



Marietta Daily Journal

April 18, 2008

Cobb's Local News Source Since 1866

★ 142nd year, No. 109 ♦ 50 cents

Romance shakes up state DOT

Board chair resigns to pursue relationship with commissioner

By Shannon McCaffrey
Associated Press Writer

The chairman of the powerful state Department of Transportation board stepped down on Thursday, saying he wants to pursue a budding romance with the department commissioner he helped put in office.

Mike Evans said he and Gena Abraham have developed a relationship that "we both want to be more than just professional."

"She's become my friend and as that friendship has developed we realized there was a possibility of something more than just a friendship," Evans told the board at a packed meeting.



Mike Evans



Gena Abraham

Ms. Abraham, chosen by Gov. Sonny Perdue to lead the troubled department, has been at the helm for just five months. She declined to comment after the meeting, disappearing into her office with Evans. Both Evans and Ms. Abraham are divorced, a DOT spokesman said.

There was no word on Ms. Abraham's future with the department. A special board meeting was scheduled for Monday.

As a result of Evans' resignation, DOT board Vice Chairman Garland Pinholster of Ball Ground now will serve as acting chairman until the regular board elections in June. Pinholster represents all of Cherokee County, and parts of Cobb, Fulton and DeKalb counties.

See Romance, Page 3A

MARIETTA / COBB

Gas main breaks cause traffic jams



Staff photos by Thinh D. Nguyen

Above: A repair crew works on a gas main break at the intersection of the South Marietta Parkway and Atlanta Road near Powder Springs — all major thoroughfares through the city. **Below:** Traffic begins to back up in the area near Old Clay Street as the afternoon commute rush-hour traffic builds.

Commute headache begins before lanes cleared

By Talia Mollett
Marietta Daily Journal Staff Writer

The county had three minor gas main breaks Thursday — two in the city of Marietta and one in unincorporated Cobb. Both Marietta breaks happened almost simultaneously around 3 p.m. on South Marietta Parkway, causing two sections of the road to be shut down and leading to a traffic backup when the commute traffic began to build around 4 p.m.

No injuries or evacuations were reported as a result of the three gas main breaks. The breaks were repaired by 5 p.m. and all lanes

were re-opened about 10 minutes later, said Matthew Daly with the city of Marietta.

The first break happened on South Marietta Parkway at Wylie Road.

Marietta Officer Mark Bishop said a construction crew was in the area digging when workers hit the gas line. Two east-bound lanes on the parkway were shut down as a result, causing Cobb residents to divert during rush hour.

The second gas leak on the parkway was at the corner of South Marietta and Atlanta Road. South Marietta Parkway was

See Traffic, Page 3A



Post-traumatic stress affects 1 in 5 troops

Toll estimated at 300,000 or more

By Pauline Jelinek
Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Roughly one in every five U.S. troops who have survived the bombs and other dangers of Iraq and Afghanistan now suffers from major depression or post-traumatic stress, an independent study said Thursday. It estimated the toll at 300,000 or more.

As many or more report possible brain injuries from explosions or other head wounds, said the study, the first major survey from outside the government.

Only about half of those with mental health problems have sought treatment. Even fewer of those with head injuries have seen doctors.

Army Surgeon General Eric Schoomaker said the report, from the Rand Corp., was welcome.

"They're helping us to raise the visibility and the attention that's needed by the American public at large," said Schoomaker, a lieutenant general. "They are making this a national debate."

The researchers said 18.5 percent of current and former service members contacted in a recent survey reported symptoms of depression or post-traumatic stress. Based on Pentagon data that more than 1.6 million have deployed to the two wars, the researchers calculated that about 300,000 are suffering mental health problems.

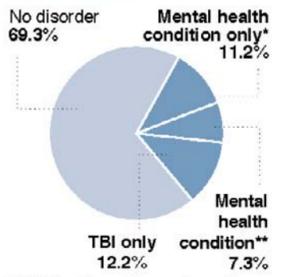
Nineteen percent — or an estimated 320,000 — may have suffered head injuries, the study calculated. Those range from mild concussions to severe, penetrating head wounds.

"There is a major health crisis facing those men and women who have served our nation in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Terri

Mental stress among military vets

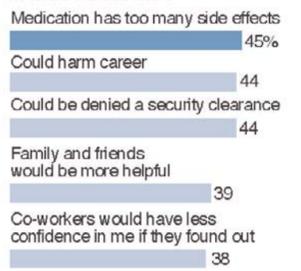
More than 30 percent of U.S. troops who served in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars suffer from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder or experienced a traumatic brain injury.

