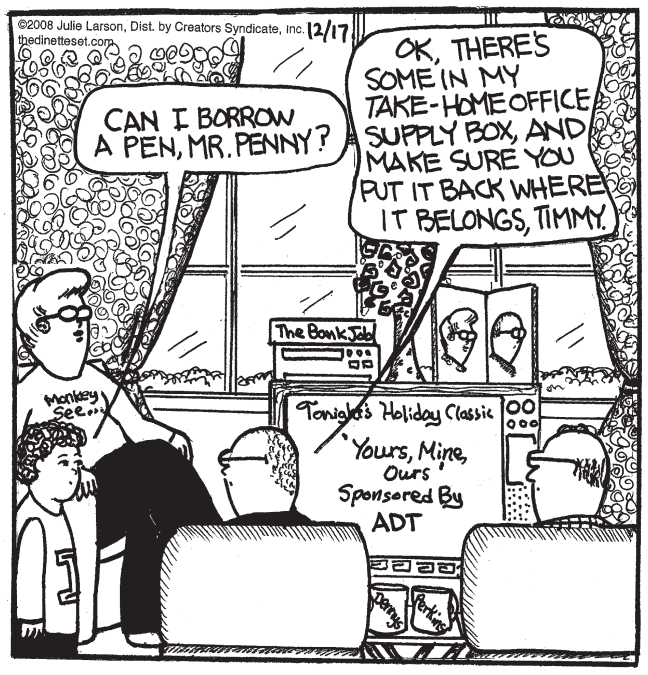


Dog eat Doug

By Brian Anderson



The Dinette Set by Julie Larson



Strange Brew

By John Deering



Speed Bump

By Dave Coverly



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MYSTERY PHOTO

The first person who can correctly identify where this image was captured gets a pat on the back from the Santa Monica Daily Press. Send answers to *editor@smdp.com*.

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Discon-cert
6 Outcrop-ping
10 TV's "Uncle Miltie"
11 Sandra's "Speed" co-star
12 Modify
13 Jockey Arcaro
14 Mrs. Lincoln's maiden name
15 Banded rock
16 Holiday lead-in
17 Small bed
18 Crosses out
19 Dresses up
22 "Just —" (sneakers slogan)
23 Metropolis
26 Slips away
29 Research site
32 Calendar box
33 World labor grp.
34 Charm
36 Hound hopper
37 Squad car sound
38 Fencing swords
39 Wading bird
40 "Believe it —!"
41 Corner piece
42 Skater Fleming

DOWN

1 Let up
2 Toni Morrison book
3 1920s style
4 Winter glider
5 That ship
6 Hand over
7 Mathe-matical base
8 Biscotti flavor
9 Shot in the dark
11 Fort Knox setting
15 Sticky stuff
17 One unlikely to make the honor roll
20 Youngster
21 Frank McCourt book
24 At work
25 Christmas symbol
27 Manx, for one
28 Comfort-ably warm
29 Intense beam
30 Buddy
31 Donkey
35 Onion's kin
36 Golf cry
38 Dandy

R	O	A	M	S	■	W	R	E	C	K
E	N	R	O	L	■	R	E	D	Y	E
S	C	U	B	A	D	I	V	I	N	G
T	U	B	■	L	E	T	■	F	I	G
S	E	A	C	O	W	S	■	I	C	E
■	■	■	A	M	Y	■	S	C	A	R
S	H	U	N	S	■	R	E	E	L	S
N	A	P	S	■	B	E	N	■	■	■
A	M	S	■	S	A	N	T	A	N	A
P	I	C	■	E	L	O	■	K	I	N
S	T	A	G	E	D	I	V	I	N	G
T	U	L	I	P	■	R	A	T	E	S
O	P	E	N	S	■	S	T	A	R	T

Yesterday's answer

NEW CROSSWORD BOOK! Send $4.75 (check/m.o.) to Thomas Joseph Book 1, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475

1	2	3	4	5	■	■	6	7	8	9
10					■	11				
12					■	13				
14				■	15					
16			■	17			■	18		
19			20				21	■	■	■
■	22				■	23		24	25	
■	■	■	26		27					28
29	30	31	■	32			■	33		
34			35			■	36			
37					■	38				
39					■	40				
41				■	■	42				

12-17

DAILY LOTTERY

MEGA MILLIONS
10 16 19 27 48
Meganumber: 25
Jackpot: $12M

SUPER LOTTO PLUS
20 22 25 32 45
Meganumber: 12
Jackpot: $31M

Fantasy 5
6 7 14 23 28

DAILY 3
MIDDAY: 5 4 5
EVENING: 6 5 4

DAILY DERBY
1st: 11 Money Bags
2nd: 05 California Classic
3rd: 02 Lucky Star
RACE TIME: 1.46.37

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NEWS OF THE WEIRD

BY CHUCK SHEPARD

■ An administrative court in Sweden overruled a government agency in November, thus requiring that the Madonna of Orgasm Church founded by artist Carlos Bebeacua be registered as a legitimate religious community. "The orgasm is God," he said, and "should be worshipped" as a "metaphor of life." It should not be limited to ejaculation but can be taught "through art or by looking at a landscape and thinking, 'Wow!'" Bebeacua already claims "a few hundred" followers.

