

West Alabama

FRIDAY, JULY 7, 2006

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SECTION B

MED-TOWN

AND AROUND

Register for runoff

TUSCALOOSA | Today is the last day to register to vote in the July 18 Republican and Democratic primary runoffs.

Tuscaloosa County residents can register at the Board of Registrars Office in the Courthouse Annex, 2501 Seventh St. Office hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. For information, visit the office or call 205-349-3870, ext. 415.

Registration can also be completed at a public library, an armed forces recruiting station, when applying for a state driver's license or identification card, or when applying for Aid to Dependent Children, food stamps, WIC, Medicaid or rehabilitation services.

Winners of the runoffs will meet their party's nominees in the Nov. 7 general election.

Teen in hospital after jump

MENTONE | A Michigan teen remained in critical condition Thursday after he and a friend jumped from an 80-foot cliff into waters at DeSoto Falls and had to be pulled up the cliff side in a basket lift.

District Park Superintendent Tammye Butler said, Conrad Chura, 15, whose hometown was taken to Erlanger Medical Center in Chattanooga hospital after Tuesday's jump.

COUNTY SCHOOLS

Board selects familiar face for middle school job

By Antwanette Jones
Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | The Tuscaloosa County Board of Education named three candidates Thursday, filling one of the posts with a former county school administrator.

The board welcomed back Walter Davis, naming him principal at Davis-Emerson Middle School. Davis last worked as principal of Cottontale Elementary School for five years before moving to a position as director of federal programs for Tuscaloosa City Schools last year.

Davis replaces Dwight Moore, who resigned in June to work in real estate after almost six years in the county school system.

County board member Bret Whitehead said he was excited to have Davis back, especially at Davis-Emerson Middle. While at Cottontale Elementary, Davis worked with many of the same children who now attend that middle school.

"It will be a seamless transition and he will bring some stability to the community," said Whitehead, pointing to Davis' familiarity with the parents and students from the area.

"I think everybody in Cottontale knows and trusts Walter."

Davis is Monroe's wife, Geneva Monroe, has been principal at Myrtlewood Elementary since 2002. She will move to the same position at Fascetti-Visser Elementary.

Monroe will replace Shannon Stanley, who resigned from the school system in June and now works in Oxford City Schools in Calhoun County.

The board also named Jason Stapp, sixth-through-eighth-grade special education teacher at Ebocks Middle, to assistant principal at the school. Stapp replaces David Scott, who was promoted to principal at Matthews Elementary.

All the employees will begin in their new positions effective later this month.

Reach Antwanette Jones at antwanette.jones@tuscaloosaneews.com or 205-722-9297.

Lowé's will get tax incentives

City expects to take in about \$558,000 after first year of the deal

By Lydia Seabolt
Staff Writer

NORTHPORT | Lowe's Home Improvement store will open its doors to Northport in January — and in return, the city has agreed to give the retailer \$1.6 million of the taxes it generates throughout the next decade.

The incentive plan, which some council members had previously said they

knew very little about, was announced by city attorney Bert Guy during the council's planning meeting Thursday. The city will give Lowe's \$100,000 a year for 10 years. But, if the city receives more than \$340,000 a year in tax revenue by the seventh year, Northport must pay \$200,000 the seventh and eighth year to pay off the bond early.

The 117,000-square foot store is expected to generate as much as \$25

million in sales during its first year of operation, which means about \$558,000 in sales tax and license fees after the city pays Lowe's its first incentive payment, Guy said.

"There are always going to be people who don't like incentives," Guy said. "But this is going to bring a lot of tax dollars back home."

Northport's incentive plan pays comparatively less than other incentives

plans for Lowe's stores in Alabama. Birmingham paid Lowe's \$2.4 million to build the Brook Highland store off of Highway 280. Fort Payne paid Lowe's \$1.8 million. Fultondale paid the store \$2.1 million and Alabaster paid Lowe's \$2.2 million to build a store in its area.

Although a 1986 opinion by the Alabama attorney general says that paying a corporation money from city sales tax is

SEE STORES | 4B

HURRICANE SEASON

Alabama prepared, survey indicates

Residents have insurance, disaster plans

By Suevon Lee
Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON | Alabama homeowners are ahead of residents in most other Gulf Coast and Atlantic Coast states in hurricane emergency preparedness, according to a survey released Thursday.

The study indicated that 58 percent of homeowners in Alabama had taken more than half the steps necessary to recover from a major hurricane, compared with a 48 percent average rate overall.

