

**Avoiding smoke
in the workplace**

MONEY 4B



**Meet the new
reality staff**

REALITY

**Phils lose shot at
sweep in St. Louis**

SPORTS 1D



THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER 20, 2007

BUCKS COUNTY Courier Times

www.phillyBurbs.com

50¢

HIGH 82 LOW 57

Fog in the morning; mostly sunny. **4C**

THIS JUST IN ...

Charges dismissed against Md. mother

Charges were dropped Wednesday against a Maryland woman accused of killing her newborn child in 2004 and keeping other sets of fetal remains around her home. An Ocean City Police spokesman said the dismissal came because of insufficient evidence after a medical examiner's report. Christy Freeman had been held without bond since July, when she went to a hospital with heavy bleeding and doctors discovered she'd recently given birth. The prosecutor planned to hold a news conference today about the case.

Senate rejects bill on troop leave

Democrats' efforts to challenge President Bush's Iraq policies were dealt a demoralizing blow Wednesday in the Senate after they failed to scrape together enough support to guarantee troops more time at home. The 56-44 vote — four short of reaching the 60 needed to advance — all but assured that Democrats would be unable to muster the support needed to pass tough anti-war legislation by year's end. The legislation, sponsored by Sen. Jim Webb, D-Va., was seen as the Democrats' best shot because of its pro-military premise. Webb's legislation would have required that troops spend as much time at home training with their units as they spend deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan. Members of the National Guard or Reserve would be guaranteed three years at home before being sent back. **More Iraq news, 4A**



Simpson out on bail

O.J. Simpson leaves the Clark County Detention Center in Las Vegas on Wednesday after posting \$125,000 bail. Simpson, 60, flew home to Miami after his release. He spent three nights in jail after being charged with kidnapping, armed robbery and other offenses. The case has legal experts wondering: Could a former football star who beat a double-murder rap really do hard time for a crime that sounds like a bad movie? Police have laid out a case that makes Simpson the leader in an armed holdup of sports memorabilia collectors, and they arrested a fifth suspect in the case Wednesday. **Story, 2A**

Court orders drug tests for Britney

The hits keep coming for Britney Spears, but not the kind that will put platinum records on her walls. A court commissioner in Spears' child custody dispute called the 25-year-old pop star a "habitual" user in ordering her to undergo random drug and alcohol testing. The question is, does the order come soon enough — and is it strong enough — to keep Spears from losing her two young sons to ex-husband Kevin Federline? It couldn't have come at a worse time for Spears, who is trying to recover from a series of image-crippling events that include a bizarre head-shaving in February and a ridiculed performance at the MTV Video Music Awards.

Local news also on 6F

Vol. 98, No. 263 ©2007 Courier Times, Inc.

The Courier Times is printed in part on recycled paper and is recyclable.



HEALTH

Change in dress code to fight germs

British hospitals adopt a "bare below the elbows" policy to help stop the spread of MRSA.

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

British hospitals are banning neckties, long sleeves and jewelry for doctors — plus traditional lab coats — in an effort to stop the spread of deadly hospital-borne infections, according to new rules published Monday.

Hospital dress codes typically urge doctors to look professional, which, for male practitioners, has usually meant wearing a tie. But as

concern over hospital-borne infections has intensified, doctors are taking a closer look at their clothing.

"Ties are rarely laundered, but worn daily," the Great Britain Department of Health said in a statement. "They perform no beneficial function in patient care and have been shown to be colonized by pathogens."

The new regulations, which take effect next year, will also mean an end to doctors' traditional long-sleeved white coats, Health Secretary Alan Johnson said. Fake nails, jewelry and watches, which

the department warned could harbor germs, are also out.

Johnson said the "bare below the elbows" dress code would help prevent the spread of methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, the deadly bacteria that is resistant to nearly every available antibiotic.

Popularly known as a "super bug," MRSA accounts for more than 40 percent of in-hospital blood infections in Britain. Because the bacteria is so hard to kill, healthcare

See **MRSA, 5A**

Preventing staph skin infections

■ Keep hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

■ Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.

■ Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.

■ Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels or razors.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

MORE HEALTH NEWS ON 5A

Vintage or vile?



Sylvia Stern purchased this couch after she moved into her Richboro home 32 years ago. Thanks to two Middletown interior decorators, the sofa is a finalist in a national contest. **KIM WEIMER / COURIER TIMES**

A couch only a mother could love

Interior designers entered Sylvia Stern's sofa in an ugly couch contest — and it's a finalist.

By **CRISSA SHOEMAKER DEBREE**
COURIER TIMES

Wendy Kokinda and Colleen Stasinchak have seen a lot of unusual furniture during their careers as interior decorators.

But nothing caught their eye quite like Sylvia Stern's couch.

Stern purchased the chartreuse sectional with swirls of green and yellow shortly after she moved into her Richboro home 32 years ago. To her, it was a functional — and expensive — piece of furniture in the seldom-used formal living room.

To Kokinda and Stasinchak, though, it might just be THE ugliest couch in the country.

And so many people agree with them that the couch (and Stern) will make an appearance Tuesday on "Live with Regis and Kelly." There, audience members will determine if it is, indeed, America's

ugliest couch. If it is, Stern will win \$5,000 from the contest sponsor, Sure Fit.

Kokinda and Stasinchak, who own Larsen Redesigns in Middletown, discovered the couch when they were consulting with Stern on a project. As interior designers, the pair use what's already in a person's home to come up with a new look.

Thinking the couch could have a place in the design, Stasinchak snapped a picture of it.

A few months later, the pair was ordering a slipcover from Sure Fit, an Allentown company that specializes in couch coverings and other home accessories. They learned about the company's contest and immediately thought of Stern's couch.

Kokinda said Stern had released the rights to the photographs she and Stasinchak took of her home and furniture. So the pair entered the photo in the contest.

Sure Fit whittled the more than 250 entries to 10, and online voters picked Stern's couch as one of

See **COUCH, 2A**

PLUMSTEAD

Farmer isn't thrilled with Shyamalan film shoot

Raymond Gross said he didn't realize M. Night Shyamalan's latest film was a violent, R-rated movie when he agreed to let the director use his property.

By **RILEY YATES**
COURIER TIMES

Raymond Gross is no fan of M. Night Shyamalan's.

Though his Plumstead farm is a set in the "The Sixth Sense" director's latest movie, Gross isn't happy about it — at all.

"I got talked into it because I'm a dumb farmer, and I didn't know any better," Gross said.

Filming is under way until

Monday at the Gross property off Route 611 for "The Happening," an apocalyptic thriller starring Mark Wahlberg and Zooey Deschanel.

Gross inked the contract allowing the crews to use his 112 acres, but he said he regretted it as soon as he learned the movie is violent.

See **FILM, 2A**



Raymond Gross' farm in Plumstead is expected to get between five and seven minutes of screen time in the latest M. Night Shyamalan film, "The Happening," due out June 13.

DAVID GARRETT
COURIER TIMES