

Trooper: Woman missing four or five days

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phone with a neighbor of Harnest just seconds before a report came advising that the woman had been found. Thomas immediately drove to the scene.

"She was in pretty good shape for an 81-year-old lady who was out there for four or five days," said Thomas.

"She apparently had gone for a walk to her neighbor's when she got lost. At some point, she fell down and struck her head. When she was found she was alert and talking. Her feet were wet but she was in pretty good shape," he said.

A missing person report on Harnest was not filed until Tuesday — when Donald Harnest of Largo, Fla., arrived to visit his mother but was unable to locate her. His mother's vehicle was also missing but was found Wednesday at a garage in Berkeley Springs, according to Chief Deputy John Rohrbaugh of the Hampshire County Sheriff's Department.

Harnest reportedly was last seen at about 10 a.m. Saturday when she checked the mailbox at her Kilgore Road residence, Rohrbaugh said.

Paw Paw, Slanesville and Morgan County volunteer firefighters responded to the incident. A helicopter landing zone was set up at Paw Paw High School for the patient flight to Winchester hospital.

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Arafat's health worsens Palestinian leader in 'very difficult situation'

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RAMALLAH, West Bank — An ailing Yasser Arafat collapsed Wednesday night, was unconscious for about 10 minutes and remained in a serious condition. A team of Jordanian doctors was urgently summoned to treat the ailing Palestinian leader, whose wife headed to her husband's side from Paris.



ARAFAT

An official in Arafat's office said the Palestinian leader had created a special committee of three senior officials, including Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, to run Palestinian affairs during his continuing illness.

Other Palestinian officials, including his spokesman Nabil Abu Rdeneh, denied a temporary leadership group was formed.

The Palestinian leader was eating soup during a meeting with Qureia, former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas, and another official when he vomited, a bodyguard said.

Arafat was taken quickly to the clinic inside his Ramallah compound, where he collapsed and was unconscious for about 10 minutes, the guard said.

Arafat has been known to be ill for two weeks, but reports about his ailment have varied widely.

Palestinian officials said he had the flu. Israeli officials speculated he might have stomach cancer, but two of his doctors said Wednesday a blood test and a biopsy of tissue from his digestive tract showed no evidence of cancer.

On Tuesday, a hospital official said Arafat was suffering from a large gallstone. The gallstone, while extremely painful, is not life-threatening and can be easily treated, the official told AP.

Arafat has shown symptoms of Parkinson's disease since the late 1990s.

An official in Arafat's office said the Palestinian leader had deputized Qureia, Abbas and Salim Zaanoun, head of the Palestinian National Council, to run the PLO and the Palestinian Authority during his illness.

GOP: Johnson campaigning in Iowa

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polling places. I'm expecting a very long day on Nov. 2," said Johnson.

Back home he's continued his political activity as second vice chairman of the Maryland Republican Party in addition to working out of the Hagerstown office for District 6 U.S. Rep. Roscoe Bartlett, who's also seeking another term.

But one of Johnson's greatest thrills would be casting his electoral vote Dec. 6 if Bush carries Maryland in the general election.

"I was honored to be selected as the Republican elector for District 6 by the district's Republican Central Committee," he said.

One thing that concerns Johnson and some fellow Republicans is the prevalence of voter fraud being revealed from both sides of the political fence.

"I hope there's a clear winner this year and it doesn't end up in the courts," he said. "But both sides have legal teams ready to be dispatched if there's any problems."

Johnson believes the presi-

dent will do better this year in Maryland compared to his performance here in 2000.

"You can gauge from the figures that he's doing much better already," he said. "Overall I think the race is going to be close — maybe 52 percent to 48 percent, but the president will win. Still, the bottom line is to get your people to turn out and vote at the polls."

Johnson knows for sure that President Bush has received at least one vote in Maryland. "I voted absentee last week," he said.

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Call center: Firm plans December opening

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Jamie Spriggs, vice president of operations for JAK Productions, said the chamber was instrumental in getting the company to locate in the business center. Keyser was chosen because of a demographic study he had done in West Virginia based on the need for jobs and the fact that it has a proven work force, he said.

Beckley, where Spriggs is based, was chosen as the site for one of the company's first centers because of the need for jobs in that area, he said. Parkersburg is also the site of a center.

Palmer said that she met Spriggs several months ago and continued to keep contact in an effort to get the company to locate at Grand Central, where the chamber office is located. The business center lost a tenant when Powertel closed a little more than a year ago.

"I think it's good for college kids to be able to offer them something," she said of the part-time jobs the company will fill.

Spriggs said the company is recruiting employees for 75 full-time positions and 50 part-time positions initially. The starting pay will be between \$7 and \$9 an hour.

The center will run four shifts and he expects it will have between 150 and 200 employees by June.

"We've tentatively scheduled Monday, Dec. 13, to be operational," he said, noting that the lease and other paperwork was signed this week and that renovations are to be completed by Dec. 11.

Spriggs said JAK Productions is owned by John Keller, CEO and president, and is based in Atlanta. The company specializes in outbound calling for charities such as state police organizations, firefighters, fraternal orders of police in different states and federal programs, such as the National Child Leukemia Foundation.

"We have about 35 major clients," he said.

Spriggs said he will relocate to the Keyser area when he finds a house.

Curtis Durst, consulting

director of Grand Central Business Center, said he thinks the new call center will be a good fit with other businesses in the building, owned by Morgantown developer Kris Warner.

