

Center stage

Warren East, Warren Central high schools battle through losses to put on annual fall productions. Also: A glance at Halloween events. Page 1B



Four in a row

Greenwood girls put down Bowling Green 2-1 for another Fourth Region soccer championship. Page 1C



THURSDAY
OCTOBER 28, 2004



DAILY NEWS



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Slight chance of showers.
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Bowling Green, Kentucky

State rep candidates trade blows at short forum

Incumbent Roger Thomas cites budget, health-care cost control as big issues; contender Jim DeCesare backs Fletcher plans

By JIM GAINES
The Daily News
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Money, health care and education were the main issues over which 21st District State Rep. Roger Thomas, D-Smiths Grove, and his Republican challenger, Jim DeCesare, wrangled during a televised debate Wednesday evening, with Thomas accusing DeCesare of run-

ning a negative campaign and DeCesare accusing Thomas of "playing political games."

Neither candidate was allowed rebuttal time in the half-hour forum at Bowling Green Junior High School, so most charges went unanswered.

DeCesare said that he would sponsor an amendment to the state constitution to require that the General Assembly pass a



budget, or stay in session without pay. For the second time in two budget cycles, lawmakers adjourned this year without agreeing on a budget, leaving the state to be run under Gov. Ernie Fletcher's spending plan.

DeCesare declared his support for Fletcher's tax reform plan and for caps on medical malpractice lawsuit awards.

Thomas said that his top priorities in the General Assembly are to pass a budget, and work to control health care costs.

Debate moderators from WBKO-TV asked both candidates a series of questions, starting with what is needed to ensure that a state budget gets passed from now on.

Neither DeCesare nor the moderators mentioned that DeCesare is married to

Amy Bingham, the TV station's anchorwoman. Thomas' wife is Doris Thomas, vice president of marketing at The Medical Center.

Thomas, too, said he would support a constitutional amendment to keep legislators in session until one is approved.

"I've pre-filed legislation already that would do that," he said, adding that he may amend his bill to require the legislature's 30-day short session to focus on budget matters only.

See FORUM, 6A

CELEBRATING SUCCESS



Lost River Elementary School pupils grab cookies Wednesday during a surprise celebration for faculty, staff and children in honor of the school's CATS test scores, which were the best in Warren County.

Photos by Joe Imel/Daily News

Lost River pupils rewarded for CATS scores

By COURTNEY CRAIG
The Daily News
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Take a few hundred young students, some teachers, a high school drum line, Big Red and the highest test scores in Warren County, and what do you have?

A surprise party for Lost River Elementary School.

Lost River, which had an accountability index of 95.6 on the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System - the highest of any school in the Warren County school district for the 2003-04 school year - showed its pupils and teachers appreciation Wednesday afternoon in the school's gym.

The kids let out ear-splitting screams for themselves and their teachers as they danced to the beats of Warren Central High School Band's drum line and laughed at Big Red's antics.

"We're here today for one reason and one reason only, and that's to congratulate every student, teacher and faculty member on these outstanding test scores," said Brian "Slim" Nash, who helped host the event. "These are the highest scores in the history of Lost River Elementary School and the highest scores in Warren County."

The event was a complete surprise for the teachers and the

See LOST RIVER, 6A



Second-grader Tyrell Whitney screams for Lost River Elementary teachers Wednesday during a surprise CATS celebration.

Questions raised on missing explosives

Iraqi weapons could have been stolen before - or after - American military took control

By CHRIS TOMLINSON
The Associated Press

There appear to be two periods of time when the 377 tons of high explosives missing from a military facility in Iraq could have been moved or stolen - in the weeks before the U.S. invasion began or several weeks in April after U.S. troops overran the Al-Qaqaa base and moved on to Baghdad.

Iraqi officials told the International Atomic Energy Agency two weeks ago that the explosives vanished as a result of "theft and looting ... due to lack of security."

The ministry's letter said the explosives were stolen sometime after coalition forces took control of Baghdad on April 9, 2003. But they have not been able to explain how they know when the explosives were removed from bunkers sealed by the IAEA as part of the weapons inspection program.

