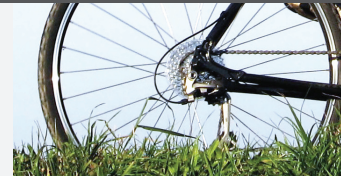




The women's basketball team prepares for the final game of the regular season. Sports, page 10



The Harris College of Nursing and Health Sciences received a \$281,772 grant for increasing graduation rates. Tuesday in News



The Purple Bike Program has experienced a surge in the number of volunteers. Tuesday in News

SPRING BREAK

Violence in Mexico elicit travel concern

By Chilton Tippin
Staff Reporter

Escalating violence in Mexico led the university to issue a travel alert advising spring breakers of the potential dangers in traveling to the country, a university official said.

Lt. Ramiro Abad, head of the campus police patrol division, said the university received the travel alert from the U.S. State Department and passed the information on to students because many travel to Mexico for spring break.

"There's always been problems in certain border towns," Abad said. "Drug activity of-

ten overlays into people who aren't involved, and they get caught into it."

According to the State Department's travel alert, Mexico is caught in a violent conflict between warring drug cartels and Mexican security forces. Innocent bystanders have been killed or injured in drug-related attacks and dozens of Americans have been kidnapped, according to the alert.

Amanda Benson, a sophomore English major, called off her trip to Cancun, Mexico, as a result of the dangers.

"My parents don't think it's going to be safe," Benson said. "I got the alert and sent it to my dad, and he said, 'If your school

is even telling you not to go, you're not going."

The rest of her group plan to follow through with the trip, Benson said.

According to the State Department's travel alert, the most dangerous areas in Mexico are near the U.S. border, where the drug cartels are fighting for control of narcotics smuggling routes.

Ashley Reed, sophomore finance and accounting major, said that even though she is a little worried, she plans on following through with her spring break plans to vacation in Cancun.

"We are just going to stay at the resort

more and not go out at night," Reed said. "So I think we'll be all right."

Reed said her mother has been concerned about her going to Mexico.

"My mom hasn't said she doesn't want me to go," Reed said. "She just wants me to send her a text every night before I go to bed and tell her I'm OK."

Abad said students who are traveling to Mexico should take precautions to ensure safe and enjoyable vacations.

"The best thing to do is know where you are going," Abad said. "Don't go off in remote areas. ... See what's going on and be aware."

CORRECTIONS

An article in Wednesday's Skiff about Facebook's new policy regarding changes to its terms of use included an incorrect title for Chip Stewart. He is an assistant professor of media law in the Schieffer School of Journalism.

An article in Thursday's Skiff about TCU's baseball game against Baylor University incorrectly identified a pitcher who committed a balk that led to TCU's only run of the game. The player was Baylor's Logan Verrett.

TOP DVD SALES

- 1 High School Musical 3: Senior Year
- 2 Body Of Lies
- 3 Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa
- 4 Changeling
- 5 Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa/The Penguins Of Madagascar

— Billboard



Students will be paying for the stimulus for years to come. Opinion, page 3

PECULIAR FACT

STERLING, Va. — A school bus driver has been charged with contributing to the delinquency of a minor after she allegedly offered students cash to throw snowballs at a 13-year-old boy.

— Associated Press

TODAY'S WEATHER

81 62
HIGH LOW
Windy

Tomorrow: Windy
76 / 62

Sunday: Chance of t-storms
78 / 60



Please remember to recycle this newspaper.

PUPPY LOVE



Annie Del Valle, a sophomore international communication major, plays with Daisy, a 9-week-old puppy belonging to her friend. Students took advantage of the warm weather Thursday afternoon to relax at the Campus Commons.

LIBBY DAVIS / Staff Reporter

EDUCATION

Liberal arts disciplines see growth in interest

By Courtney Jay
Staff Reporter

The current economic situation is causing universities across the country to prepare for possible enrollment decreases in their liberal arts departments, but the university's program is not following that pattern, a university official said.

Nowell Donovan, provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs, said enrollment in liberal arts classes has increased.

Andy Schoolmaster, dean of AddRan College of Liberal Arts, said enrollment for the spring semester credit hour generation in the college was up this spring over last spring.

According to the Office of Institutional Research, there was a 3.3 percent enrollment increase from 1,118 undergraduate students in spring 2008 to 1,155 students in spring 2009.

Arthur Aven, sophomore radio-TV-film and history major, said there are generally more students in his history classes than there were last year, but it usually depends on the class size limit.

Aven said liberal arts classes are more like the core of education.

"A lot of times when you get to college, you only take history and English to get the credit," Aven said. "But I feel like people are more interested in it now."

Aven said he originally planned to attend graduate school to become a teacher, but the financial strain of three more years of schooling caused him to change his mind. He said he added a major in radio-TV-film to have more career options.

Kelly Barnes, junior political science major, said he's also noticed more students in his AddRan classes.

SEE LIBERAL ARTS · PAGE 2

MUSIC AND OPERA

Baroque comedy to be performed by students

Elle Cahalan
Staff Reporter

The School of Music and Opera Studio will bring a little piece of Italy to Fort Worth this weekend with a performance of L'Ormino, a 17th-century baroque comedy.

Ten students and one guest artist will perform in the opera, said associate professor Richard Estes, director of the studio and of L'Ormino. Associate professor J. David Brock will conduct the baroque orchestra.

Italian composer Francesco Cavalli wrote L'Ormino, which was originally produced in 1644 in Venice. It is a story of two North African princes, both in love with the same woman who is unhappily married to an older king. With schemes, disguises, unfaithfulness and fights, the opera was renowned in 18th century Europe and has been recreated countless

times, Estes said.

It will be in the original Italian with projected English super titles, Estes said.

Katie Haney, who is earning a master's degree in music and voice performance, plays Mirinda, the maid to the queen in the opera. This will be her sixth leading role at the university.

"It's a real cultural experience that you can get at home," Haney said.

Devin Drerup, a sophomore vocal per-

L'Ormino by Francesco Cavalli

When: 7:30 p.m. today and Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday
Where: Ed Landreth Auditorium
Tickets: Free with TCU ID

SEE L'ORMINDO · PAGE 2

Student filmmakers' projects to get red-carpet treatment

By Lizzy Karoly
Staff Reporter

Programming Council and the Student Filmmakers Association are hosting a red carpet event that will showcase student-produced films on Friday.

Jason Knutzen, senior radio-TV-film major and president of the Student Filmmakers Association, said the event is a premiere of the projects that students have been working on for the past three semesters.

"We want to showcase the effort, work and time students have put into these films," Knutzen said.

The 50-60 members in the SFA are divided into film crews, directors and actors, Knutzen said.

The members serve on at least one crew per semester and produce 3 films.

Each film is allotted a \$500 budget, which comes from membership dues and

SFA Premiere Night

When: 6:30 p.m. tonight
Where: BLUU Auditorium
Admission is free for all students

the SGA activities board, Knutzen said.

The event will feature 13 student-produced films, some of which are award-winning, such as "Amendment II."

Ross Murray, senior radio-TV-film major and co-director of "Amendment II," said the film is a western film set in a grocery store and is about a man rescuing his wife from a store robbery.

Murray said "Amendment II" has been shown at the North Texas College Showcase at AFI Dallas, and the Dark Horse Film Festival where it won best cinematography.

"I'm looking forward to having peo-

SEE SFA · PAGE 2

NEWS & SPORTS

LIBERAL ARTS

continued from page 1

"I feel that in the current economic climate, students are realizing that a liberal arts degree will have more weight with potential employers as it works on writing skills and more discussion-based

"There are jobs; there are opportunities. It's just going to take a longer process than normal."

John Thompson
executive director of Career Services

classes," Barnes said.

However, according to a Feb. 24 article in the New York Times, past economic downturns have led to decreased enrollment in humanities courses because some students fear that the career world does not place a high importance on knowledge of religion, language and history.

The economy does play a role, however, in the number of liberal arts students who decide to attend graduate school, said John Thompson, executive director of Career Services.

About 25 percent of liberal arts students decide to attend graduate school, but the economy will probably increase that number, he said.

Schoolmaster said some liberal arts students choose to attend graduate school during tough economic times to get more credentials before entering the workforce. A liberal arts basis will help prepare students for the future because of the focus on critical thinking and good communication skills, he said.

"A degree in the liberal arts prepares you to go to your professional schools, say for example law school," Schoolmaster said. "It also prepares you to take positions in business."

Some students decide to forgo graduate school to enter the workforce. Thompson said those students should not change their minds because of the economy.

"There are jobs; there are opportunities," Thompson said. "It's just going to take a longer process than normal."

Employers are looking to hire smart and talented employees, but what they really want is someone with experience, Thompson said.

"What we recommend to all students is that they have an internship on their resume before they get in the job market because companies hire experience," Thompson said.

SFA

continued from page 1

ple see the things I have been working on for the last three years," Murray said. "I hope people are entertained by them."

Justin Paxton, freshman pre-business major and the lectures, forums and films director for Programming

Council, said the event will be divided into two sections. The first portion will feature 20-30 minute films and the second portion will showcase films produced as part of a 48-hour experience, during which students filmed, produced and edited a film within 48 hours.

The event is open to the public. Admission is free.

L'ORMINDO

continued from page 1

formance major, said this is a unique opportunity for students to see a full-length opera for free. Drerup plays Eric, Princess Sicile's nurse. This is Drerup's first opera performance.

The cast has been preparing since the beginning of the fall semester, Drerup said. Aside from

working with voice coaches and with Estes on staging, the performers prepared on their own time to invest in their characters, he said.

The cast has also spent time learning about the baroque-style opera. Speaking on pitches, stressing certain words and correcting verb agreement are things the cast is practicing to portray the Italian opera authentically, Drerup said.

SOAK UP THE SUN



LIBBY DAVIS / Staff Reporter

Sam Wuehmann, a freshman dance major, and Andrew Mabry, a sophomore business major, enjoy the sun Thursday at the Campus Commons. While the weather this week was sunny and in the mid 80s, next week's forecast calls for temperatures in the lower 60s with the possibility of rain.

Biden: Success among middle class essential

By Alfonso Chardy
and Evan S. Benn

McClatchy Newspapers

MIAMI — Vice President Joe Biden told a group of labor leaders Thursday that he and the president are committed to helping U.S. workers and the middle class.

"We will judge the success or failure of our administration based on whether or not the standard of living of the middle class has increased," Biden said to the AFL-CIO Executive Committee plus about a hundred other labor supporters. "Neither one of us believes it can get better without you getting stronger."

Biden received a rousing ovation when he mentioned the Employee Free Choice Act that the Obama administration has proposed and took a swipe at corporate executives.

"It's just not right when the average CEO makes \$10,000 more every day than what the average worker makes every year," Biden said.

"We're not asking for anything we don't deserve. We just want to level the playing field again. I have a simple, basic belief: If a union is what you want, a union you're entitled to have."

