



WEATHER

Mostly sunny
94/66



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ENTERTAINMENT



Manager: Spears not slated to perform at MTV Video Music Awards.

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SPORTS



Former area basketball player Brandi Akin (left) created Shooting for Success, a program to benefit Arkansas River Valley children with special needs.

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AROUND THE STATE



■ Foster ban on state ballot would eliminate waivers.
■ Revised survey: Sugg highest-paid school official.

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AROUND THE NATION



■ ICE: Nearly 600 detained in Mississippi plant raid.
■ FAA: Communication failure at Ga. facility that processes flight plans causing delays.

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City council dissolves finance position

Action calls mayor's hire into question

By Adam Franks
crime@couriernews.com

The Russellville City Council voted to pass an ordinance re-establishing the offices of city clerk and city treasurer at a special meeting Tuesday evening, effectively eliminating the position of city finance director.

Mayor Tyrone Williamson announced earlier Tuesday he hired an experienced Russellville financial consultant to serve as the city's director of finance.

When asked after the meeting how the reorganization would affect the hiring, Alderman Phil Caruth was definitive.

"The position has been eliminated," he said. Williamson, who was not present at the meeting, said in a telephone interview following the

meeting the man he hired, Monty W. Kasselmann, would assume the position of city treasurer.

"I hired [Kasselmann] before they took it out from under me. I knew [the council] would try to do something, so I hired him before they could do that," Williamson said. "They have bones to pick, and I don't have time for all of that. I'm trying to do what's best for the city of Russellville."

Councilwomen Freddie Harris and Faye Abernathy were also absent from the meeting Tuesday night, after which Harris contacted a Courier reporter and said she was not officially informed of the proceeding.

The Courier's newsroom received notice of the meeting via fax at about 3 p.m. Tuesday.

"[Alderman] Robert Wiley tried to convince me Monday night to vote for this resolution to move the treasurer position back under the council," Harris told The Courier. "He said 'We need to have a meet-

ing before Tyrone can hire somebody else.' No one called me telling me there was a meeting. I would have been there; I would not have missed it. I'm tired of all the games that have been going on in the past few weeks. It's not in the best interest of the city of Russellville that we keep fighting like this."

Wiley denied Harris' statements and declined to comment further on the matter.

"I don't remember saying that," he said when reached by telephone, adding "I'm not going to play these games. I'm just trying to keep the peace."

Wiley also indicated it was the responsibility of city human resources director Christi Williams to notify the entire council about special called meetings.

Williams, who is working from home following a medical procedure, said each alderman was

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17.9 percent in state below poverty line

By Jon Gambrell
Associated Press writer

LITTLE ROCK (AP) — Arkansas continues to have one of the nation's highest poverty rates and lowest median household incomes, as high gas prices and housing worries still trouble the country, new U.S. Census Bureau data shows.

Data from the American Community Survey, released Tuesday, shows 17.9 percent of Arkansans subsist on earnings beneath the federal poverty line in 2007. Workers in Arkansas brought home a median income of \$38,134 during the year.

Academics and policy advocates say the low wages hurt single parents and especially children, as data shows one in every four children in Arkansas live in homes earning under the poverty level. However, the statistics do not reflect this year's troubles in the mortgage market and gasoline prices still about 80 cents a gallon higher than a year ago.

"The reality of these numbers are worse than what they're showing us," said Kevin Fitzpatrick, a sociology professor at the University of Arkansas. "There are more people looking into shelters and showing up in soup kitchens and trying to access services this year in 2008 than ... last year."

A growing demand for services for the poor is indicated in the number of people using food stamps in Arkansas, which grew

See POVERTY on page 2

London fire claims life, home



THE COURIER / Cindi Nobles

A London mobile home fire claimed the life of a Russellville woman early Tuesday morning.

Coroner: State police investigating blaze

By Adam Franks
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A Russellville woman was discovered dead in the remains of a west London mobile home that caught fire early Tuesday morning.

Stacy L. Taylor, 40, was found under a pile of clothes in the Price Road home at about 1:30 a.m. She was pronounced dead by Pope County Coroner Leonard Krout.

According to a report by the Pope County Sheriff's Office, William W. Hurst Jr., 37, of Russellville brought Taylor to the residence from a friend's house. Misty Loveless, 24, the occupant of the residence, was walking Hurst out to his car when she received a phone call from Taylor, who asked Loveless to "please come back

to the residence because she did not want to be alone." When Loveless and Hurst went to the rear of the residence about 30 seconds later, they noticed flames and smoke coming from the room where the victim was located, the report continued.

Loveless and Hurst made several attempts to get Taylor out of the residence, the report stated.

Loveless told investigators there "might have been electrical problems in the breaker box," and that "there were several candles burning in the residence," the report stated. Terry Loveless, Misty Loveless' father and owner of the residence, corroborated her statements, according to the report.

The body is being sent to the State Crime Lab in Little Rock. Krout said the Arkansas State Police, Pope County Sheriff's Office and London Fire Department are investigating the matter.

Yield to pedestrians



Shawn Breeden (left), Jody White and Kris Sanford (back, drill operator) with All Service Electric Inc. of Hot Springs work together Tuesday morning digging a hole at the northeast corner of East Main Street and Weir Road for a pedestrian signal pole. The company will replace all of the signal lights at the intersection during the next few weeks.

THE COURIER / Joshua Mashon

Hang glider rescued with Black Hawk

MORRILTON (AP) — A hang glider who got stuck in a tree after taking off from Petit Jean Mountain was rescued by a Black Hawk helicopter team from the Arkansas National Guard, and safely returned to earth.

John Jenkins, 51, of Dardanelle took off about 5 p.m. Monday from private property near Petit Jean State Park, but a gust of wind caught his glider and blew him into some trees, Conway County Chief Deputy Sheriff Sonny Stover said.

Jenkins was suspended about 40 feet off the ground and couldn't release his harness to get out and climb down the tree, Stover said. Park rangers tried to rescue him but could not get to where he was stuck on the side of the mountain.

They called the National Guard, which flew in about 8 p.m. and lowered a team member from the UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter, who was able to reach Jenkins and lift him back into the helicopter.

Stover said Jenkins was not injured and did not have to go to a hospital. The rescue took about five

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This day in HISTORY

A year ago in The Courier
Aug. 27, 2007

Trooper finds cocaine cache
Trooper Chris Goodman found a brick of cocaine, street valued at \$100,000, in a box of laundry detergent when searching a car he stopped on I-40.

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