Factors such as reviewing home insurance policies, owning a separate flood insurance policy or developing a family disaster plan were used to measure preparedness level.

The survey, sponsored by seven major insurance companies, sampled 4,200 home-insured residents in places from Texas through Maine during a two-week period in June. Pollsters also examined whether residents had made repairs or improvements to their homes, or stored important documents such as insurance policy information in a safe place.

"When you have three hurricanes in 11 months, it tends to get [people's] attention, not only on the insurance side, but on the personal preparedness side," said Bruce Baughman, director of the Alabama Emergency Management Agency. "I hope we can maintain that five years from now."

SEE STORES | 4B



Artist Frank Calloway, right, speaks with Steve Black in the Kentucky Art Center during a reception for Calloway's art show. Calloway lives at the Alice M. Kidd home at Bryce Hospital.

DRAWING FROM HIS PAST

Frank Calloway, 110, expresses his life through art

By Kris Kallies
Staff Writer

Frank Calloway leaned in, his face inches from a piece of butcher paper, and methodically calculated his next stroke as his fist gripped tightly around his pen.

"I need to draw a coal car," he said, wanting to complete his picture of a steam-powered train.

At 110 years old, Calloway interprets the world through his art. Calloway ordinarily does his work in Crayola crayon.

He loves to draw pictures of horses, tractors, cars, trains and houses — most of them purple and green.

"It's amazing that he always knows what he wants to draw. He plans everything and searches for its exact placement on the paper," said Zondra Hutto, Calloway's guardian.

Calloway has been living at the



Alice M. Kidd home at Bryce Hospital for more than 50 years. Hardly a day goes by when he doesn't draw.

On Thursday, Sara Anne Gibson, executive director for the Kentucky Art Center in Northport, hosted a showing of Calloway's drawings,

prompted by an article in The Birmingham News that led many people to Bryce Hospital wanting to meet Calloway.

"We're just not equipped to handle visitors coming in and out like that," said Carol Preeley, director of social services at the home.

Gibson said she wanted to help Calloway because the center is community-based, she said, and "just because someone is mentally ill doesn't mean they're less aware of art and they can still have talent."

At 110, Calloway is as lively as ever. "I like to draw all kinds of pictures," he said, as his coal car gradually transformed into a horse, complete with coal on its back.

Hutto said that he never tells anyone what he's thinking, but he always people things from his past.

"They may seem random, but everything makes perfect sense to

SEE ART | 4B

State opens bidding for sewage cleanup work

The state corrections department has been accused of releasing untreated waste

By Desiree Hunter
The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY | It's a heavy-duty cleaning job like no other: ridding Alabama's rivers of the sewage that has seeped out of eight wastewater management facilities run by the prison system — then making sure it doesn't happen again.

The state corrections department, under complaints and lawsuits arising out of heavy-duty pollution, is turning to the private sector this time.

DOC attorney Kim Thomas said

Allen said. "We're trying to get something that's going to fix these problems."

The plants on prison grounds treat the wastewater produced by inmates. The wastewater is supposed to be treated to meet health standards before being released into the surrounding waters. But due to factors including overcrowding and aging equipment, raw sewage and partially treated wastewater is often released, leading to environmental damage, broken coves and lawsuits.

"Currently the [corrections] department is in the sewage business in a way because DOC operates and maintains those plants," Thomas said. Under the department's plan, the private operator will take on the financial responsibilities and the department will be a customer.

The transfers will place the responsibility of complying with ADEM codes on the operators.

"It's not like we're sitting back and not paying any attention, but just the management and the way they will be more on the vendor as opposed to us," Thomas said.

"When you go to the agency's proposal request, vendors will lease and improve the equipment at the prison sites and pay DOC a percentage of any profits they make from treating waste from other clients in the areas they service with the prison plants.

The privatization model was adopted at Donaldson prison in Jefferson County when DOC turned it over to Alabama Utility Service last year.

SEE SEWAGE | 2B

STORMS

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The coastal counties of Baldwin, Mobile and Escambia have been affected in recent years by Hurricane Ivan in 2004, and Hurricane Dennis in July 2005, which was followed a month later by Hurricane Katrina. It pummeled the Gulf Coast region and caused an estimated \$75 billion in damage.

Hurricane experts are predicting another strong season this year. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecast an 80 percent chance of above-normal hurricane activity in the 2006 season, which lasts from June 1 to Nov. 30.