Persuading Congress to pass the act is one of organized labor's top priorities. The proposed law would require companies to negotiate with a union if a majority of workers sign cards for that purpose. It also would allow for binding arbitration if the two sides were unable to reach an agreement on wages and work-

ing conditions. And it would increase the penalties for companies that violate labor laws by, for example, firing or harassing union supporters.

Supporters say the law would make a more level playing field between unions and employers, make it easier for workers to form a union, increase union membership and therefore increase wages. But business groups are fighting the law, saying it would create government intrusion into the private sector and that in-

"We're not asking for anything we don't deserve. We just want to level the playing field again."

Joe Biden
vice president

creased unionization would lead to hundreds of thousands of jobs being eliminated.

Biden spoke for about 45 minutes before taking questions from labor leaders in a conference room at the resort.

The union's executive council meetings are traditionally closed to the press, but "as part of its unprecedented commitment to transparency, Vice President Biden's office asked that a change to the policy be made so that a pool of print reporters would be allowed to cover the speech," spokeswoman Elizabeth Alexander said.

A-Rod like a headache that won't go away

By Wallace Matthews
Newsday

Alex Rodriguez has a cyst on his hip and a space between his ears.

The cyst could be gone, but the space will be there the rest of his life.

At worst, the former will knock him out only of the World Baseball Classic. At best, the latter will knock him out of the Bronx, for good.

On Sunday, the Yankees packed A-Rod off to play for the Dominican Republic in the WBC. They put 200 welcome miles of desolate turnpike and the Everglades between their camp and their third baseman. And in less than three days, he was back to haunt them again.

Tuesday morning, it was a brainless comment, intended as a compliment for Jose Reyes, that instead came out as a slap at Derek Jeter. In the evening, it was the cyst that threatened to send him back to Tampa and the loving arms of his teammates.

"So much for our three-week vacation," a Yankees employee said Tuesday night.

They've hardly played a week of exhibition baseball and already, it has been all A-Rod, all the time.



Rodriguez

Once again, A-Rod proves to be more trouble than any player possibly can be worth.

No matter how many home runs he hits, how many tickets he sells, how many championships he leads the Yankees to — so far, the answer is none — the 10-year, \$275-million contract the Yankees gave A-Rod after the 2007 season seems destined to go down as the worst deal in sports history.

Think about it. Worst. Deal. Ever. Worse than Andrew Jones to the Dodgers. Worse than Mo Vaughn to the Mets. Worse than Stephen Marbury to the Knicks or Brett Favre to the Jets.

It's not as if he is just an April to October headache. A-Rod is a year-round migraine.

Since the end of last season, we've had The Divorce, The Torre Book, The Steroids Test, The Cousin and The Shady Trainer. We had The Slight and The Cyst. Still to come, two days before the home opener, is The Next Book, Selena Roberts' unauthorized A-Rod bio that is said to be chock full of sala-

rious personal details.

The Yankees already have gone to great lengths to bar A-Rod's cousin Yuri Sucart from their premises. They should have done themselves a favor and barred A-Rod instead.

The dual A-Rod dramas had Yankees staffers desperately trying to contain the damage, calling newspaper editors, alternately to "advise" them that what he had said in the morning ("I wish (Reyes) was playing on our team") was really not a shot at Jeter, and to warn them that "ownership will be taking a close look" at how the story was played.

In truth, everyone in the Yankees' organization, with the possible exception of Hank Steinbrenner, who pulled the trigger on the deal, wishes they never laid eyes on the guy.

In five seasons, A-Rod has hit 208 home runs with 616 RBI for the Yankees. During the same period, the Yankees have gone 10-14 in the postseason, suffered the worst playoff collapse in history, haven't made it out of the first round since 2004, and missed October altogether last season.

They are getting worse with him, not better. Not to mention more expensive and more troublesome.

He and Jeter used to be as tight as Elvis' pants, but by the time he got here, he had to apologize for some dumb remarks he made to Esquire in 2001 and the two never have been chummy since. Now, he has to do it all over again, somehow convince Jeter that saying he wishes Reyes was a Yankee doesn't mean he wishes Jeter weren't, even if they do happen to play the same position.

While he's at it, he might want to apologize to Johnny Damon, who is the club's leadoff hitter only because (in A-Rod's words) Reyes isn't, and then he might want to apologize to Brian Cashman, for tying up a huge chunk of his payroll for a decade, and to the rest of his teammates, for turning their clubhouse into the set of "Desperate Housewives."

But of course, he has apologized, time and again, and somehow, the same things keep happening over and over.

It could be bad luck, like a cyst that pops out on a guy's hip just when he's looking to relax and play baseball for a change.

At least with time, the cyst will heal. But the Yankees will find it easier to fill A-Rod's hole in the lineup than to heal the hole in A-Rod's head.

re Marc able

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The Skiff View

University's worldwide presence continues

Despite ongoing campus-wide budget cuts, the university has maintained its commitment to providing students with unique and valuable academic experiences and recently established a partnership with Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

TCU's newest exchange program will provide study opportunities for students in a variety of disciplines.

Founded as an engineering school in 1981, Nanyang now offers programs in areas such as art, communication and business, so applicants are not going to be limited by their major.

They will also not be limited by their foreign language skills, or lack thereof. Singapore is unique among study abroad destinations because English is the primary language in the city. Those who choose to participate in the program will not face a difficult language barrier, and they will get the perk of living in a city that is rich in culture and steeped in Asian traditions.

Studying in Singapore will be a smart choice for students in several fields, and particularly in business, because Asia continues to grow as an influential power in the world economic market.

But the benefits of the new exchange program will extend far beyond the group of students that choose to enroll at Nanyang. Students from Nanyang will also enroll at TCU and have the opportunity to share their culture with those on campus and learn about the culture of American college students as well.

The program will also further establish TCU's international presence and recognition.

Already known for strong study abroad programs, the university was not complacent about its lineup. Its commitment to expand the study abroad opportunities for students, even amid the nation's economic downturn, is admirable.

News editor Logan Wilson for the editorial board.

The Skiff View represents the collective opinion of the editorial board.

'Bachelor' ending reflects poor societal love attitudes



VLORA BOJKU

In one of the most romantic endings yet on ABC's "The Bachelor," Jason Mesnick declared his love for Melissa Rycroft, proposed to her and bestowed her with the coveted final rose. He said he was the "happiest man in the universe" and couldn't wait to start his life with Rycroft.

Flash forward to "After the Final Rose" and you find a completely different Jason.

"After the Final Rose" is normally a segment where the new couple shares their love and future plans. The audience oohs and aahs at the couple and hopes against all hope the two will actually last.

Unfortunately, in what may have been real or staged, this segment was quite different than expected.

Mesnick told Rycroft on national television even though he believed at the time he had "no doubts about putting a ring on her finger" and about their future together, the past six weeks hadn't been what he envisioned and everything felt completely different for him.

He admitted he couldn't stop thinking about Molly.

Rycroft seemingly could not comprehend Jason's declarations, and asked why he couldn't fight for them. Millions of fans who watched the

show are now questioning Mesnick's ethics.

In the real world, when all the cameras, makeup and lighting crews are gone, relationships take effort. Sharing your life with another is not something that comes easily. If it were, then we wouldn't have a 50 percent divorce rate here in the United States.

The fact that Mesnick was indecisive enough to toy with two women's hearts is unforgivable. He publicly broke up

In the real world, when all the cameras, makeup and lighting crews are gone, relationships take effort. Sharing your life with another is not something that comes easily.

with his fiance on a show he was being paid to do, allowing America to see her heartbreak and what seemed to be genuine shock.

Could he not have waited awhile for the time to pass and break up with her in private like almost every other Bachelor?

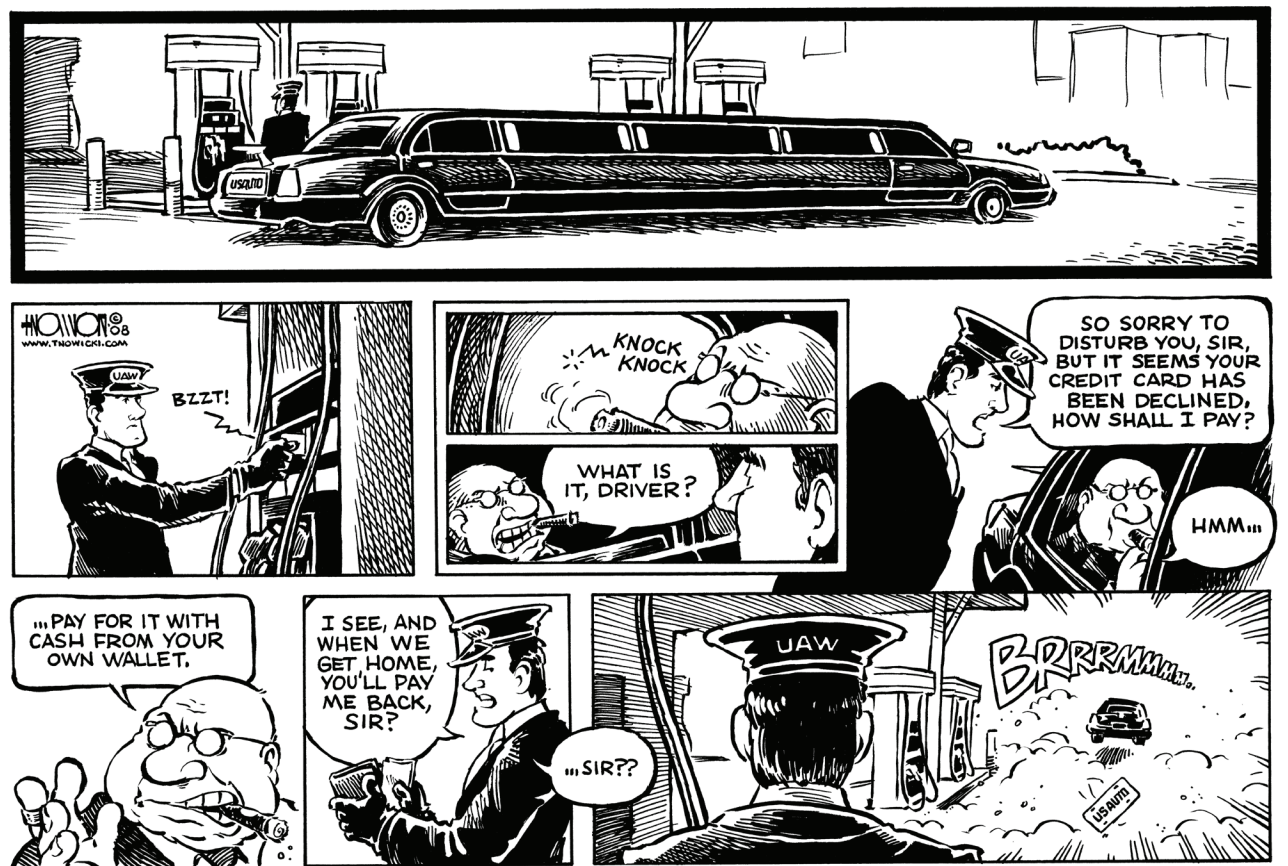
So now, Mesnick, who has dragged his young son along with him all the way, is in a relationship with Molly.