■ The streak for the longest continuous chanting (already noted twice in the Guinness Book of World Records) is still active, according to an August Indo-Asian News Service dispatch from Ahmedabad, India. Clerics at the Shri Bala Hanuman temple started intoning "Shri Ram Jay Ram Jay Jay Ram" on Aug. 1, 1964 (more than 23 million minutes ago).

■ "Intercessionary" prayer (having other people pray for you) is proliferating on the Internet, with the oldest such broker, Unity Church, now a Web presence (200,000 requests a year) after a century's operation by mail (500,000 last year) and telephone (another 1.3 million). Other Web sites also handle requests for life-saving miracles, inner peace and financial recovery (and one, on OurPrayer.org, quoted in a November New York Times report, asked for success on her financial accounting exam: "This is my third attempt on this paper, and I pray that the Lord will grant me wisdom and a clear mind").

TODAY IN HISTORY

1903 Wilbur and Orville Wright of Dayton, Ohio, conducted the first successful manned powered-airplane flights, near Kitty Hawk, N.C., using their experimental craft, the Wright Flyer.

1957 the United States successfully test-fired the Atlas intercontinental ballistic missile for the first time.

1986 Eugene Hasenfus, the American convicted by Nicaragua for his part in running guns to the Contras, was pardoned, then released.

WORD UP!

fabricate \FAB-ri-keyt\, *verb*:
1. to make, build, or construct
2. to make up, invent
3. to fake or forge a document or signature

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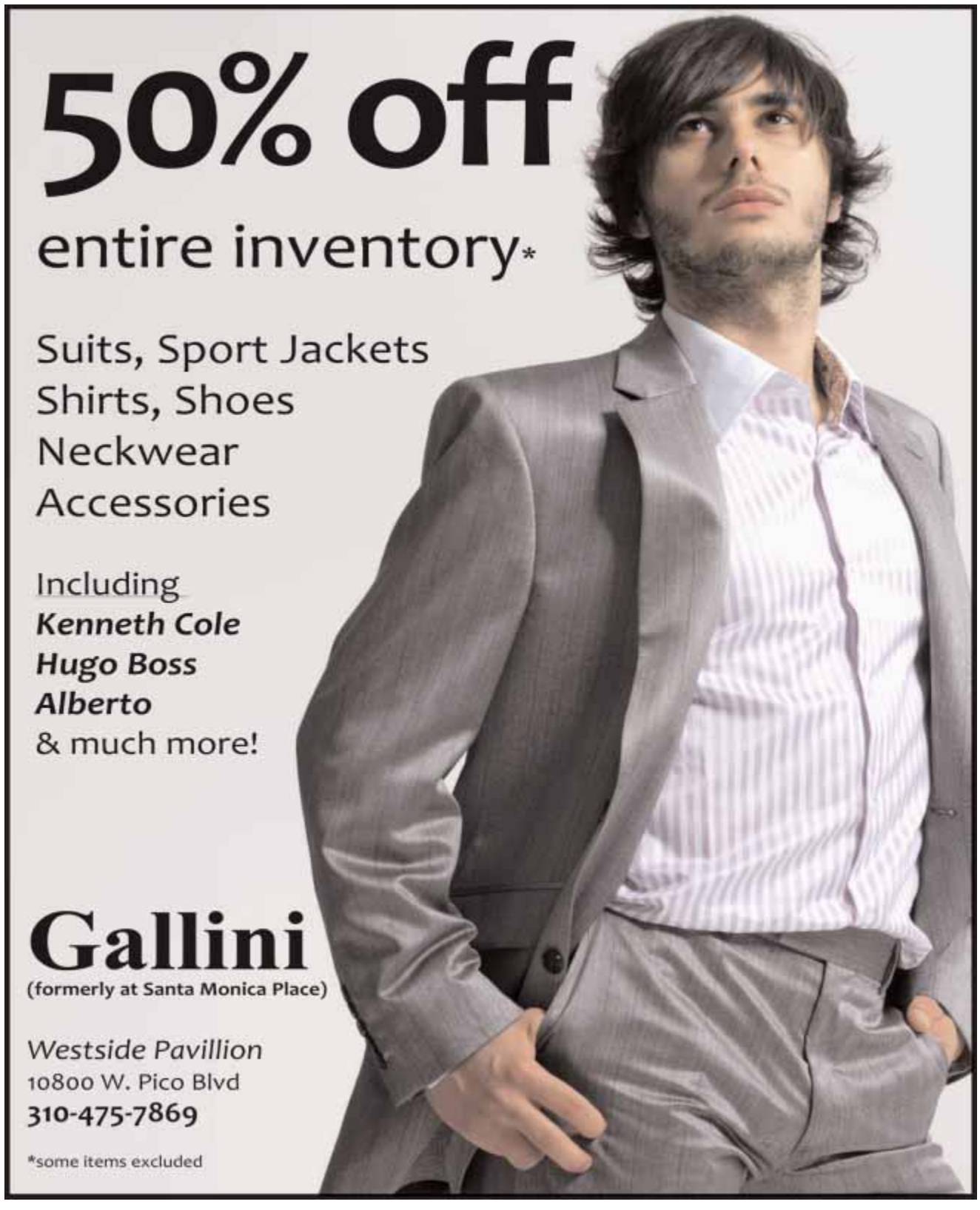
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North of Montana	=	$3,355,912	$1,510,632
Between Wilshire & Montana	=	$2,085,200	$873,104
South of Wilshire	=	$927,333	$704,004
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