

TODAY'S FORECAST



Mostly sunny, warm
High 96 — Low 66
Details: C12

Thursday
August 28, 2008

50 Cents
Designated areas higher

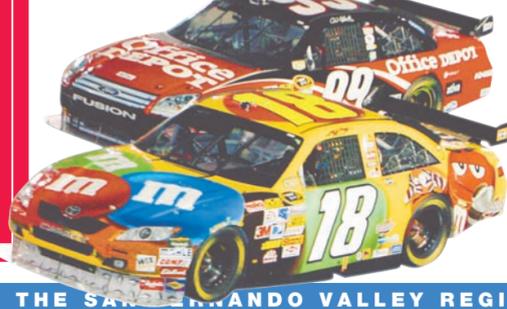
Daily News

DailyNews.com

NASCAR'S YOUNG GUNS

Kyle Busch and Carl Edwards lead the charge into Fontana

SPORTS C1



READERS CHOICE

Check out the best food, places and services in the L.A. area

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Staying home for the holiday

TRAVEL: With gas prices still high and the economy shaky, this year's Labor Day exodus is expected to be less crowded.

By Sue Doyle
Staff Writer

Don't let the recent dip in gas prices fool you.

Despite the declining costs, fewer Southern Californians will be hitting the roads this Labor Day weekend, opting instead to lounge in their inflatable backyard pools or flip burgers on the grill.

This weekend, holiday travel — which includes driving and flying — is expected

to be 1.4 percent lower than last year, when the number of Labor Day vacationers rose 1 percent, according to the Automobile Club of Southern California.

That's partly because even though gas prices have dropped for more than six consecutive weeks — to \$3.92 a gallon for regular unleaded in the Los Angeles area — that's still \$1.15 a gallon higher than a year ago.

"It's been a tough year for gas prices.

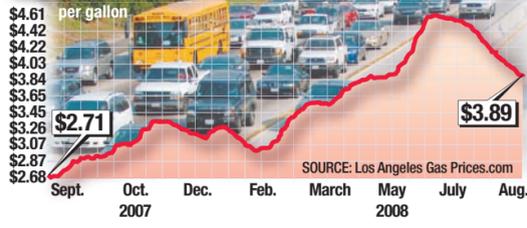
They're coming down fast. It's great," said Marie Montgomery, spokeswoman for the Auto Club.

"But you still see those \$4 prices out there."

And those prices, coupled with a sluggish economy and California's 7.3 percent unemployment rate — a 12-year high — have caused many families to think twice about packing up the car and cruising up the coast.

More than 2.7 million Southern Califor-

Regular gas prices



HOLIDAY/A6

VOTE 2008 NATIONAL ELECTION

King's 'Dream' takes on new life



John Lazar/Staff Photographer

Morris Pichon, with his wife, Barbara, in the front yard of their Pacoima home, says Barack Obama's presidential nomination is historic and hopeful.

DNC: Barack Obama is first of his race to capture major-party presidential nod.

By David Espo
The Associated Press

DENVER — Barack Obama stepped triumphantly into history Wednesday night, the first black American to win a major party presidential nomination, as thousands of Democrats transformed their convention hall into a joyful, shouting celebration.

"I think the convention's gone pretty well so far; what do you think," called out the Democrats' man of the hour in a surprise late-night visit to the hall. The crowd thundered its approval, and he and running mate Joe Biden basked in the cheers.

Obama implored the delegates to help him "take back

DEMS/A21



Paul Sancya/The Associated Press
Barack Obama and Democratic vice presidential candidate Joe Biden appear Wednesday at the DNC in Denver.



Emmanuel Dunand/AFP/Getty Images

Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama lays a wreath at the tomb of Martin Luther King Jr. and his wife, Coretta Scott King, in January.



Barack Obama speaks tonight. Watch his speech live at our Web site. For more on the DNC, including video, more photos and to check out our blog, go to dailynews.com.



On Aug. 28, 1963, at the Lincoln Memorial, civil-rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I Have a Dream" speech, credited with prompting passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

AFP/Getty Images

BLACKS: In Valley, African-Americans have become part of the middle class.

By Tony Castro
Staff Writer

The seminal moment in the lives of many African-Americans who came of age in the 1960s often is related to the civil-rights movement: the Supreme Court desegregation of public schools, the freedom marches in the South, the "I Have a Dream" speech by Martin Luther King Jr.

But Morris Pichon, himself a son of the South, says the most pivotal moment in his life occurred this year.

"The Iowa caucuses," said Pichon, a 66-year-old retired Lockheed Martin Corp. manufacturing analyst who lives in Pacoima with his wife, Barbara. "When I saw that Caucasians in Iowa were going to the polls and voting overwhelmingly for Barack Obama, a black man, I knew that for the first time, after all these years, Americans had woken up."

"American Caucasians were judging a black man on something other than the color of his skin, and I knew: This is a new America."

Pichon's new America takes another step forward tonight when Obama gives his speech accepting the Democratic nomination, becoming the first African-American presidential nominee of a major political party.

BLACKS/A25

Antelope Valley in a retail spurt

BUSINESS: Commercial, industrial projects stay in fast lane despite housing slowdown.

By Karen Maeshiro
Staff Writer

ANTELOPE VALLEY — The economy is sluggish and homebuilding is in a slump, but new stores, restaurants and hotels are sprouting up in the Antelope Valley, where land remains cheap and the population is growing.

Projects that were approved and launched during boom times are under construction now throughout Palmdale, as on the east side and at the Antelope Valley Mall, and throughout Lancaster, especially in the northwest near Fox Field.

Construction also began this year on a seven-story Embassy Suites hotel in Palmdale, which will be the tallest building in the Antelope Valley. City officials also hope for a conference center at the site.

"We are a region of 430,000 people, and we are not going away," said Vern Lawson Jr., Lancaster's economic development and redevelopment director. "Retailers want to be in a position to serve us."

The current retail development is a product of preparation and local government's approval when the nation's overall economy was stronger.

For example, in 2005-06, Palmdale officials



ONLINE POLL
Will the A.V.'s construction boom benefit the overall economy? Vote at dailynews.com.

BUILD/A6



Ariana Cubillos/The Associated Press

Women walk through a flooded street during heavy rains in southern Haiti on Wednesday.

TOP OF THE NEWS

■ Assessors in L.A. and Ventura counties warn homeowners to be on the lookout for a "Property Tax Reassessment" scam letter.

A3

■ On the eve of Hurricane Katrina's third anniversary, New Orleans waits as another storm threatens to test everything rebuilt in the city.

A8

■ U.S. thrifts lose \$5.4 billion in the second quarter and set a record amount to cover losses from bad mortgages and other loans.

BUSINESS A23



Volume 97 Number 241



CRIME CENTRAL

Follow along with Daily News reporters as they give you the inside scoop on crime in and around the Valley. Go to dailynews.com/crime to peruse our homicide map, track sex offenders or to submit a tip.



THE SPORTS DESK

Sports Editor Kevin Modesti not only comments on the big sports stories of the moment — he talks about what makes them big. Check out his blog at blogs.dailynews.com/sportsdesk for an inside look at covering sports.

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