At least she will have the good fortune to be dumped in private, as Jason has clearly shown he does not know what he wants.

Vlora Bojku is a junior business major from Colleyville.



SXC.HU



Terrence Nowicki is an editorial cartoonist for the Western Front at Western Washington University.

Stimulus spending unsustainable



ASHLEY TAMBUNGA

America is nowhere near the conditions of the Great Depression.

So why are we spending like there's an economic boom?

When logic tells us budgets should be tightened and debts should be paid, is the solution really to drastically increase our deficit by spending more? Everyone would love to spend like we're back in the Reagan administration, but the fact of the matter is that we're spending like we're still in the Bush administration. Spend now, pay for it later, seems to be the new American way. Federal spending this year is already \$900 billion more than expected, and President Barack Obama plans to spend \$4.9 trillion in 2018, \$550 billion more than what was predicted.

And who will be paying for this? That's right. You and me; the next generation.

It seems that Obama wants to change the way Americans view the government. He does plan to abolish the subsidized loans and gain access for students to borrow directly from the government. For incoming college students, this opportunity will be very beneficial. But the master plan

is to spend \$3.55 trillion in the 2010 fiscal year, which sounds good to me, I'd love the government to help me get out of debt. But this is a deficit in itself, and it's just like getting vaccinated. At the time, it's a boost for the body, but without taking habitual care of the body, sickness will strike again. A shot is a temporary fix, and with Obama's plan to cut that shortfall in half by the end of his term, on top of a \$1.4 trillion current deficit, I don't see all faring well for taxpayers.

Before you take the bait on all the "free money" that the government is offering through national health care and a stimulus deal for the housing industry, just remember that we are all going to be paying for this sooner or later.

Don't get me wrong, I'd love the opportunity to get \$8,000 from the government to buy my first house. But the fact that I'm already in debt with student loans, facing a hard time getting a job out of college, and will be unable to maintain the house on a low salary after 2009 makes me

think this might be counterproductive. The \$8,000 must be spent in 2009 toward a new house purchase and the owner is obligated to pay it back (though it's seen as tax credit) if the owner does not live there at least three years. This replaces the bill that gave a \$7,500 tax credit under the Bush administration that needed to be paid back on a 15-year schedule. But this bill isn't going to help any of us already getting government assistance for our higher education, although I'm certain we'd all like to own a home after graduation. Again, the administration seeks to soothe our wounds now by packing on debt that we shouldn't think about until later; later affects students immediately after graduation.

Obama has the nation's best interest at heart and recognizes deficit is inevitable. But Bush's deficit is now Obama's deficit, and it is now his responsibility.

What spending is really necessary in order to "put our nation on sound fiscal footing," as Obama said in his presidential message? I have faith in his capability to govern our nation, but I am disheartened to know that I'll be paying for benefits I'm not qualified to receive.

Before you take the bait on all the "free money" that the government is offering through national health care and a stimulus deal for the housing industry, just remember that we are all going to be paying for this sooner or later.

Ashley Tambunga is a junior English major from Fort Worth.

Prehistoric finds among of joys of science

The journal Nature reported recently that huge snakes, stretching up to 43 feet long and weighing 2,500 pounds, thrived on Earth 60 million years ago, after the dinosaurs died off.

Our first thought was, how could we not have known for eons that snakes this big — twice the length of the biggest anacondas and pythons around today — once slithered on our planet?

What we don't know yet about the life and times of this planet could fill volumes. Heck, we don't even know about all the species that share Earth with us today. Biologists believe the number of undiscovered insect species is larger than the number that have been identified and cataloged.

Scientists from the California Institute of Technology recently revealed they had discovered three species of sea life more than a mile beneath the ocean surface near Tasmania. Caltech's Jess Adkins, the leader of the expedition, described them as "carnivorous and Seuss-like."

A couple of years ago scientists from the American group Conservation International discovered what they described as a "lost world" of bird, animal and plant species in remote New Guinea.

And we've just discovered that Earth once was home to a snake as long as a bus.

Snakes need heat from their environment to power their metabolism. Thus a hotter climate means larger snakes. This find reveals the resiliency of ecosystems that face extreme heat in a carbon-dioxide-rich tropical environment, and may tell us something about the likely impact of global warming.

What else is hidden in the mists of disappearing rain forests ... and the other nooks and crannies of this planet? What a joy to be a scientist, engaged in the quest to find out.

This editorial appeared in the Chicago Tribune on Wednesday. It was distributed by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.



SXC.HU

NEWS

Federal plan aims to protect Florida's reefs, its ecosystem

By David Fleshler
Sun Sentinel

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — A few miles from the southeast Florida coast, at a depth of crushing pressure and frigid temperatures, lies an eerie world of snowy coral, undiscovered forms of life and rock towers thrusting through ink-dark water.

Although the deep ocean reefs of the southeastern United States rose before the pyramids, their existence had only been hinted at by geological evidence until ruggedly built submersibles reached them in the late 1990s. Now, before commercial fishing damages a still-pristine ecosystem, the federal government is considering protecting a stretch of ocean floor from the Florida Keys to North Carolina, an area six times the size of Yellowstone National Park.

The South Atlantic Fishery Management Council plans to vote in June on banning bottom trawls, bottom longlines and other destructive fishing gear

across 23,000 square miles, an area thought to encompass the largest deepwater reef system in the world. Although elsewhere such reefs have been mown down by commercial fishing gear, the reefs being considered for protection have sustained little impact from human activities, and the council wants to act before any damage takes place.

"We want to protect these very fragile, vulnerable ecosystems that we know very little about," said Myra Brouwer, a biologist with the Fishery Management Council. "They grow very slowly, and they're thousands of years old."

More remote than the polar ice caps or the Himalayan peaks, the deep ocean has surrendered its secrets slowly. It took the use of submarine-hunting sonar, for example, for scientists in the 1950s to map out the oceans' submerged mountain ranges. And while they suspected the existence of reefs in the ocean depths, they only acquired the tools to study them with the development of deep-diving submersibles, multibeam

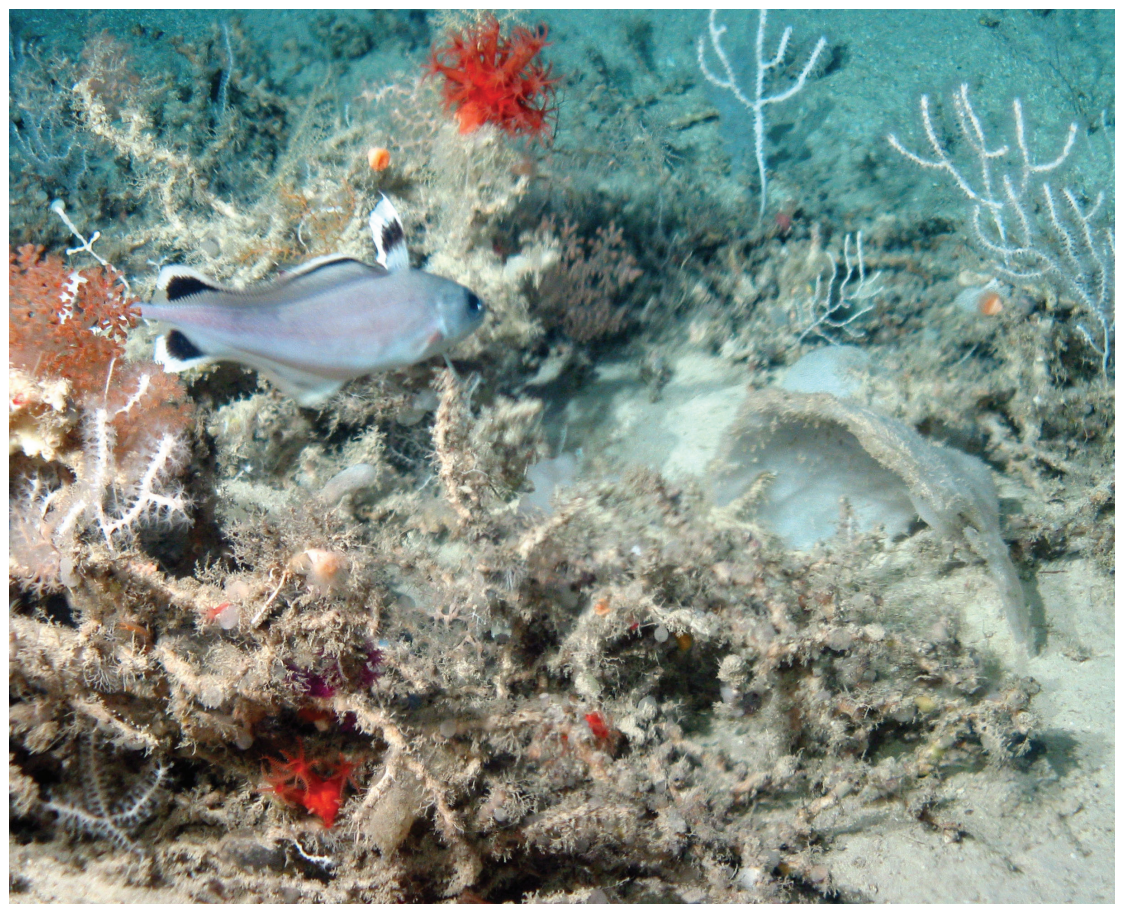
sonar and remotely operated vehicles.

John Reed, senior scientist at the Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University, discovered many of the deepwater reefs off Florida riding the submersible Johnson-Sea-Link 2,500 feet below the surface, where no sunlight penetrates and the water temperature drops into the 30s. During undersea trips from Jacksonville to Miami, he counted about 400 coral mounds, one reaching a height of 400 feet, mostly composed of a delicately branched, snow-white coral called *Lophelia pertusa*. He saw eels, scorpion fish and several examples of the huge sixgill shark, a primitive species that hunts near the surface at night and spends the day in the depths.

During a dive off southeast Florida, he peered through the submersible's acrylic bubble as the craft inched toward the coast. Searchlights swept the black water, revealing only small fish and sandy bottom. But as the craft came within 15 miles of the hotels and condominium towers of Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Boca Raton, the ocean floor sloped sharply upward, in a rugged, rubble-strewn ascent of more than 1,000 feet.

At the top, about 900 feet below the surface, a lush undersea landscape of sea fans, black corals, sponges and other creatures covered the reef called the Miami Terrace. New species of fish, crab and coral have been found in these reefs, and scientists expect to find many more.