Percentage with mental health condition



*PTSD or depression, no traumatic brain injury ** PTSD or depression and traumatic brain injury

Top 5 barriers to seeking mental health care



SOURCE: RAND Corporation AP

Tanielian, the project's co-leader and a researcher at Rand. "Unless they receive appropriate and effective care for these mental health conditions, there will be long-term consequences for them and for the nation."

The study, the first large-scale, private assessment of its kind, includes a survey of 1,965 service members across the country, from all branches of the armed forces and including those still in the military as well as veterans who have completed their service.

See Stress, Page 4A

McCain winning back unhappy Republicans



By Alan Fram and Trevor Tompson
Associated Press Writers

WASHINGTON — Growing numbers of people like what they see in John McCain, vaulting him into a tie with the two Democratic presidential contenders just a few months after Republicans faced a steep disadvantage.

The Arizona senator has made a race of the White House contest by attracting disgruntled GOP voters, independents and even some moderate Democrats who shunned his party last fall, according to an Associated Press-Yahoo News poll released Thursday. About two-thirds of them have grown disenchanted with President Bush despite voting for him in 2004, including many GOP-leaning independents, while the remaining third usually support Democrats but like McCain anyway.

While McCain's image with voters has progressed since November, it is far from overwhelmingly strong. Yet he has done better than his two rivals: Opinions of Hillary Rodham Clinton have soured slightly since the fall, while views of Barack Obama have improved though less impressively than McCain's.

"I'm left with McCain as the best of a weak field," said David Chojnacki, 68, a retired judge from West Seneca, N.Y., in a followup interview.

By tracking the same group of roughly 2,000 people throughout the campaign, the AP-Yahoo poll can gauge how individual views are evolving.

The findings of the survey, conducted by Knowledge Networks, provide a preview of one of this fall's battlegrounds. Though some unhappy Republicans will doubtless stay with McCain, voters now shifting toward him include many centrist swing voters who will be targeted by both parties.

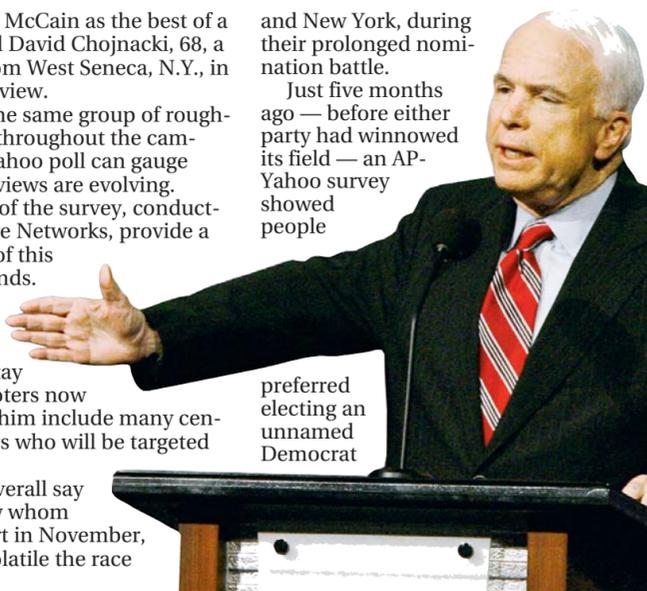
One in five overall say they don't know whom they will support in November, showing how volatile the race remains.

The poll shows McCain's appeal has grown while the Democrats' has dwindled — suggesting he may be aided by the continued scuffling between Obama and Clinton, the senators from Illinois

and New York, during their prolonged nomination battle.

Just five months ago — before either party had winnowed its field — an AP-Yahoo survey showed people

preferred electing an unnamed Democrat



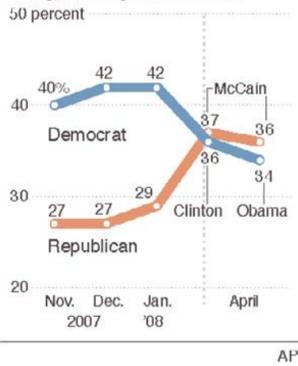
over a Republican by 40 percent to 27 percent. Now, McCain gets about 10 percentage points more than the

See McCain, Page 3A

Switching sides

In November 2007, more people preferred a Democrat as president over a Republican by 13 percent. Now, John McCain is about tied with both Democratic rivals.

If the 2008 general election for president were being held today, would you vote for ...



Inside

Advice	2D	Deaths	3B
Bridge	2D	Lifestyle	1D
Business	8B	Lottery	2A
Classifieds	5D	Movies	3D
Cobb	1B	Opinion	6A
Comics	7C	Sports	1C
Crossword	5D	TV	6C

FORECAST



Today 76 Tonight 51

Weather, 8A

Click us @
mdjonline.com

Contact us/Page 2A



7 87396 00001 1