He credited Palmer and Annette Keller, Grand Central building manager, with handling many of the details of recruiting the new business.

"Anne always has something in the works and I think there will be something else soon," he said.

"The space is being remodeled and will have a whole new look," Durst said of the area that was originally a gymnasium when the building housed Keyser High School. Warner bought the building in mid-1999.

Powertel was one of the first businesses to locate in the center and was considered the enterprise anchor until the company moved out last year.

To apply for employment with JAK Productions, call Spriggs at (304) 252-4482 or fax a resume to him at (304) 252-6201.

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Mineral: Officials trying to secure backup

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As the commissioners met, elections clerk Lauren Ellifritz and maintenance staff continued to work on the machine, speaking with technicians in Oklahoma for more than two hours by telephone.

Wednesday, the company sent a technician in from Fairmont to examine the ailing equipment.

Thomas said the news was positive, but he is also taking additional steps to insure the county will have a backup plan.

"I have a part coming, which they're assuring me will repair the problem," he said late Wednesday afternoon.

"In case it doesn't, however, I'm currently in negotiations for a backup machine to be delivered to the county."

Mineral County also experi-

enced difficulties with the ballot-counting machine in May, when the sensors malfunctioned during mandatory tests run just prior to starting the actual ballot count.

At that time the workers were able to repair the problem with over-the-phone help from the manufacturer.

The problem slowed the counting process to a crawl, however, with the last tests finally being run at 2 a.m. the following day.

With the counting process expected to be even slower on Nov. 2 due to the write-in votes, which must be hand-counted, a malfunctioning machine could postpone the final results for quite sometime.

With that in mind, Thomas said he plans to have a backup counting machine in place should the original machine

break down once again.

Tuesday's breakdown came in the midst of an already hectic period of preparation for the Nov. 2 general election, as county employees have been striving to get the names of the 1,600 new voters who registered in the county this year on the books.

In addition, more than 800 Mineral Countians have already voted early under West Virginia's "no excuses" early voting program. With three days remaining to vote early, up to 1,000 county residents could take advantage of the opportunity.

"We're going to have a deluge," Thomas told the commissioners. "All indications are we're going to have a lot of people voting."

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Streets: Simple things on minds of voters

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traffic volume and estimated cost is available.

"I think, unfortunately, over the years — in my opinion — street decisions were more political instead of where we would get the most bang for the buck," he said.

Rephann said it's important that the city's gateways, those streets that lead to the city, be in the best possible shape. He said Baltimore Avenue is in deplorable condition for the amount of traffic that travels that road daily.

He said the city has been successful in receiving state funds for such projects as the Rolling Mill area, which has seen the start of rehabilitation in the Maryland and Virginia avenues corridor. Some problems also have been solved through the use of Community Development Block Grant funds.

Sidewalks are owned by the property owner; therefore, it's up to that person to make repairs, he said.

Rephann said a program could be available for low-income residents.

Deborah Smith said she doesn't believe residents should be responsible for paying a portion of their street paving — an idea recently considered by council for White Avenue — especially since they pay taxes that are supposed to be used to maintain streets. She said most people, low-income residents in particular, can't afford to do so and shouldn't have to. She said all residents deserve to have a nice paved street, free of potholes.

When it comes to paying for the work, she isn't sure all grant programs that could be utilized are. Businesses along the routes should be approached about assisting with the cost, she said.

As for sidewalks, Smith has realized as she campaigns door-to-door that the city doesn't have many, but those in the historic district in particular are beautiful and should be maintained.

"Obviously, the city should be responsible," she said. "I'm from Baltimore where the city is responsible for them."

Smith said citizens also need to take responsibility, and in cases where a neighbor can't maintain his sidewalk, neighbors should offer to help.

Jim Combs said he has an understanding of such issues because he worked in the construction industry for more than 30 years. He believes he could bring such expertise to the table.

He said almost all the streets downtown have been

CITY OF CUMBERLAND

paved but if one drives over the railroad tracks onto Baltimore Avenue, it's a different story.

"That intersection is horrendous," he said. "It's like a war zone."

Combs said city officials should go to the state and federal governments and ask for assistance. He said those groups need to understand that this is an older area that does not have the same resources as a metropolitan area.

He said something as simple as expanding the road near the former York Hotel could help. Other areas such as Park Street, Williams Street and Maryland Avenue also need to be completed.

Combs said it wouldn't be a bad idea to look at Maryland Avenue and to put the overhead power lines underground on one side even though it would be costly. That would allow for the sidewalk to be narrowed and the street to be widened.

Improvements need to continue on Virginia Avenue and Industrial Boulevard, which then form a connection to the commerce center of Queen City Centre, he said.

Councilman Ed Hedrick said the city's recent purchase of an in-house paving machine has allowed the city to maximize the amount of paving.

He admits that street condition has always been a problem and will continue to be one although he'd like to see more money in the paving budget to tackle more streets.

As for sidewalks, he said the No. 1 priority should be to make sure curb cuts are made and are in good shape for those who are physically challenged.

Although sidewalks are considered the property owner's responsibility, he'd like to see a program where the resident can receive a tax break for repairing his sidewalk. Several neighborhood associations have received funds through Community Development Block Grants to pinpoint sidewalk repair.

He said the city has benefited from the State Highway Administration's sidewalk program and cited work performed along Industrial Boulevard as an example.

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