"We really don't understand a lot about the ecology of these deepwater reefs," Reed said. "We're still learning what lives there — what animals, what fish."



JOHN REED / Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University via MCT
Codling fish shot from the Johnson-Sea-Link submersible can be seen. A federal government plan aims to protect Florida's reefs before a precious ecosystem is ruined.

Despite encompassing a vast stretch of ocean floor, the plan is not particularly controversial. A small amount of commercial fishing takes place along the periphery of the reef systems, mostly for shrimp and golden crab. The new rule would allow the fishing to continue, although it would freeze the footprint of the golden crab fishery in place.

But a group of recreational fishermen called deep-droppers, who catch fish at depths of 400 feet to 3,000 feet, are worried that the protected zone could be a prelude to restrictions on their activities. Mark Sagerholm, president

of the 100 Fathom Fishing Club, said he supports protecting the coral, so long as it doesn't lead to restrictions on deep-dropping.

"Our real concern is any time someone says, 'Hi, I'm from the government and I'm here to help,'" he said. "Even though right now there's no restrictive language against deep-dropping, we're concerned that later restrictive language will be put in."

Unlike famous landscapes such as the South Dakota badlands, Florida Everglades or Amazon rain forest, the reefs of the deep ocean can't be experienced except through photographs and

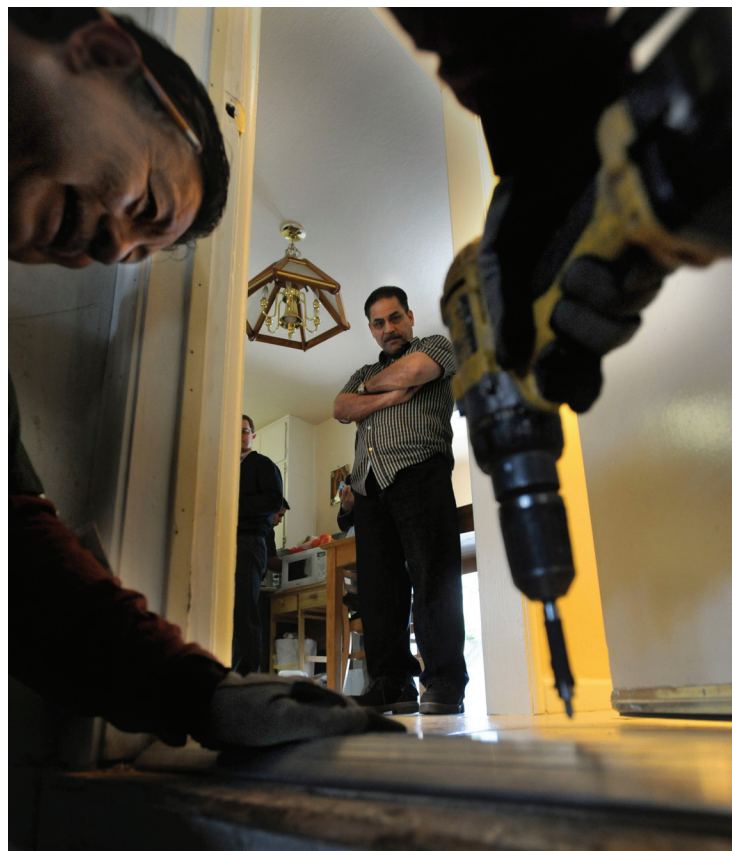
videos. Pressed for an explanation of why we should care about protecting them, scientists talked of the pharmaceuticals that could be developed from deep reef species and spoke of our duty to prevent harm to ecosystems with their own integrity and beauty, whether or not we can see them directly.

"This is a unique ecosystem that occurs right in our backyard, and we should act as stewards," Reed said. "They're very similar to ancient redwood forests. Once they're clear-cut, they're not going to grow back in our lifetimes."



JOHN REED / Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute at Florida Atlantic University via MCT
An Anthonia fish shot from the Johnson-Sea-Link submersible

Homeowners stand to gain from energy-efficiency stimulus funds



BRYAN PATRICK / Sacramento Bee via MCT
Home owner Santos Espinosa, 51, center, watches as Gregorio Tostado, from Community Resource Project, puts in a door threshold at his Sacramento home. The federal stimulus package pumps an unprecedented amount of money into energy efficiency, particularly for low-income residents.

By Jim Downing
McClatchy Newspapers

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — In Santos Espinosa's small beige house near Arden Fair Mall last week, a crew installed fluorescent light-bulbs, swapped out an old water heater and filled drafty gaps beneath doors.

For thousands of Sacramento-area households, this sort of work stands to be the biggest direct benefit of the federal economic stimulus package. The bill pumps at least \$20 billion into energy efficiency, by far the largest such investment in U.S. history.

Many details of how the stimulus funds will be spent have yet to be finalized, but the bill outlines a bonanza for homes, businesses and the public sector.

Grants targeting low-income households like Espinosa's will jump at least fivefold. All homeowners will get a tax credit (up to \$1,500) that's worth up to 30 percent of a project's cost three times as much as is currently offered. Cities and counties will get millions to cut waste in their buildings and fund efficiency initiatives.

Sacramento-area universities are hoping for grants to expand efficiency research. Local venture capitalists say the funding should help new green-tech companies get off the ground.

Economists say an investment in efficiency delivers a double benefit. Spending on installation boosts manufacturers, hardware suppliers and construction workers. Lower utility bills give households and businesses more money to pour back into the local economy. And that local spending, said David Roland-Holst, a professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, delivers far more job-creating punch than money spent on energy, much of which flows out of the state to buy fossil fuels. "It really is a potent stimulus," he said.

Espinosa, a 51-year-old drug and alcohol counselor who lives with his daughter, is hoping the efficiency gains will cut his \$250 monthly utility bill by \$100 or more.

"I'm pretty sure it's going to be a lot," he said. "When I shut the heater off, [the house] just sucks the cold air in." He said he plans to spend the savings on car repairs and food.

The crew at the house works for Community Resource Project Inc., a Sacramento nonprofit that administers federal low-income weatherization funds in Sacramento, Sutter and Yuba counties.

Deputy Director Joan Graham said the group hired 20 installation workers in January to keep up with a federal funding increase passed last fall and expects to add more once it's clear how much the stimulus package will deliver.

In Espinosa's kitchen, Juan Mendoza worked his way along the wall, installing gaskets behind the cover plates on the electrical outlets to stop air leaks. Mendoza, hired last summer, said the work is a step up from his previous position installing office cubicles. "You learn so much," he said.

Graham said she received more than a thousand applications in her last round of hiring. Many applicants were experienced construction workers who in better times made more than the \$13 to \$18 per hour, plus benefits, that Community Resource Project pays new hires.

"There were a lot of very skilled people out there," she said. "Usually we don't get that."

The federal low-income weatherization program gets \$5 billion under the stimulus bill. California will see about \$216 million, according to one estimate, and the Sacramento area will likely get more than \$10 million. That's enough to cover a few thousand homes, likely only a fraction of those eligible, Graham said. The Department of Energy hasn't released income qualification standards.

Local heating and air-conditioning contractors stand to get new business from the increased homeowner's tax credit for efficiency upgrades.

"Everybody's starved for cash right now, so this is some pretty exciting stuff," said Rick Wylie, president of Sacramento's Beutler Corp.

New incentives, though, will have to reverse consumers' recent cutbacks in spending. The Sacramento Municipal Utility District lopped \$10 million, or 22 percent, off the 2009 budget for its efficiency-incentive program after demand fell in the second half of 2008. Among other things, the program provides rebates on energy-efficient appliances and air-conditioners.

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Financial scams spread with suffering economy

By Tony Pugh

McClatchy Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Researchers say people are more susceptible to investment scams such as Ponzi and pyramid schemes after going through adverse life events — a job loss, foreclosure or some other financial hardship.

So it's not surprising that many experts think the nation's deepening economic crisis is creating a whole new universe of potential scam victims every day. In fact, it makes perfect sense.

An estimated \$6 trillion in wealth has been lost since the housing bubble burst. Mutual funds suffered \$191 billion in losses in January alone, according to the Investment Company Institute.

And the average 401(k) account fell 27 percent from about \$65,000 to about \$48,000 in the year that ended in December 2008, according to the Employment Benefit Research Institute.

As more consumers look to shore up these and other dwindling assets, regulators and watchdog groups are warning them to look out for foreclosure rescue schemes, shady debt settlement firms and investment scams touting profits that seem too good to be true.

"Nothing concerns me more than the cold hard reality that hardworking Americans are being swindled," Sen. Jay Rockefeller, D-W.Va., said last week at a consumer protection hearing of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation. "The more people in distress, (the) more people want to take advantage of people in distress. It's really quite stunning."

High-profile investment schemes have received national attention recently due to the fraud charges against financiers

Bernard Madoff and R. Allen Stanford, who are both accused of running multibillion-dollar Ponzi schemes disguised as legitimate investment firms.

Ponzi schemes, using promises of quick profits, collect money from new investors to pay supposed returns to other investors. Pyramid schemes focus on recruiting new investors to make money. After paying an "enrollment fee," the new member earns money by getting a cut of the enrollment fees paid by people he or she has recruited, who must in turn find new participants to pay the fee.

Both schemes play on investors' greed and trust. And older people, who've amassed more savings, are the typical victims of choice.

However, people who've cashed in their stocks and 401(k)s due to recent market losses also are vulnerable, said Fred Joseph, the president of the North American Securities Administrators Association.

"Two or three months later they'll decide, 'Now I need to do something with this pot of money I have.' That's when they're most at risk because that 8 percent, 10 percent, 20 percent (return on investment) sounds really good and they're very susceptible to getting conned into something," Joseph said.

Joseph, who's also Colorado's securities commissioner, said that fraud investigations are up 10 percent to 15 percent this year in that state, where the scams seem to follow the headlines.

Gas and oil schemes flourished during last year's oil price spike, Joseph said. This year, he's seeing gold mine investment scams trying to take advantage of the lure of higher gold prices.

While profit-starved investors are vulnerable to these scams in

the current economic downturn, there is a bright spot: Ponzi and pyramid schemes are also more likely to unravel in bad economic times as more investors try to pull their money out and find there's none there.

That's what happened to James M. Nicholson, whose investment

"Nothing concerns me more than the cold hard reality that hardworking Americans are being swindled,"

Jay Rockefeller
Sen. D-W.Va.

firm in Pearl River, N.Y., allegedly defrauded hundreds of investors out of millions of dollars by misrepresenting the value and profits of numerous hedge funds he managed.

The Securities Exchange Commission claimed Nicholson even created a phony accounting firm to provide bogus statements about the funds' financial health.

Last week, the SEC moved to freeze the assets of Nicholson and his company, Westgate Capital Management. Calls to Westgate weren't answered and messages couldn't be left.