The Insurance Information Institute, which presented the poll results Thursday at a "Washly" dinner, D.C., invited Bob Sheets, former director of the National Hurricane Center, to elaborate on the results of the study.

Sheets said he is troubled by the fact that many coastal states have not taken most of the steps recommended for hurricane preparation. Atlantic Coast states such as Connecticut, New York, Maryland and Maine lagged behind the others in the survey index.

"Most people don't want to believe that disaster can happen. That's just human nature," Sheets said Thursday.

The threat of hurricanes has not deterred people from living in coastal communities. Sheets said 77 million people live in coastal counties in the Gulf and Atlantic regions.

Still, only 23 percent of Alabama coastal homeowners surveyed said they don't have flood insurance.

The high risk of hurricane devastation to homes, however,

poses a challenge to residents looking to purchase insurance for their homes.

Hurricanes lead to the largest insurance payouts, according to Michael Trevino, a spokesman for Allstate Insurance. "Two of the largest payouts we have ever made have been in the last 13 years. We're entering a period where hurricanes will continue to be very frequent and very intense."

Dave Rickey, spokesman for Montgomery-based Aflac Insurance, which represents 20 percent of the market in Alabama, said the high risk of natural disaster in coastal counties is problematic when issuing insurance.

"There's a philosophical question that insurance companies face," he said. "Should you customer base bear the increased cost of insurance in coastal areas?"

But Alabama residents do have the option to participate in a "beach" insurance pool, said Ragan Ingram, associate commissioner at the Alabama Department of Insurance, a state regulatory agency.

The number of policies in this pool — which serves as an alternative to insurance policies offered by private companies — nearly doubled since Hurricane Ivan hit in 2004, Ingram said. That hurricane caused nearly \$13 billion in damage and five deaths in Alabama.

There are about 6,000 policies that are part of this pool, and the premium volume has increased from \$5 million to \$9 million since 2001, Ingram said.

Ingram said the market for purchasing coastal homes has "slowed down a little bit," especially on the condo end. Even "big buildings have trouble getting property insurance," he said.

Panning stressed at meeting about disaster response

By Deneasha Edwards Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | U.S. Rep. Artur Davis met Thursday with federal state and local officials to discuss plans for coordinating responses to natural disasters.

"The National Weather Service has predicted this will be the worst hurricane season," said David a Democrat representing the 7th District. "We want to be as prepared as possible."

The roundtable discussion at the federal courthouse included representatives from the National Weather Service, American Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Alabama Emergency Management and Alabama Power. They exchanged information about what has worked well during previous disasters as well as areas that need improvement.

"The best time to come together is before a disaster," said Gibson, a FEMA policy analyst for the state EMA. "By talking and communicating with each other we're prepared before a disaster comes."

Part of the responsibility for emergency response falls to citizens who need to tune in for information, according to James Stefovich, meteorologist-in-charge at the National Weather

Service. Flooding and high winds are common in this region, and could be worse than usual because of the active hurricane season that has been predicted this year, said Stefovich, adding that people don't always understand they need to stay indoors and not drive in bad weather conditions.

"Everyone has a personal responsibility to take care of themselves," he said.

Davis said more should be done to get information to the public before and after a major storm. Other areas for improvement include donation management, coordinating volunteers, updates on daily information and educating local responders before a disaster.

"Some areas we're going to move slow in and some we're going to move fast in," said Stephanie Gibson, regional coordinator of the state EMA for Region 3. "We shared information and identified short-comings, so now we can do good."

Oscar Barnes, executive director of the West Alabama Chapter of the Red Cross, agreed it's a collaborative effort.

"We need to improve the communication line to let the public know where doing our job," he said. "Inform the public what it takes to do our job — it takes all of us."

Tuscaloosa city schools OK chief financial officer contract

By Antwanette Jones Staff Writer

TUSCALOOSA | The Tuscaloosa City Board of Education approved a five-year contract for a chief school financial officer, a new state-mandated job aimed at increasing fiscal accountability.

The contract, which became effective Thursday, will change Pat Conner's title from executive director of finance to chief school financial officer. Conner's salary will increase from about \$91,000 per year to \$95,457 for now, and would increase about \$9,000 in October after state-mandated pay raises take effect.

The changes come after state lawmakers passed an act in March that requires school boards to appoint chief financial officers, eliminating the custodian of school funds position. Another city school employee has the custodial position but will be eliminated.

