

TIMES RECORD

TODAY IN BUSINESS

OFFICIAL LINKS RAIL, JOBS PAGE 5C



TODAY IN NATION & WORLD

PHILLIPS HAS 'BOYS PLAYING GREAT DEFENSE

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INMATE ESCAPES CUSTODY

CALIFORNIA MAN SUSPECTED OF MURDER FLEES AT REST STOP NEAR VAN BUREN

By Amy Sherrill

TIMES RECORD • ASHERILL@SWTIMES.COM

A California man being transported Wednesday by a private prisoner transport company escaped in Van Buren during a stop for a bathroom break, authorities said.

Justin Patrick Welch, 26, of French Camp, Calif., attacked a guard at about 2:45 a.m. at a rest area in Van Buren off

Interstate 40, said Lt. Brent Grill of the Van Buren Police Department.

Welch allegedly used a tire plug tool to stab a guard from the Columbus, Miss.-based North Atlantic Extradition Service,



Welch

a private prisoner transport company. The guard had just escorted Welch and four other inmates to the bathroom. Welch stole the guard's gun after stabbing him and then fled the bathroom, Grill said.

Once outside, Welch confronted the second guard. The second guard, who was unarmed, was asleep in the van and not aware of the stop. Welch shot at the guard

in the van, but missed, police said. Welch was able to leave the area in the transport van, a white 2007 Dodge.

It is unknown at this point how Welch may have acquired the tire tool, police said.

A nationwide manhunt is under way for Welch's capture, Grill said.

The van is marked on both sides with the letters

"NAES" and below those letters it has "North Atlantic Extradition Service." The vehicle has Mississippi license LTC537.

Inside the van is a cell phone belonging to one of the guards as well as civilian clothes and guard uniforms, Grill said.

The guard was taken to a local hospital, where he was treated and released.

The four other prisoners were taken to the Crawford County Jail, where they were held until NAES dispatched a second transport van to Van Buren, Grill said.

Welch is considered by authorities to be armed and dangerous. He is accused of traveling to Wisconsin and stabbing a woman to death as part of a murder-for-hire

SEE INMATE BACK PAGE

Alamo's 'Wives' Awarded \$500,000

EVANGELIST TO PAY RESTITUTION

By Jill Zeman Bleed

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEXARKANA, Ark. — Five young women who testified last year that evangelist Tony Alamo took them as "wives" and sexually assaulted them when they were minors are entitled to \$500,000 each from his multi-million-dollar ministry, a federal judge ruled Wednesday.

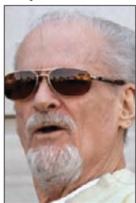
U.S. District Judge Harry F. Barnes ordered restitution after a government witness said the women suffered physical and mental pain at the hands of Alamo, who is serving a 175-year prison sentence for taking the women when they were underage across state lines for sex.

In his ruling, Barnes noted that each of the victims was assaulted by someone they regarded as a pastor and prophet.

"The defendant has truly, truly damaged these five young girls, and I don't think any amount of money this court can order can replace their loss," Barnes said.

Prosecutors said they were confident Alamo, 75, could afford the \$2.5 million judgment even though most of his assets are held in his followers' names.

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Alamo

NANUK OF THE NORTH SIDE



J.P. Owings and Rebecca LaFerr walk Nanuk, a German shepherd, Wednesday at Creekmore Park. The couple said they walk every day.

KAIA LARSEN • TIMES RECORD

Agencies Say Give Money For Haiti Aid

CASH BEST WAY TO LEND HAND TO QUAKE-DEVASTATED COUNTRY

By Rusty Garrett

TIMES RECORD • RGARRETT@SWTIMES.COM

RELATED STORIES PAGE 7A

Concern for the plight of the hundreds of thousands left injured and homeless by the devastating earthquake Tuesday in Haiti has prompted a desire among many to offer help, local service organization leaders say.