With consumer desperation creating more opportunity for fraud, the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority issued an "Investor Alert" last week on how to avoid investment scams. The information outlines a variety of tactics commonly used in securities fraud. It also provides links to sites that help people conduct background checks on investment professionals, learn more about the investments they're considering and how to file a complaint if necessary.

"Using these tools can help investors shut the door on any con

artists who might come knocking," said John Gannon, the regulatory authority's senior vice president for investor education.

At the Senate hearing on consumer protections, Rockefeller, the committee chairman, cited concern over a number of growing abuses in the area of personal finance. These include foreclosure rescue scams that collect hefty fees, but don't keep families in their homes; and debt collectors who use deceptive practices, such as threatening consumers with imprisonment, to compel payment.

Travis Plunkett, the legislative director for the Consumer Federation of America, testified that some debt-settlement firms that collect fees often fail to negotiate reductions on credit-card debt. While Pamela Jones Harbour, a commissioner with the Federal Trade Commission, said that some credit repair companies promise to remove negative in-

formation, such as delinquencies, from credit reports, even though they can't do so if the information is accurate.

"Unfortunately, experience teaches that some bad actors will seek to take advantage of consumers when they are down," Jones Harbour said.

And people are indeed down. In the third quarter, the percentage of borrowers who are at least 60 days late on their mortgage loans increased for the seventh straight quarter, Harbour told senators last week. And in January, late payments on credit cards hit record levels.

To better protect consumers, Harbour said that new laws are needed. Specifically, she recommended giving the FTC rulemaking authority to declare certain financial practices unfair or deceptive; allowing the FTC to obtain civil penalties for dishonest acts and to sue in federal court to obtain those penalties.

Politicians use Twitter in growing numbers

By James Oliphant

Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON — John McCain took to the Senate floor Monday and talked about twittering.

For the increasingly popular networking tool, it was either a moment that marked the technology's full-bore entry into the cultural mainstream — or an undeniable sign that Twitter is now about as hip as Pac-Man.

It was just last year that McCain, then the Republican nominee for president, was frequently mocked by late-night talk show hosts for his lack of technological savviness. But McCain 2.0 is now plugged in, sending multiple tweets, as Twitter messages are called, several times a day.

"We have the most followers out of any congressman," boasts his spokeswoman, Brooke Buchanan, "topping over 122,000." Tweet, follow, or get out of the way. That seems to be the new mantra that has consumed Capitol Hill in early days of the Obama administration.

While the rest of the nation is following the stimulus debate and the bank bailout, the city's political and media classes have become obsessed with Twitter, the social networking site that allows you to send short messages to followers, who view them on a Web site or on their cell phones. Dozens of members of Congress have been using the service.

They say it helps connect them directly with constituents. The value of that, of course, depends on how much unfiltered comment you really want from your elected officials.

"Jindal is weird," tweeted Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., while watching the Louisiana governor speak on national television last week in response to President Obama's address to Congress. "I can't believe Jindal. Such a sad contrast with President. Doesn't even look or sound good, to say nothing about content." Blumenauer was twittering throughout Obama's speech, as were several other lawmakers, including Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo., who later, she told her followers, was upbraided by her mother for it.

"OK, OK. Mom's upset that I

was rude at Pres speech re: tweets," McCaskill later tweeted. "For the record I tweeted bfor, at very beginning, & after speech. I wanted to listen."

Twitter's very nature means that elaboration is impossible. Messages can't exceed 140 characters. But you can transmit them instantly to your followers. Rep. Pete Hoekstra, R-Mich., was slammed by some for sending tweets during a trip to Iraq and Afghanistan last month that critics said compromised the delegation's security. Hoekstra said he revealed no sensitive information.

Some members such as McCaskill frequently tweet about their daily lives, but others simply use the medium for sending out information you would find in press releases.

Why do they do it? Here's McCaskill's explanation in her own, uh, words: "Try to tweet 3-4 times a day. Combo of policy, personal, schedule, politics. Want to be candid and give a real glimpse of my life and job." McCain, who began twittering last month, spent Monday tweeting lists of what he called "pork" in the omnibus spending bill under consideration in the Senate.

"\$1,427,250 for genetic improvements of switchgrass — I thought switchgrass genes were pretty good already, guess I was wrong," the senator tweeted.

Congressional tweets range from the mundane — "Happy to announce nearly \$4 million in the recovery package for the William antic, Torrington, and Norwalk community health centers," tweeted Sen. Chris Dodd, D-Conn., — to the confusing: "Great afternoon watching skijoring in Wisdom, Montana," wrote Rep. Denny Rehberg, R-Mont.

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich is a regular twitterer, and he believes it is a useful political tool. "Using Twitter to bypass traditional media and directly reach voters is definitely a good thing," Gingrich said in an e-mail interview. "Members should avoid twittering from the House floor, though."

Don't twitter on the floor. Wonder what Henry Clay would think of that advice?

"OMG. Spinning in grave," Clay might have tweeted.

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NEWS

Sudan expels aid agencies

By Shashank Bengali
McClatchy Newspapers

NAIROBI, Kenya — A day after an international court called for his arrest on war-crimes charges, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on Thursday took his anger out on Western humanitarian agencies, expelling 13 major relief groups working in Darfur and vowing to defy the arrest order.

Appearing before thousands of cheering supporters in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, a defiant Bashir dismissed the International Criminal Court's charges that he masterminded atrocities against civilians in Darfur. He called the accusations part of a Western plot to carry out regime change in the huge, oil-rich African nation.

"We are telling the colonizers, 'We are not submitting to you. We will not kneel,'" Bashir shouted.

While the 65-year-old president strutted and waved a walking stick to thrill the crowd, 13 leading aid groups that provide water, health care, education and other basic services in Darfur's overcrowded refugee camps were preparing to cease operations and leave the country under orders from Sudanese authorities. Sudanese officials accused the groups of cooperating with court investigators, charges that the agencies denied.

The expulsion orders were a drastic show of force by a government in crisis.

The humanitarian operation in Darfur is the largest and most complex in the world, and relief officials warned of devastating consequences for many of the 4.2 million people in Darfur who depend on outside agencies for services that the central government doesn't provide.

Without these agencies, aid workers said, food aid deliveries for 700,000 people are jeopardized, water pumps could run dry and rust, refugee schools could close, vital medicines could run out, pregnant women could lack pre-

natal care — and, in general, life in one of the most forbidding patches of Africa will become even more desperate.

"The population of Darfur is now being punished by its own government in response to the arrest warrant," said Tawanda Hondora of Amnesty International, an independent advocacy group. "The Sudanese government is effectively holding the entire civilian population of Darfur hostage."

The expulsions appeared to have been planned and coordinated far in advance of Wednesday's announcement by the court of an arrest warrant for Bashir on five

"The population of Darfur is now being punished by its own government in response to the arrest warrant."

Tawanda Hondora
Amnesty International

counts of crimes against humanity and two counts of war crimes. Shortly after the decision, representatives of several relief agencies said they were summoned to a meeting in Khartoum, where the government Humanitarian Aid Commission, which issues licenses for relief operations, said their licenses were being revoked immediately.

At several agency offices, authorities confiscated telephones, computers and radios, relief officials said. The groups were also ordered to furnish bank account details and to pay off Sudanese staff members and terminate their contracts.

"It was very clear from the commission that there will be no possibility of a reversal," said a senior United Nations relief official in Sudan who didn't want to be named criticizing government policy. "We

are told it's going to be extremely difficult to revoke because it comes from the highest senior staff of the government."

The expulsions targeted branches of Care International, Doctors Without Borders, the International Rescue Committee, MercyCorps, Oxfam, Save the Children and other agencies. U.N. officials are scrambling to fill in the gaps but other agencies are already stretched beyond their capacities.

In some parts of Darfur, the impact will be felt immediately. In Kalma, one of the largest camps in southern Darfur, an outbreak of meningitis, a potentially fatal spinal inflammation, could go unchecked because of the expulsion of Doctors Without Borders, the only medical agency in the area.

Agencies that have built and maintained pumps for drinking water in Kalma have also been expelled, the U.N. official said, and if the pumps break down they might not be replaced.

"Tomorrow some IDPs (internally displaced people) are going to wake up without water in Kalma," the official said.

Sudan has expelled some aid workers before, often reinstating their permits eventually, and many agencies had braced for a backlash from an arrest warrant for Bashir. Never have so many groups been ordered to leave at once, however.

African leaders continued to back Bashir, with the African Union announcing that it would send a high-level delegation to the U.N. Security Council to push for a one-year postponement of the warrant. In his own country, as well, even Bashir's critics said that no one in Sudan would dare oppose him.

"Nobody now has the courage to criticize the president," said Ghazi Suliman, an opposition figure and leading human rights lawyer. "Now in Sudan that is treason. Omar al-Bashir is now more strong than ever."



Yearbook staff members Sara Lemmon, 18, left, and Amibeth Allman, 18, work on the yearbook at Tallmadge High School on Feb. 5 in Tallmadge, Ohio. Fewer students turn pages of yearbooks in the digital age.

Fewer students look at yearbooks

By Kim Hone-Mcmahan
Akron Beacon Journal

AKRON, Ohio — Kristen Thompson grinned when chatting about how her parents sometimes reminisce about their school days, flipping through the pages of the yearbook.

For those of us who bought the annuals, the headshot of the class clown can thrust us back to the time when he and some of his mischievous pals lifted the principal's Volkswagen Beetle and carried it into the school's gymnasium. Or maybe the photo of the pimply-faced kid makes you quiver, recalling the boogers he stuck beneath the desk in biology class. And how about that heartthrob with the sky-blue eyes and dimpled chin? The one who used to tell all of the girls that he worked for Ohio Bell, and it was his job to gather their numbers for the telephone book?

Whether good or gross, the yearbook is filled with memories of the times that shaped many of our lives. But in some parts of the country, it has been done away with, or is at risk of demise.

"It's the only thing from high school that you'll probably have 20 years from now," said Thompson, a staff member of the Tallmadge High School yearbook who wasn't pleased to learn that in some schools, including at least one in the Houston area, the annual is no more.

Some say it's the economy, others say it's because of the popularity of social networks like Facebook. And then there are the teens who simply don't have a loyalty to their school — usually no fault of their own.

About 275 students at Akron, Ohio's Garfield High School are expected to get this year's annuals. The cost of the book is included in senior dues. Yearbook adviser Jeffrey Davis said he expects about 245 Garfield pupils not to pay those dues, meaning just 30 underclassmen will have ordered the books.

In addition to students not having an extra \$55 to pay for the books, he believes the issue of transience has an impact on sales. As of the first of February, five months after school began, the teacher had already experienced a 20 percent

turnover in his student roster.

"A couple of my kids are in their third school this year," he explained. "That makes it very tough for many inner-city students to develop an allegiance to their high school. Why would a student buy a Garfield yearbook if there's a chance he will be at East by the end of the year?"

Davis noted that most of the turnover is the result of parent or guardian relocations, but there are other factors such as open enrollment, which allows students to transfer to other schools in the district.

