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Main Street taking on Christmas Parade

'... This is something that we really felt that we should take on for this community ...,' says Laura Quinn



Quinn

By Melanie Crossover
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After unanimously voting to play Santa for the city by taking the Christmas Parade organizational post recently left open by the Pilot Club, Columbus Main Street Inc. board and officials are quickly working out details to keep the Dec. 3 event on track.

The fact that Main Street was already looking at a full schedule and an ongoing search for a new manager should only make their success a more tangible holiday miracle when College Street is lined with people in three months.

Not only does the group have Afternoon Tunes to contend with starting next week, but the Friday before the parade is the lighting of the city

Christmas tree and the following Friday is Wassailfest, another popular downtown event.

"This is definitely going to be a community effort this year because we have a lot to do and a little time to do it, but this is something that we really felt that we should take on for this community since it's already such a big part of downtown tradition," said Laura Quinn, soon-to-be-former man-

ager of the local Mississippi Main Street chapter.

Quinn turned in her resignation early last month to be with her family more, and the board's search committee began the interview process to fill her shoes on Monday.

With three candidates already interviewed and another five set to inter-



Miller

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Making a statement



Skip Descant/Dispatch Starkville Bureau

Corie Stanford, 21, of Tupelo, a communications junior at Mississippi State University, paints a T-shirt to hang on the MSU Sexual Violence Clothesline, a project to raise awareness and counseling around sexual abuse issues. The Clothesline project is up all week on the Drill Field, and includes nearly 100 T-shirts with as many hand-painted messages.

Teacher shortage 'absolute crisis,' Bounds claims

By John Mott Coffey
Dispatch Capitol Bureau
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JACKSON — Not enough people are entering the teaching profession and those who do soon leave because of student disciplinary problems and lack of support from school administrators, said state Superintendent of Education Hank Bounds.



Bounds

"Something has to be done about the teacher shortage in this state."

Hank Bounds
State superintendent of education

"We're in an absolute crisis in this state with the teacher shortage," Bound said.

He gave legislative leaders an update Wednesday on the state of Mississippi education and how much money it'll need next year in the state budget.

With Mississippi short of about 3,000 teachers, state education leaders are struggling to come up with ways to lure more people into the profession and keep them.

"Something has to be done about the teacher shortage in this state," Bounds told the Joint Legislative Budget Committee.

About 1,000 people graduated in 2006 from state universities with teacher degrees and stayed in Mississippi. However,

about 50 percent of all new teachers quit the profession after five or so years, Bounds said.

Efforts are under way for "a complete overhaul" of how teachers and school administrators are trained at state universities, he said. The changes should give teachers the skills to better manage misbehaving students and give administrators more leadership abilities to support teachers.

Mississippi also needs to raise teachers' salaries to lure more of them, Bound said. Mississippi teachers this year earn an average of about \$41,300, according to the state Department of Education. That's about 30 percent higher than the \$32,000 state average in 2000 but lower than the Southeastern average of \$43,200 in 2006.

Mississippi teachers this year got a 3 percent across-the-board pay raise. The state Department of Education is asking the

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Barge facility on schedule, Hardy tells Port Authority

By Gabe Smith
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Construction continues on the west bank of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, where Pennsylvania building contractor Kinder Morgan Terminals is clearing earth and foliage during the early stages of erecting a new barge unloading facility to transport scrap from the river to the SeverCorr steel plant.

"Everything is on schedule," said Lowndes County

Port Authority Director John Hardy at his board's monthly meeting Wednesday.

Kinder Morgan began initial site work in July, after negotiations with SeverCorr had been finalized for scrap unloading fees. The land for the project is the property of the Port Authority.

Now excavation work is under way, with excess dirt, brush and trees still being cleared and pushed to the north end of the property.

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Out on bond, O.J. Simpson returns to Florida

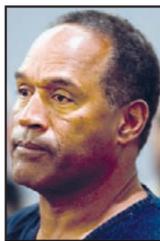
Cavalcade of media vehicles trails former football star in an SUV

By Michelle Spitzer
Associated Press Writer

MIAMI — O.J. Simpson slipped back into familiar territory early today — not just the humidity of South Florida, but into the center of a media cavalcade fixated on a robbery case that could imprison him for life.

In the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood airport, he refused to answer reporters' questions about the case, though girlfriend Christine Prody answered a question about how Simpson was doing with: "He's fine."

The former football star left in an SUV, tailed by a pack of cameras and reporters. Hours later, he still hadn't returned to his



Simpson

suburban Miami home, where reporters and a television helicopter disturbed the quiet in the normally tranquil neighborhood.

Police allege the Heisman Trophy winner led an armed holdup of sports memorabilia collectors. Simpson has insisted he was merely retrieving items that had been stolen from him.

Legal experts say the prosecution's case could be clouded by issues including who had rightful ownership of the goods and the

reputation of witnesses in the sometimes less-than-reputable world of memorabilia trading.

At his arraignment today, Simpson furrowed his brow as the judge read the list of charges against him. Gone was the slight smirk he flashed when arrested.

He answered quietly in a hoarse voice and nodded as the judge laid out restrictions for his release, including surrendering his passport to his attorney and having no contact with co-defendants or potential witnesses.

Simpson did not enter a plea. His attorney, Yale Galanter, said after the hearing

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TODAY'S DISPATCH

Proverbs

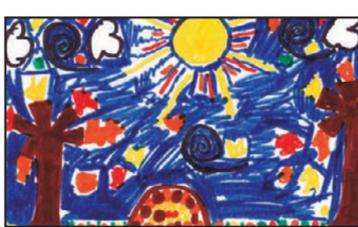
By James Brewer

Weeds grow themselves; flowers need cultivation.

Five Questions

1. What legendary sheriff's "Big Sticks" and patrol car are on display at his Adamsville, Tenn., home? 2. What building marked its 50th birthday by staging an attack by a 3,000-pound inflatable beast in 1983? 3. How many stars are within one light-year of Earth? 4. What Canadian territory co-hosted the 2002 Arctic Winter Games with Kalaallit Nunaat? 5. What symbol at the end of a U.S. dollar's serial number indicates that it was inserted into a brand new bundle to replace a flawed bill? **Answers:10B**

Weather



Mary Grace Dishongh, third grade, Heritage

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Demonstrators gather



Thousands flock to Jena, La., in support of six black teens charged in the beating of a white classmate. 5A



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