The disappearance of the explosives has raised questions about why the United States didn't do more to secure the facility and failed to allow full international inspections to resume after the invasion. It has also become an issue in the U.S. presidential campaign.

The Kerry campaign called the disappearance the latest in a "tragic series of blunders" by the Bush administration in Iraq. The White House has issued a statement saying that the matter is under investigation and the explosives may have been moved before the invasion.

IAEA inspectors report that they checked the seals placed on the bunker storing stockpiles of HMX and RDX kept at al-Qaqaa on March 9. There have been reports that another IAEA team checked the site on March 15, but that has yet to be confirmed.

Until March 20, when coalition forces attacked Iraq, the explosives could have been moved to another location without risk of being intercepted by U.S. air or ground forces. U.S. attack jets patrolled Iraq's major highways after March 19 in search of military targets to destroy.

Iraqi forces were still at the al-Qaqaa complex on April 3 when Task Force 3-15 of the 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division arrived, said Col. Dave Perkins, who commanded the brigade.

Troops reported seeing the gates open and several hundred troops were defending the site, Perkins said Wednesday. The infantrymen's mission was to destroy any Iraqi troops in the area and, after defeating the forces in the facility, the task force moved north on April 6 to prepare for the assault on Baghdad. The 2nd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division was the first U.S. unit to enter central Baghdad on April 7.

U.S. troops passed through more than a dozen Iraqi military facilities on the march from the Kuwait border to Baghdad, and while cursory checks were made for suspected weapons of mass destruction, large ammunition, weapons and

See EXPLOSIVES, 6A

THE DISAPPEARANCE: The 377 tons of high explosives were taken from the Al-Qaqaa military facility after March 9, when the IAEA sealed the bunker.

TWO POSSIBILITIES: They could have been taken before March 20, when coalition forces attacked, or sometime after April 3 or 10, when two different U.S. units arrived at Al-Qaqaa, one that fought with troops and one that searched for chemical weapons - but not high explosives.

THE POLITICS: The Kerry campaign faults the Bush administration. The White House has said the explosives may have been moved before the invasion.

Inside

Polish women taken hostage by militants. Page 7A

Safe Spot program works to protect kids

By HAYLI FELLWOCK
The Daily News
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Of all the causes of child disappearances, the least common cause is abduction by someone who is not related to the child, according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

Though uncommon, "non-family abductions" pose the greatest risk of child injury or death, the center's research shows.

After the abduction in 1996 of 7-year-old Morgan Jade Violi - kidnapped while playing with a friend

in a parking lot at Colony Apartments on Shive Lane - citizens of Bowling Green began working to make the area's children safer.

Thus the Safe Spot program was born - a cooperative effort among area businesses to provide shelter to children who are lost or endangered.

Today, about 133 businesses participate in the Safe Spot program, which is still volunteer-driven, but now under the direction of Family Enrichment Center.

The businesses display in their windows a yellow, triangular Safe

Spot logo sign that means the businesses will offer protection to children who may need assistance.

"The (business) location is important, but not a major factor as long as the business follows all the guidelines," said Bowling Green Police Department Officer Jerry Corbitt. "They're told not to interview the child. They are just to provide shelter and wait for police to arrive."

Corbitt said all participating Safe Spot businesses are urged to do background checks on their employees.

The Safe Spot program also educates elementary students and their families throughout Warren County on safety guidelines needed to reduce the risk of non-family abductions.

Participants in the Safe Spot program include Bowling Green Municipal Utilities on Center Street, Booth Fire and Safety on College Street and Insight Communications on Double Springs Road.

No in-home businesses are allowed to be Safe Spots, said

See SAFE SPOT, 6A

Correction

The 24-year-old Detroit man who died Sunday night after being shot in Lampkin Park was incorrectly identified in articles on Page 1A Monday and Tuesday. The man's name is Derris Thomas.

Opinion

Stealing and defacing campaign signs is a disgrace to democracy. Page 4A

Moonstruck

Stargazers nationwide enjoy total lunar eclipse for over two years. Page 10A

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