There are, of course, some exceptions, but depending on the school, sales are generally down as little as 5 percent in some areas to as much as 50 percent in others.

There was a significant drop in sales during the 1980s, when enrollment at some schools declined. A concentrated effort was put in place to market the books differently. Companies that produced them took over, helping with promotions and sales. By the late '90s, their efforts were paying off.

Today, as Davis mentioned, the lack of cash is one factor that's keeping sales down at some schools.

"I'm not getting a yearbook because they are just too darn expensive," explained Sammy Parks, a 15-year-old who attends Revere High School.

It's a sentiment that was repeated by others, particularly underclassmen. But for many seniors in our area, particularly those in suburban districts where switching schools is less frequent, having a flashback to their teenage years neatly bound together in a handsome package remains important.

"I want to be able to remember my classmates in the future," explained Green senior Todd Starkey. "The yearbook crew always makes them great."

That's what Eric Poston, student editor of the yearbook staff at Green, likes to hear. About half of the high school student body has bought yearbooks, a number that has stayed consistent the past few years.

"I am grateful that students think so highly of the yearbook staff," a proud Poston said. "The entire staff puts a lot of hard work in the book each day."

Social Networking

If hawking the memory tomes isn't difficult enough during a struggling economy, the popularity of social-networking sites like Facebook can complicate the matter.

The computer site allows anyone to post photos and create albums. It's free and accessible with just a click of a button. But those types of sites might be gone, or at the very least remarkably different, when today's high school seniors are grandparents.

"When I'm 50 years old, I'm not going to have a Facebook," explained Natalie Walker, Tallmadge High School senior and member of the yearbook staff.

"And those sites aren't capturing enough of what's happening inside the schools," added classmate Mercedes Slider.

A list is posted on the wall inside Julie Headrick's classroom at Tallmadge High where her yearbook staff keeps track of the school's stu-

"I wouldn't say the yearbook is dying, but I think we need to tell people why it's alive."

Jim Barbour
Herff Jones employee

dents in an attempt to get everyone's photo in the book at least once. It's a good marketing strategy.

To get kids to buy the yearbooks, said Jim Barbour of Herff Jones, which produces yearbooks in our area, printers must help schools develop more viable marketing approaches.

Kids are relying less on e-mails and more on text messages to get information, so a teen might receive a text from a pal on the yearbook staff reminding him that it's time to order.

It takes much more these days to hawk the book than a couple of kids sitting in the cafeteria at lunch. Those who are true to their school need to hear why the annuals are something they will want someday.

"I wouldn't say the yearbook is dying, but I think we need to tell people why it's alive," Barbour said.

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Flight crew in it for the long haul for Afghan trip

By Edward Colimore
The Philadelphia Inquirer

PHILADELPHIA — The green and white lights in the C-17 Globemaster's massive cargo compartment went dark, replaced by the glow from a string of dim red bulbs.

It is 1 a.m., 30,000 feet over Afghanistan. No sense making the plane an easy target against the dark sky.

"Can I have your attention? We are starting our combat entry," said a voice over a public-address system.

Army troops quickly donned flak jackets, and Air Force crew members strapped on sidearms while the pilots in the armored cockpit put on night-vision goggles to scan the ground for flashes of light that might be gunfire.

Capt. Dave Gaulin guided the mammoth, \$200 million aircraft toward a glowing spot in the clouds, lit by runway lights below.

He and Capt. Chris Zielinski and James Sprys were minutes away from Bagram Air Base, part of a sprawling American military presence in the shadow of the snow-capped Hindu Kush Mountains.

Their plane — flying last week with Army soldiers, Air Force airmen, and tons of supplies — is part of a long lifeline, a kind of Berlin Airlift that sustains the base, the 4,000 airmen at adjacent Camp Cunningham, and other U.S. troops battling the Taliban.

Leaving homes and families in southern New Jersey and Philadelphia, the pilots and crew members regularly make vital flights that take them from McGuire Air Force Base "down-range" to combat areas of landlocked Afghanistan.

Their physically exhausting efforts have become increasingly important as supply lines are threatened: Nearby Kyrgyzstan has asked the United States to leave its base there in six months, and Taliban forces have stepped up attacks on NATO columns and shipping terminals in Khyber and Peshawar in Pakistan.

Making the cargo missions even more crucial is President Obama's approval last month of adding 17,500 troops to the 36,000 already in Afghanistan. Those Marines and soldiers will arrive in a few months as the Taliban begins an expected spring offensive and presidential elections are held in August.

"You just feel that you are part of the bigger picture," 26-year-old Sprys said. "It's easy to think you are a small piece of the puzzle, but when it comes down to it, the stuff we're carrying over into theater is going to be put to use, and the quicker we get it there, the better off it will be."

Simply put, the cargo "helps the guys on the ground do the up-front mission," said 29-year-old Zielinski.

As the three pilots looked from cockpit windows Monday and the C-17 emerged from wispy clouds, they saw runway lights stretching ahead of them. They were flying into the open end of a horseshoe-shaped section of the mountains surrounding the airfield.

"One way in, one way out," Sprys said.

Clumps of snow covered the ground on parts of the base, the temperature was in the 30s, and ground crews waited for the special delivery.

"Welcome to Afghanistan!" Sprys said.

The grueling flights that eventually carried the McGuire Air Force crew more than 13,000 miles to at least three countries began with meticulous planning in New Jersey.

It was late afternoon on Friday, Feb. 20. The six active-duty mem-



LAURENCE KESTERSON / Philadelphia Inquirer via MCT

Sgt. Andrea Eubanks, left, and Maj. Sarah Albrycht, both from the U.S. Army's 709th Military Police Battalion, ride in the cargo hold of the C17 cargo jet on their way to Bagram, Afghanistan on Feb. 22.

bers of the Sixth Airlift Squadron in the 305th Air Mobility Command stood around a long table at the squadron's building at McGuire to go through a full briefing and a checklist of small essentials.

Their six-day mission: Fly to Ramstein Air Base in Germany, Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, and "an undisclosed location in Southwest Asia," then head back to Ramstein and, ultimately, home.

Along the way, the plane would pick up and drop off Army troops and airmen and deliver a jet engine for a KC-135 air-refueling tanker and rotor blades for a CH-53 Marine helicopter.

The crew — including 39-year-old Master Sgt. Brian Cook, 23-year-old Senior Airman Christine Condoleon and 31-year-old Technical Sgt. Stephen Cochling — would fly a C-17 Globemaster III, a gray behemoth, tail number 44128.

"The pressure is on for me, huh?" said Sprys, who was running the mission under the supervision of Gaulin, an instructor pilot and graduate of Syracuse University who has been flying C-17s for about five years.

By 8:27 p.m., with four jet engines revving and the fuselage pulsating with their power, the C-17 blasted down the runway for Germany. Nine hours and 3,384 miles later, it was on its final approach to the huge base there.

"Ramstein is a sight to see," said Sprys, a military brat who graduated from the Air Force Academy.

After an Air Force-mandated rest, the crew members left their motel Sunday in Ramstein Village for the air base — and the next leg of their mission: a 6-hour flight to Bagram.

Amid a dizzying array of cockpit instruments, Zielinski watched Germany fall away beneath the plane as it ascended through gauzy white clouds.

"Night plus fog is good," said Sprys.

"You can't shoot what you can't see," added Gaulin, whose plane was the target of insurgents during a 2005 landing in Iraq.

Fourteen members of the 709th Military Police Battalion — stationed in Germany — were sitting on fold-down seats along the fuselage or sleeping on the floor of the plane when the red lights came on, casting the cargo area in an eerie glow.

In the cargo compartment, Condoleon, a loadmaster, announced the "combat entry" over the public-

address system.

Some of the planes have been fired on as they headed in to land.

The plane — carrying 540,000 pounds of cargo and fuel — touched down without incident at Bagram. A few weeks earlier, another C-17 was badly damaged when it made a wheels-up landing there.

"The most important thing is getting (the cargo) off the jet fast and getting off the ground as soon as possible," said Condoleon.

Such deliveries are especially necessary now because of the pressure on supply lines. More than 300 NATO vehicles and containers were destroyed over the last months in attacks on shipping terminals in Peshawar, Pakistan, and on convoys moving through Pakistan.

About breakfast time Monday, the McGuire crew ended the 1,300-mile flight out of Afghanistan and arrived in "the undisclosed location in Southwest Asia," a sandy, monotone world covered by a massive air base. Crew members bunked in a tent and slept for hours.

By 1:30 a.m. Tuesday, the crew was ready to leave again for the trip back to Ramstein. In the cockpit, crew members put on dark glasses to protect themselves against laser lights that have been trained on the cockpits of planes from the ground.

After about seven hours and 2,500 miles, the Globemaster touched down in Germany. The following day, refueled and deiced, it roared off the runway about 9 a.m. for an eight-hour flight to New Jersey.

The plane flew at about 34,000 feet over white clouds that seemed thick enough to land on.

It passed Newfoundland — where the crew could see ice in the ocean, like broken glass — and eventually headed down the East Coast toward McGuire.

"Ah, it's good to be back in the States!" Zielinski said.

About noon Wednesday, the crew was 3,000 feet over the Pinelands and preparing to land.

"Mission accomplished," said Sprys.

Just another workday for members of the McGuire crew. "We could end up doing this again," said Gaulin, "in a couple weeks."

World Baseball Classic offers sneak peak at players



BILLY WESSELS

The World Baseball Classic is officially underway after Japan knocked off China 4-0 early Thursday morning.

These games might not really matter to your fantasy leagues, but you do get a chance to see some of your favorite players face off against some live pitching with something on the line.

Seeing Ichiro Suzuki go 0-5 was a little disheartening, but it was just the first game of the Classic and he hadn't played at all for the Mariners in spring training yet, so don't freak out owners. I think Ichiro will still hit .310, score 100 runs and steal 40 bags.

Tampa Bay Rays second baseman Akinori Iwamura went 0-4 in his Classic debut. Odds are you won't be drafting him, unless you are desperate for a sec-

ond baseman in the really late rounds, but if you get stuck with this import expect him to hit about .260 and score 70 runs. But that run total could dip if he bats seventh and not at the top of the order.

Chicago Cubs outfielder Kosuke Fukudome is an interesting prospect and had an interesting game against China. He went 0-0 in four plate appearances with four walks and scored a run. Nobody knew what to expect out of the outfielder when he came into the league last season, but fans and owners were delighted for the first half of the year when he hit .288, with five home runs and 31 RBIs from opening day through June. But from July on he hit just .207 with four home runs and 24 RBIs. Overall, I don't want Fukudome on my teams and neither should you. Look for a .260 average with eight home runs and 40 RBIs in a crowded Cubs outfield.

