

Weather: Rain, storms likely during morning. High in the lower 80s. 14

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'Ready, Set, Read!'

Students at three schools are gearing up to read a million words in a campaign.

YOUNG ROMANS, inside



Coaches seeking open records of school probe

The school system has set a Sept. 8 hearing for the 2 cheerleading coaches.

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Police capture escapee

A man who escaped from the Floyd County Prison last week was in the Cherokee County, Ala., jail Monday.

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Braves put up big win in Charleston

Rome wins 13-1 in an offensive showcase against the RiverDogs.

SPORTS, page 7



30 indicted in gang sweep

• Among the accused are 5 already charged in murders in 2003 Polk and Floyd counties.

By Lauren Gregory
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Five men accused of committing half the murders in Floyd and Polk counties in 2003 were among 30 alleged drug gang members named in an indictment unsealed Monday by the U.S. Attorney's office.

Josh Smith of Silver Creek, Shane Rosser of Centre, Ala., and Sammy Duque of Cedartown are implicated in the March 2003 shooting deaths of Floyd County residents Truitt Jerome "T.J." Agan and Christopher Kane Fortenberry.

According to the indictment, Agan, 28, and Fortenberry, 29, owed Duque money for methamphetamine.

After Duque ordered Rosser to get the money, Rosser and Smith allegedly shot the two to death at their 1425 Cunningham Road home on March 27, 2003.

Also alleged to be gang members are Daniel Villenas-Reyes and Miguel Goicochea Perez, two Cedartown men accused of killing Cesar Juarez Vasquez, 17, Arturo Torres Ventura, 30, and an unidentified young woman in a September 16, 2003 murder-arson indictment.

Villenas-Reyes and Perez allegedly bound their victims with duct tape and shot them in the head before setting them on fire at 506 Seventh St. in Cedartown, the home of co-defendant Felipe Cormona-Romero. They are also accused of setting fire to Vasquez' 1991 Subaru.

ON THE WEB

Visit www.romenews-tribune.com for a complete list of those listed in the indictment unsealed Monday.

Although the two incidents had initially appeared to be separate cases, said Floyd County police Maj. Tommy Shiflett, authorities in the neighboring counties were able to connect them as their investigations began to dovetail.

Federal investigators were called in, Shiflett said, and the cases were both eventually lumped into a large-scale, organized operation of violent drug dealing and other criminal activity cracked open by the Northwest Georgia Criminal Enterprise Task Force.

Please see NAMES 2



William T. Martin / Rome News-Tribune

Floyd County District Attorney Leigh Patterson, joined by U.S. Attorney David Nahmias (left), speaks at the Federal Courthouse in Rome on Monday.

Police charge teen in death

• The teen's father linked his son to the hit-and-run death of a 6-year-old girl.

By Matt Tuck
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A teenager was charged with vehicular homicide Monday in the hit-and-run death of a 6-year-old girl after the boy's father turned him in to police, authorities said.

Close to 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Taylor Brooke Shirey, of 415 E. 20th St., and a friend were riding bicycles in front of her aunt's 356 Turner Road residence when she was hit by a Ford Ranger pickup truck driven by a 16-year-old male, said Floyd County police Sgt. Dallas Battle. The teenager then fled.

Monday morning, the boy's father saw the damage to the truck and confronted his son, police said.

"His dad was on his way to work when he heard about the hit-and-run, and went back and asked the 16-year-old about it," Battle said. "The kid had a couple of stories. At first he said he hit a tree, then he said he hit a deer."

Please see TEEN 2

TODAY'S YOUNG ARTIST



Today's artwork is by Brittany Dowdy, a second-grader at Pepperell Primary School.

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Katrina strikes Northwest Georgia



Ryan Smith / Rome News-Tribune

Owner Jerry Parris surveys the damage at his Westside Mini Warehouse on Pine Pitch Road in Cedartown on Monday. Storms from Hurricane Katrina left thousands in Northwest Georgia without power, but only 29 in Floyd County.

Tornado sweeps Polk

• Residents hit by the storm are expected to have power returned by this morning.

By Matt Tuck
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Storms spawned from Hurricane Katrina blew through Northwest Georgia Monday, with a tornado causing damage in Cedartown while Floyd County escaped relatively unscathed.

Close to 5:30 p.m., the tornado was spotted in the Antioch community — just south of Cedartown — touched ground and downed trees, said Polk 911 Director Thomas Wilson. "I expected some calls for sightings, but I did not expect anything like this."

About 15 minutes later, it rolled toward U.S. 27 near Cherokee Road, knocking over a canopy at Dawson's Store, 1999 Rockmart Highway, and causing more damage along the way, Wilson said. "It knocked a billboard down on Cherokee Road and knocked down some trees on Denton Road."

For the most part, though, Wilson said, Polk County escaped serious damage but not power outages.

The tornado popped up again in Floyd County, over Lindale close to 6:30 p.m., but did not touch down, said Scotty Hancock, Floyd County Emergency Management director.

A downed tree knocked out a power line on Lyons Bridge Road — the worst of the damage in Floyd County, Hancock said. "Overall, we did pretty good here."

Curtis Hart, Northwest Region External Manager for Georgia Power, said about 3,000 people were without power at the height of the storm, while



William T. Martin / Rome News-Tribune

Polk County firefighters eye a billboard on U.S. 27 near Wal-Mart that was knocked down by high winds Monday that swept through the area.

only 29 residents lost power in Floyd County. Monday night, the Floyd County residents still had no electricity, and all but 255 people were waiting for their power to be restored in Cedartown, he said. Hart expected all power to be restored by early this morning.

Polk residents were still cringing from the tornado Monday evening as they prepared to sort through the damage.

Cedartown's Brittney McKelvey said she was glad her dad used to be a Boy Scout when she and her father, Tim, were in their Denton Road garage and the air pressure changed drastically.

"It got really calm, really quiet and all of a sudden the wind started blowing fast. He felt the pressure change and he told us to get in the house, get in the closet," McKelvey said.

Please see TORNADO 5

County seeks W. 3rd clarity

• Floyd County officials must adopt a resolution of support and commit funds for the project to move forward.

By Alan Riquelmy
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ROCKMART — The Floyd County Commission is going to wait for the whole story before it makes a decision on supporting the West Third Street development.

Both the Floyd County and Rome City commissions discussed the proposed development at their Monday joint meeting at Winn's Lake Lodge near Rockmart. County Commissioner Garry Fricks, the county representative on the West Third Development Committee, said he'll wait until the numbers are finalized before he brings the issue to his board.

"It's all changing," Fricks said at his commission's retreat earlier Monday. "Once it's all done, we'll plug in how it affects us and make a judgment off of that." Local developers propose relocating Barron Stadium from West Third Street to State Mutual Stadium and the Rome-Floyd Tennis Center from West Third Street to Riverside Parkway.

West Third Street would be turned into a multi-use area with retail, residences and greenspace.



Garry Fricks, Floyd County commissioner, is still awaiting the information necessary to make a decision on the projects.



Chuck Hufstetter, commission chairman, said there's still much to find out about the project.

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VISIT US ON THE WEB

Go to www.romenewstribune.com to see photos from across the South of damage inflicted by Hurricane Katrina. Also check back periodically for updated weather reports and what impact the storm will have on Northwest Georgia.