"The fastest and best way to get help to Haiti is to donate money," Susan Krafft with the American Red Cross said Wednesday.

Krafft is director of communications for the Northwest Arkansas chapter of the Red Cross and director of the Fort Smith service center.

Krafft said Wednesday direct help by the local unit in disaster recovery has not been requested. She said the American Red Cross has pledged money and supplies, and is urging those who want to help to make personal donations as well.

"We have Red Cross offices and supplies on Haiti and more on the way," Krafft said.

Krafft said donations can be made to the Red Cross either on its Web site, www.redcross.org; by telephone, to 800-REDCROSS; or even by text message.

In participation with most wireless phone carriers, customers can donate to the Red Cross by typing GIVE on a text message sent to the number 24357. That action will add a \$5 charge to the caller's monthly phone

bill. The company forwards 100 percent of the donated amount to the Red Cross.

Krafft said donors should specify their donation is for Haiti relief. By their address, the Red Cross will note the origin of the money sent from local donors, she said, crediting it to the Western Arkansas chapter.

Capt. Carlyle Gargis with the Fort Smith unit of the Salvation Army said his organization has also recommended that those interested in helping Haitian refugees should give money.

Directly shipping clothing, food or other relief supplies from Fort Smith would be too costly, he said.

The Salvation Army also has facilities on Haiti and is accepting donations on its toll-free phone line, 800-SAL-ARMY or through its Web site, www.salvation-army.org.

"If people want to send the donation here, they can go ahead and do it," Gargis said, adding they should specify it is for Haiti. The local office will forward the donation, he said.

The U.S. State Department has also recommended monetary donations by people who want to help. A link on the State Department's Internet site, www.state.org, leads

SEE HAITI BACK PAGE

Panel OKs Methods For Funding Roads

By Rob Moritz

ARKANSAS NEWS BUREAU RMORITZ@ARKANSASNEWS.COM

LITTLE ROCK — A state panel Wednesday endorsed three options for generating additional money for state highway improvements and voted to take the proposals on the road to get public input.

The Blue Ribbon Committee on Highway Finance approved a recommendation to shift \$425 million

annually from state general revenues, a move Gov. Mike Beebe has said he opposes, and two proposals to raise taxes.

One of the tax measures would index motor fuel taxes based on the annual Construction Cost Index increase, which is a general measure of inflation associated with construction commodities. The other would levy an excise tax on the wholesale price of motor fuel.

SEE FUNDS BACK PAGE

GETTING STARTED

IN THE NEWS

Budget Panel OKs Beebe's Proposals

LITTLE ROCK

— A legislative panel Wednesday endorsed Gov. Mike Beebe's recommended budgets for the state Department of Education, Department of Correction and Department of Community Correction.

FULL STORY, 2A

Parks Panel Sets West End Fees

By Wanda Freeman

TIMES RECORD • WFREEMAN@SWTIMES.COM

Visitors of the Park at West End can look forward to cheap thrills when the Ferris wheel and carousel begin to spin in April, thanks to a decision Wednesday setting ride fees at \$1 apiece.

The Parks and Recreation Commission voted unanimously on the new fee, which will take effect when the privately owned park opens under city management around Easter.

Under a contract ap-

proved by the Board of Directors in December, the Parks Department leased the downtown amusement park for a one-year trial period, which began Jan. 2. If the agreement is renewed, the rent — now \$1 — will go up to \$6,000 a year.

The city is responsible for landscaping as well as daily operations and maintenance of the rides, while owner Phil White will handle major repairs.

The seven-member commission also voted unanimously to set party and private rental rates:

• Birthday parties will be \$50, which allows for up to 10 people to ride free for an hour during normal park hours.

• Before or after regular hours, private parties will be \$350 for a three-hour event.

• Private parties scheduled during regular hours, which would require the amusement park to be closed to the public for up to three hours, would cost \$750.

The park will operate between Easter and Halloween. During the spring and fall months, it will be open

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