So now you know a couple of guys I don't want, but those aren't surprises. Here are a couple guys I don't want on my team that may surprise you:

David Ortiz (DH-Boston Red Sox) - Not only is he beginning to come back down to earth after a couple of monster years — from 2005-2006 he hit .294 with 102 home runs and 285 RBIs and from 2007-2008 he hit .299 with 58 home runs and 206 RBIs — he is starting to become injury prone and will be hurt by the loss of Manny Ramirez.

CC Sabathia (SP-New York Yankees) - I think he will have a good year. Look for him to win 18 games and get 240 or more strikeouts. But the reason I don't want him on my team is because of where he will go in drafts. He will go way too early, or cost way too much, for me to consider picking him up.

The Skiff fantasy baseball league, Go Frogs, is officially full. Thanks for all of you who joined and I will be sure to give you some plugs in the paper if you do well.

Next week I will tell you about some guys that I do like and talk more about the WBC.

Billy Wessels is a senior news-editorial journalism major from Waxahachie.

QUICK SPORTS

Texas Sports Hall of Fame welcomes Tomlinson

Former TCU running back and current San Diego Charger LaDainian Tomlinson was among seven Texas athletes inducted into the Texas Sports

Hall of Fame Wednesday night in Waco.

The ceremony took place at the Ferrell Center on the campus of Baylor University, very close to where Tomlinson played football at University

High School.

Tomlinson rushed for 5,263 yards during his career at TCU and was a Heisman Trophy finalist as a senior in 2000.

-Sports editor Michael Carroll

BASKETBALL

continued from page 10

Saturday very important," Mittie said.

Last month, the Lady Frogs (19-9, 11-4 MWC) fell to the Utes (20-8, 13-2 MWC) 73-63. Mittie said rebounding was something that cost the Lady Frogs the game when they last met.

"Rebounding has been our main problem all year and was a huge problem for us against Utah, particularly in the second half," Mittie said.

Sophomore forward Emily Cart-

er echoed Mittie's observation, saying that rebounding is something the Lady Frogs need to focus on for Saturday's game.

"You can't play a game and lose the rebounding battle by 17 like we did last game against Utah," Carter said.

The Lady Frogs ended their six-game winning streak Saturday when they fell to San Diego State University 68-63. The team was able to cut a 14-point second-half deficit against the Aztecs, but could not manage a win on the road.

Saturday, the Lady Frogs will try to bounce back from their loss and

end the regular season on a high note.

Junior guard TK LaFleur said winning this game could help establish the Lady Frogs as a team to beat before going into tournament play.

"I think a win could really let the other teams know we have come back pretty strong in the second half of conference and can establish the type of team we are and are aiming to be," LaFleur said.

After Saturday's game, the Lady Frogs will travel to Las Vegas for the Mountain West Conference tournament starting March 10.

TENNIS

continued from page 10

"With these home matches we'd like to get our record back up to .500," Nichols said.

"We want to build momentum going into conference."

Both Nichols and Borelli said the team's goal remains the same as at the beginning of the season.

"Our goal is to defend our conference title and to make the NCAA Championships and win some rounds," Borelli said.

The team will also host Duke University on Monday at 2 p.m. The Blue Devils squad has a 5-3 record in the spring and is ranked No. 38 in the country by the Intercollegiate Tennis Association.

The Horned Frogs will wrap up their six-match homestand with matches against Virginia Tech on March 13 and Columbia University on March 17.

BASEBALL

continued from page 10

tween the two teams. The team's first three losses to the Shockers came in a three-game series in Wichita. The three straight losses marked the team's longest losing streak of the 2008 season. The final loss came in the opener of the NCAA Stillwater Regional in May.

The Horned Frogs will play seven of their next eight contests at home, beginning with this weekend's series against the Shockers. The team will host the University of Minnesota and the University

of Oklahoma during the stretch.

After Sunday's series finale, the Horned Frogs will travel to San Marcos to battle the Texas State University Bobcats, a team they beat 8-2 on Feb. 25.

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PUSH [PG-13]: 12:45p 3:50p 6:50p 10:10p
SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE [R]: 11:45a 3:30p 6:45p 10:00p

TAKEN [PG-13]: 1:00p 4:15p 7:10p 10:20p
THE INTERNATIONAL [R]: 11:30a 3:00p 6:20p 9:35p
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FEATURES



Enter to win movie passes and more for the new film "Miss March" at DailySkiff.com.

Take a road trip through Texas on a recession budget with our guide. Tuesday

Student aims to treat patients through music

By Bibek Bhandari
Staff Writer

J. Mack Slaughter Jr. knows what it's like to be an adult while an adolescent.

At 17, the Fort Worth native had accomplished fame with a career in a boy band. But he left the glitz and glamour of Los Angeles and returned home to pursue a career in medicine. Slaughter is now a pre-med neuroscience major at the university and has established the Zachary Music Foundation, a nonprofit organization that provides music lessons to adolescent patients.

Slaughter learned to play the guitar at the age of 12 with help from his father and sister. He said even if he is able to get one child interested in music and make it a centering passion of his or her life, it would be an achievement for his nonprofit organization.

The Past

Sitting beside his piano in his living room, Slaughter sounded jubilent as he discussed his childhood days. Dressed in a blue T-shirt, plaid pants and Converse shoes with his hair styled as if the wind had blown it from east to west, the 25-year-old musician looks like a young Elvis Presley.

An Elvis fan, Slaughter entertained his family and friends with the rock 'n' roll star's impersonations and collected posters and memorabilia of "The King." Slaughter laughed as he remembered his first performance, singing "Old McDonald" at the age of 3 on stage at Hulén Mall.

Slaughter grew up in a musical family. His father played the guitar, his mother played the drums and percussion and both his sisters sang and played the guitar.

"Just being around a family that a lot of times communicates musically gave me an ear for it at a young age," he said.

Marti Slaughter, his mother, remembers J. Mack Slaughter being the youngest in their family band, J. Mack and the Kids, led by his father. She said the family was happy to see their youngest member follow their musical footsteps. She laughed as she shared her stories about her son and his "froggy voice [low tone voice]," because of when he had to sing adult songs.

J. Mack Slaughter ran to grab his guitar from his bedroom and in an embarrassed tone, blushing, he sang the first song he wrote and composed when he was 13.

"It's terrible," he said as he sang: "Once I went to the moon/It was weird with no gravity."

J. Mack Slaughter excitedly shared his days in the boy band Sons of Harmony, formed in 1999. Covering his face with his hands, in a low voice, he mentioned the song he sang at the audition for the band, the Backstreet Boys' "I Want It That Way."

The four-member band released an album and toured with artists like Destiny's Child, Bon Jovi and Jessica Simpson.

"It was a real taste of independence at an early age," J. Mack Slaughter said. "It made me grow pretty quickly in a good way."

At 17, J. Mack Slaughter moved to Los Angeles to pursue a career in movies. He landed up in TV series playing characters like Keith in "Like Family," and Kyle in "What I Like About You," and a role in the movie "Fat Albert."

However, he never left his love for music. He formed a band called Calendar and continued playing gigs in clubs like the Dragonfly and The Viper Room in Los Angeles.

The Present

J. Mack Slaughter always dreamed of having a career in the entertainment business and living up to his dream of becoming a star.

"I thought it was going to be a really simple path," he said. "I thought I would take a regular road in music and play shows around and get signed."

But while in Los Angeles working for his TV series and movie, J. Mack Slaughter was getting dissatisfied waiting for projects to come to him and rely on them.

"You have a lot of free time," he said. "I have too much energy for that."

With time, J. Mack Slaughter also realized that being in the entertainment business he had to focus more on his appearance and groom himself. When he broke his hands during skateboarding, he said it "took all those things away."

This turned his life into a new direction. While he was volunteering at Cook Children's Hospital in Fort Worth in 2005, he noticed a void in the lives of teenagers.

"I noticed that there was an age range between 12 and 17 who weren't given as much attention," he said. "Teenagers are desiring independence and in most cases wanting some feeling of accomplishment."

J. Mack Slaughter didn't see any potential in the video games and board games at the hospital for the teenagers. So he decided to step in and help them realize their goals through music.

"That's when I wanted to turn it around and give instead of receive and wanted a career that was more selfless," he said. "I can't think of anything else that is as selfless, giving and challenging on a daily basis as medicine."

His parents and sister, Lisa Slaughter, a registered nurse, supported him because they wanted stability for him and wanted to see him happy.

Lisa Slaughter said she talked to her brother about her work, how gratifying it is. Since she knew her brother was interested in biology and science, she encouraged him to go into the medical field.

David Minter, an organic chemistry professor, smiled as he talked about J. Mack Slaughter.

He vouched for him

academically and said J. Mack Slaughter would make a "positive contribution to the profession." But the professor, who also plays racquetball once a week with his student, didn't have to think about his initial impressions of J. Mack Slaughter.

Though her brother is burdened with studies, Lisa Slaughter said he still has time for music. She sees him as a sensitive man who writes songs for every emotional moment in the family.

For J. Mack Slaughter, writing songs and composing music is a stress-releaser and a breather during study hours.

"To me it's my passion," he said. "It's what centers me in life. It balances me out."

Patrick Avila, J. Mack Slaughter's friend, former band member of Calendar and a medical student at Stanford University, agreed. Taking time between their studies, they have been working on a music album, "The Triangle Knights." He also said they discuss medical school and academics but never leave behind the topic of music.

"We talk in terms of music and even jam over the computer through Skype," Avila said.

The Future

After a hiatus of more than four years, J. Mack Slaughter said coming back to school was "starting a perception of the world all over again." Talking about the books he is currently reading, "The Brain that Changes Itself" and "I am a Strange Loop," he says he wants to be a pediatrician.

But being a doctor and helping people isn't only what he dreams of. He wants to utilize his profession and passion, music, and wants to benefit people. He defines his purpose in the motto for the Zachary Music Foundation: "To fuse the healing powers of music with the healing powers of medicine."

J. Mack Slaughter sounded excited as he talked about his vision for his nonprofit organization. Though some paperwork and administrative formalities are still pending, he is working toward his goal, already collecting some musical instruments. He said he would donate them after the music foundation is in full swing. He is also thinking of other projects for the foundation.

Lisa Slaughter is helping her

brother's foundation. As a part of the Zachary Music Foundation's purpose, she sings to some of the patients suffering from cancer at the hospital she works.

"Music is really therapeutic outlet for us and patients and their family," Lisa Slaughter said.

Their mother agrees. Marti Slaughter's voice cracked and she almost broke into tears recalling her moments at the hospital battling breast cancer and how J. Mack Slaughter and her daughters helped her gain strength through music.

"Music heals," she said. "All I did was focus on the beauty of words, calm and hope that the songs portrayed."

She recited the lyrics of the song he wrote for her, which is framed in the wall of her bedroom: "I will hold you in my arms when you're old."

She said her son's words gave her the strength to fight cancer and grow old with her son and watch him succeed.