Board attorney Dave Ryan said that although the city board took this route, other school

boards in the state might opt instead to tack the additional title onto their finance directors' current designation. Although there seemed to be no official deadline by which school boards must make this move, Ryan said other school systems were studying Conner.

In many ways, the duties of the CFO position are similar to those Conner has performed as finance director for more than five years. He will report directly to the school board and be supervised by the board, although he will work under the direct supervision of Superintendent Joyce Levey.

Conner will be responsible for reporting any spending errors or illegal transactions to the board, and could face a misdemeanor charge if he fails to report these types of findings.

The board also approved the resignation of Walter Davis, director of federal programs for the school system, effective July 20. Davis, who has served in the administrative position for about a year, was named principal of Davis-Emerson Middle School, a county school, at a meeting Thursday morning.

ART

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

him," Hutto said. "He's done a lot of things and we're only seeing glimpses of it."

Caloway said that he's done a lot of things in his life. "I only made it second grade. I worked on the railroad, in coal mines, dug wells, worked in cotton mills," he said as he talked about work he never taking his focus off of his drawings.

Walking into the showings from the street, Louise Smith said that Caloway's talent is marvelous. "We'll all be so lucky

to live that long, but to keep that to live that is amazing," Smith said.

Gibson said that she plans on bringing more of the residents from the home to Kentucky to learn to appreciate art. "We can show them that through art they can communicate, whether it's good or bad," Gibson said.

He continued to draw, hunched over his table, almost oblivious to everyone watching him.

"Yeah, I called to draw a coal car," Caloway said.

LOWES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

revenue is a violation of the 1901 Constitution of Alabama, attorney Jay Guin said there are two constitutional amendments and a recent statute that allow cities to sell or lease land or give it away as an incentive. Northport's plan would be legal, he said, because Northport would be paying the store for \$1.1 million in site preparation work.

"Low's is very particular that it follow the laws," Guin added. "They have their own bond council and we'll work through the issues and take advantage of the recent constitutional amendments."

By working the payments over 10 years instead of paying the company upfront, it ensures that the store will stay open in Northport for the next decade. If the store closes, the city pays nothing, Guin said.

Council President Steve Webb said he felt like the \$1.5

million incentive was a good plan.

"They originally wanted in the door working \$2.4 million," Webb said.

Councilman Lorenzo Freeman also liked the incentive plan.

"I think Low's coming to Northport is a great thing and that the incentive package can work," Freeman said.

Before the incentives are official the land must be annexed into the city, which should take about a month, Guin said. A public meeting on the plan will also be held at the Northport City Hall on July 24, the same day the council plans to vote on the plan.

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SEWAGE

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That move was prompted when Black Warrior Riverkeeper, a Tuscaloosa environmental advocacy group, filed a complaint against DOC with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. The group claimed Donaldson had committed more than 1,000 violations of the Clean Water Act since 1999 by discharging sewage into Big Branch and Valley Creek, a tributary of the Black Warrior River.

Nelson Brooke, who heads the organization, said Donaldson once dumped 808,000 gallons of waste water in one day, when its permit allowed only 350,000 gallons of treated waste.

He said things have improved since the prison equipment was taken over by a private firm, but is concerned that it has taken so long for the suit to be filed.

"We think it's great that the state has taken action ... a lot of people have been waiting for this," Nelson said. "I can say that it's definitely been a positive change, but I can't say

Nelson Brooke, who heads the organization, said Donaldson once dumped 808,000 gallons of waste water in one day, when its permit allowed only 350,000 gallons of treated waste.

that it's fixed everything."

To head off action from other environmental groups, the state attorney general's office took over the Donaldson complaint last year and filed similar suits citing violations by water facilities at St. Clair, Drapers Emory, Fountain/Holman and Limestone prisons and at DOC's Farquhar Cattle Ranch and Red Eagle Hooper Farm.

Assistant Attorney General William Little said his office asked for the lawsuit to be put on the administrative docket, meaning it won't be immediately going to trial.

"We realize this is going to take a long time to work out. We're satisfied with the progress they're making," Little said.

Bodies of missing boaters discovered

PENSACOLA, Fla. | Searchers have recovered the bodies of two Pensacola men who disappeared after their boat capsized in Santa Rosa Sound during a July 4 outing.

Landra Saunders, 26 and Jerry Stewart, 47, were found Wednesday in waters off the Gulf Islands National Seashore east of Gulf Breeze.

Three others who were on the 14-foot boat Tuesday afternoon made it safely to shore.

Officials said Saunders apparently drowned trying to help Stewart after the boat sank.

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