

Weather: Possible tornadoes leave trail of damage in state. **3A**



# OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS

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50 CENTS



Raging: Firefighters all but concede defeat to wildfires; flames too big. **5A**

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A MEDIA GENERAL NEWSPAPER

**NOTABLE**

**Kiesel home to two events this weekend**

Two events will bring area residents to Kiesel Park in Auburn this weekend. One for those enjoying big band music and the other for those who want to walk around the park.

The Sundown at Kiesel Park concert series will conclude Friday with the Auburn Knights Orchestra. The concert will be from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Kiesel Park pavilion. Admission is free to the public.

The Auburn Parks and Recreation Dog Club will host a fun walk for you and your canine Sunday at 2 p.m. at Kiesel Park.

This event will kick off with a brief educational segment conducted by the Auburn University Small Animal Teaching Hospital at the pavilion. The walk is free to the public and open to participants of all ages. Children younger than 12 must be accompanied by an adult. The walk will be held at your own pace.

The Lee County Humane Society will be accepting donations for dog food, toys, and other items.

For more information about the the Auburn Parks and Recreation events, call 501-2940, or visit www.auburnalabama.org.

**COMING SATURDAY**

**Tailgater**

A tale of one Auburn fan's famous burger

**OUTSIDE**



Austin Hodge

**SCATTERED SHOWERS**

High: 65 Low: 48

Complete forecast, **2A**

**INSIDE**

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## Economy can absorb layoffs

Briggs & Stratton employees should find jobs quickly, workforce experts say

AMY WEAVER  
STAFF WRITER

Nearly 100 people are losing their jobs, depleting the workforce at one of Auburn's major industries, but it's not expected to hurt the local economy.

Cary Cox, director of workforce

development with Auburn Training Connection, said it's unfortunate that 90 Briggs & Stratton employees will be out of jobs soon, but, "if there is ever going to be a time to be laid off, this is it."

His optimism is based on the simple fact that Auburn has so much industry coming in right now, these

people will be absorbed back into the workforce rather quickly.

"We're booming right now. If you were going to be laid off and have bad news, this is a good time because we've got industry that's expanding, we'll have new industry

SEE LAYOFFS, PAGE 8A

## Good odds



VASHA HUNT | OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS

Former Army Ranger Capt. Matthew Bacik gets a fitting for a new high-tech prosthetic leg Monday from Glenn Crumpton, a certified prosthetist, orthotist and pedorthist with Alabama Artificial Limb & Orthopedic Service. Bacik is a business student at Auburn University and is on track to graduate in December.

## Wounded soldier to be honored at NFL game

DONATHAN PRATER  
STAFF WRITER

Heads. He wins. Tails. He wins. The odds will be just that good for one former soldier when he handles the coin-tossing duties for the Cleveland Browns game against the Seattle Seahawks on Nov. 4.

But getting those odds in his favor has been something Capt. Matthew Bacik, 28, a former Army Ranger who was stationed at Fort Benning in Columbus, Ga., has had to work hard at since he officially finished his tour.

On July 22, 2005, Bacik's life changed forever when the unit he was part of was attacked with an IED (improvised explosive device) en route to a target near Baghdad.

"I'd dealt with IED attacks before,"

*'My wife has been great through all this and the support of family and friends has made all the difference.'*

**Capt. Matthew Bacik**

said Bacik, a native of Cleveland, Ohio.

Bacik had dealt with a total of six incidents in which the platoon he was part of encountered IEDs — he was wounded in three. In the final and most severe injury he suffered, his right leg was badly damaged by a number of shrapnel wounds.

"When the bomb went off, I knew my foot was gone," said Bacik as he sat in one of the rooms of the Alabama Artificial Limb & Orthopedic Service Inc. office.

"But when you're a soldier, if you get hit you know exactly what you need to do and that your buddies will take care of you."

Following his injury, Bacik spent a couple of months at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center and endured about a surgery a month until February 2006 when he made the decision to have his right leg amputated about halfway below the knee.

"I couldn't walk on the leg so, I was confined to a wheelchair for about eight months," recalls Bacik, who is now a business student at Auburn

SEE HONORED, PAGE 8A

## Officials comment on DUI law proposal

JAIME LAKIN  
WRBL

Alabama Gov. Bob Riley wants law makers to toughen the state's DUI laws. On Tuesday, he held a press conference in Montgomery to talk about his proposal on how to do that.

Riley's proposal would beef up the penalties for DUI convictions and close a "loophole" in the current law to allow every DUI offense to count toward felony status, according to a release the Governor's office issued following the announcement.

Under the current law which was amended in 2006, a repeat DUI offender only reaches felony status if they commit four DUI offenses within a five year period. The proposal would do away with that time element — a fact that local law enforcement say they believe is not only a good idea, but a matter of public safety.

"It's absolutely a public safety issue," said Lee County District Attorney Nick Abbett. "It should be fixed because I've got people indicted for felony DUI that because of the 2006 amendment, I'm having to work out pleas for first offense DUIs because their priors are more than 5 years old."

Under the current law, first, second and third DUI offenses carry a misdemeanor charge and lesser penalties, but prior convictions bring "enhancements" to those penalties and the time element plays a factor then in if and how those prior offenses can be considered in sentencing.

Lee County Sheriff Jay Jones said his office feels like it is part of its mission to help keep people safe on the roadways in Lee County and he is also in favor of a change to the law.

"It is something that affects all of us either directly or indirectly," he said, adding that

SEE DUI, PAGE 8A

## Student won't cut hair even though taken off football team

BEVERLY HARVEY  
STAFF WRITER

A 16-year-old Opelika High School student, who was taken off the football team for having hair that was too long, has decided not to cut his locks or return to the team.

Da'Ron Anthony made the decision to keep his almost-shoulder-length hair after his father, Robert Vaughns, addressed the Opelika Board of Education during its regular meeting Tuesday to discuss the issue.

Anthony was asked to leave the football field by head coach Spence McCracken earlier this season because his hair was "protruding" from his helmet, which he was told is

*'I think he's cute as a button, personally. But if it's a rule, it's a rule. You can't bend it.'*

**Patsy Parker**  
Board member

a safety risk and against school rules, Vaughns said.

Vaughns said he was never contacted by any of the football coaches regarding his son needing a haircut or concerning his apparent removal from the football team. Vaughns said he was also unable to get an appointment to discuss the issue with the

school board meeting.

"We addressed the issue (with coaches) ... and made sure they understood that we need to be communicating with the parents," Neighbors said. "If we are going to remove a child from playing, the parent needs to know why."

Board member Patsy Parker agreed that the manner in which the coaches dealt with Vaughns was "totally disrespectful" of him as a parent, but she also stressed the need for students to follow rules.

"I think he's cute as a button, personally," Parker said of Anthony, who attended the meeting with his

McCracken did not attend the

SEE CUT, PAGE 8A