J. Mack Slaughter also wants to follow the path and implement his medical studies for a cause.

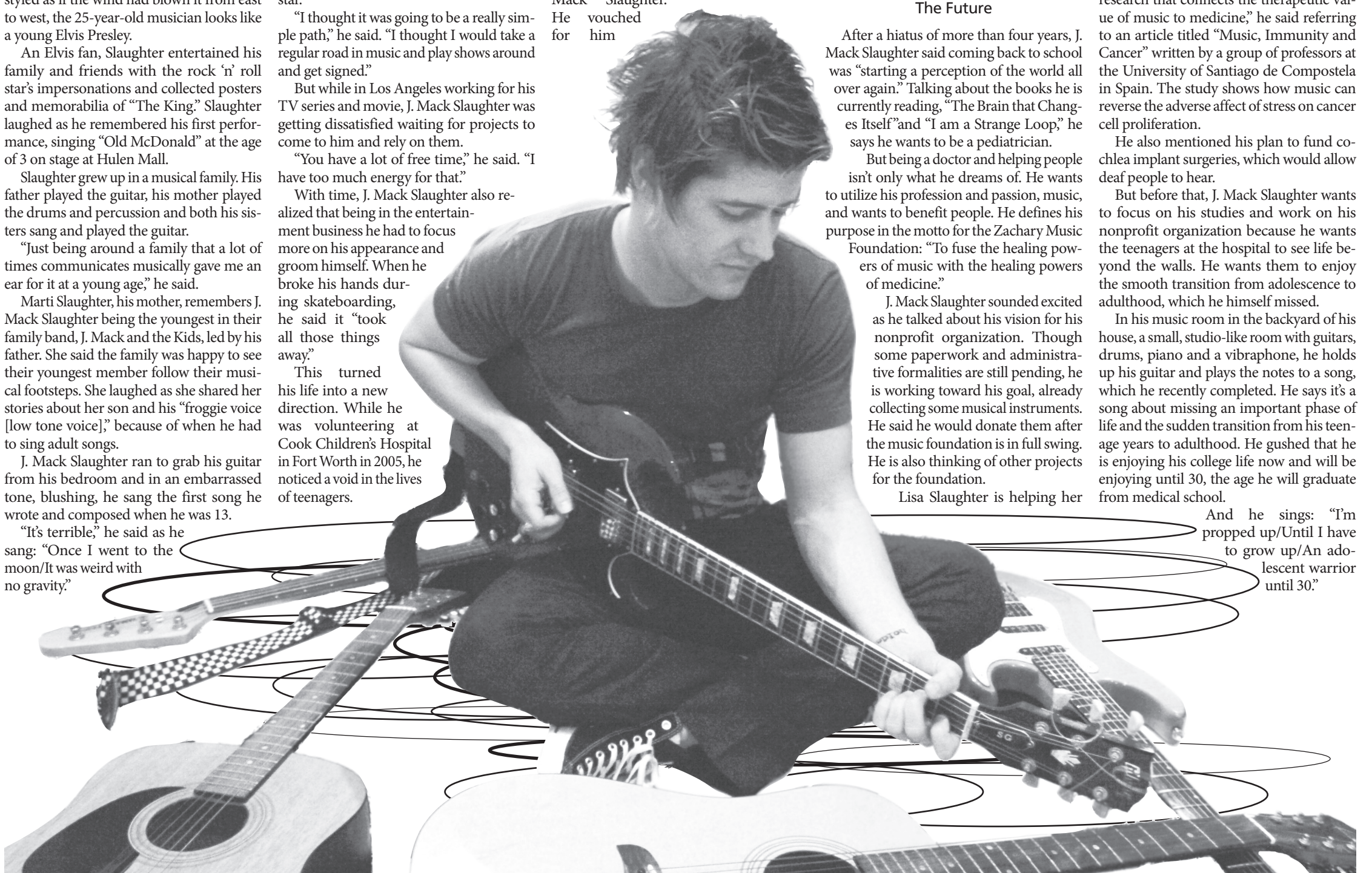
"In the future, I want to be able to fund research that connects the therapeutic value of music to medicine," he said referring to an article titled "Music, Immunity and Cancer" written by a group of professors at the University of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. The study shows how music can reverse the adverse affect of stress on cancer cell proliferation.

He also mentioned his plan to fund cochlea implant surgeries, which would allow deaf people to hear.

But before that, J. Mack Slaughter wants to focus on his studies and work on his nonprofit organization because he wants the teenagers at the hospital to see life beyond the walls. He wants them to enjoy the smooth transition from adolescence to adulthood, which he himself missed.

In his music room in the backyard of his house, a small, studio-like room with guitars, drums, piano and a vibraphone, he holds up his guitar and plays the notes to a song, which he recently completed. He says it's a song about missing an important phase of life and the sudden transition from his teenage years to adulthood. He gushed that he is enjoying his college life now and will be enjoying until 30, the age he will graduate from medical school.

And he sings: "I'm propped up/Until I have to grow up/An adolescent warrior until 30"



J. Mack Slaughter Jr. shows off some of the instruments that have been donated to the Zachary Music Foundation, a nonprofit organization that teaches music to adolescents in hospitals.

CHANCE WELCH / Features Editor

Keep these new releases on your weekend watch list

By Chance Welch
Features Editor

Music

Neko Case, "Middle Cyclone"

The fiery Neko Case has blazed trails in both country and rock circles with The New Pornographers and her own band which releases "Middle Cyclone" on March 3. Case's vocal delivery will remind listeners of the legendary Patsy Cline, but I bet Cline never sang about killing her lover and burying his body like Case did with "Furnace Room Lullaby." The country siren has a voice that can warm your heart in one song and send shivers down your spine the next. The new album will also feature collaborations with other experimental country-rockers like Calexico and Los Lobos.

Movies

"Watchmen"

One of the most anticipated comic book films in recent memory, director Zack Snyder's adaptation of the Alan Moore comic threatens to turn the genre on its head with its complex character study. Don't let that fool you. Previews of the "300" director's new project promise plenty of action as well. Previous adaptations of Moore's work like "V for Vendetta" are hit and miss, so much so that Moore asked that his name be taken off every adaptation since 2003's "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen." But from the looks of the previews, Snyder has captured a vision very close to the original source material so one can only hope it will live up to its hype and not get crushed underneath it. "Watchmen" is rated R and opens today.

Video Games

"Halo Wars"

The first person shooter staple is set to make its first entry in the real-time strategy genre with players assuming the role of a commander instead of the one-man army Master Chief. This will require more patience and management skills than most brute force hard-core shooter fans are probably accustomed to. Players can play as the Alien Covenant or the United Nations Space Command marines and fight on the ground or take it to the air with all the familiar weapons and vehicles found in the popular games.

"Halo" developer Bungie Studios handed the reins over to Ensemble Studios to make the transition, which should be a smooth one considering the group has worked on the successful "Age of Empires" series. "Halo Wars" was released March 3.



Courtesy of WARNER BROS.

There have been several attempts by different movie studios to adapt Alan Moore's comic book "Watchmen," starting in 1986 around the time of its original run in print. From left, Patrick Wilson as Nite Owl II, Malin Akerman as the Silk Spectre II and Jackie Earle Haley as Rorschach.



Singer Neko Case returns with her first solo effort in three years, "Middle Cyclone."

Courtesy of ANTI-RECORDS

SPORTS



See how the baseball team fared in its weekend series against Wichita State. Tuesday

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

FINISH LINE



ANNIE COOPER / Staff Reporter

Sophomore guard Helena Sverrisdottir muscled her way through BYU forwards Keilani Moeaki, left, and Stephanie Buhler, right, during the Lady Frogs' 62-46 loss against the Cougars on Jan. 13 in Daniel-Meyer Coliseum.

Utes' visit to end regular season

By Maddy Foxx
Staff Reporter

A Mountain West Conference title is no longer in the picture for the women's basketball team, but head coach Jeff Mittie said ending the season with a win

against a first-place University of Utah squad could help set the tone for the upcoming conference tournament.

"Both Utah and us are fighting for an NCAA tournament spot and knowing we could likely face them in the Mountain West Championship makes winning

TCU vs. Utah

When: 12 p.m. Saturday
Where: Daniel-Meyer Coliseum

SEE BASKETBALL · PAGE 7

MEN'S TENNIS

Busy four days begin with San Diego match

Mark Bell
Staff Reporter

The No. 43-ranked men's tennis team continues its six-match homestand Friday and Saturday against the University of San Diego and the University of Texas at San Antonio. The team will look to build a winning streak heading into conference play, head coach Dave Borelli said.

"We're at the stage of the season where I expect us to start winning," Borelli said.

The Horned Frogs (3-7) opened their homestand Wednesday, beating Southern Methodist University, 4-3. The team's previous nine matches were against squads currently ranked

TCU vs. San Diego

When: 2 p.m. today

TCU vs. UT-San Antonio

When: 2 p.m. Saturday

TCU vs. Duke

When: 2 p.m. Monday
Where: Bayard H. Friedman Tennis Center

no lower than No. 48 in the national team rankings.

Senior Krieger Brink, ranked No. 80, said he expects the team to get on

SEE TENNIS · PAGE 7

BASEBALL

Visiting Shockers swept team four times last season

By Michael Carroll
Sports Editor

Wednesday night's hiccup against Baylor University was the first for the Horned Frog baseball team since their season-opening loss to Cal State Fullerton on Feb. 20.

In between the two losses, the team collected six straight wins, scored 63 runs and moved from No. 32 in the country to No. 11.

The team will try to start another winning streak tonight when it kicks off a three-game weekend series against Wichita State University.

The Shockers were ranked No. 36 in Collegiate Baseball Newspaper's preseason poll and have compiled

TCU vs. Wichita State

When: 6:30 p.m. tonight
2 p.m. Saturday
1 p.m. Sunday
Where: Lupton Stadium

a 6-2 record so far this season. The team dropped out of the rankings after a 16-9 loss to Central Michigan University on Feb. 22 and has yet to break back into the polls.

The Shockers most recently split a two-game home series against Brigham Young University.

Last season, the Horned Frogs fell to the Shockers in all four contests be-

SEE BASEBALL · PAGE 7

LOOK WHO IS TURNING HEADS...



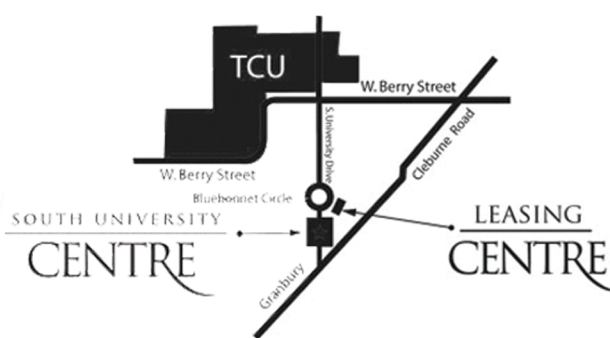
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