

COUGARS IN CONTROL

Foothill High's wrestling team wins more matches than Shasta to post an EAL dual victory and move to 2-0. **Sports, B-4**

KEEPING THAT SMILE

Dentists stress that parents start taking care of their children's teeth right at infancy. **Health, C-1**

A SMOKING FAILURE

For the second consecutive year, Shasta County receives an "F" for its failure to enact tougher limits on tobacco. **Local, B-1**



RECORD Searchlight

THURSDAY JANUARY 14, 2010 REDDING, CALIFORNIA 46 CENTS LOCAL B1 SPORTS B4 HEALTH C1 COMICS C3 CLASSIFIED C5

Foreclosure activity hits record high

Filings reported on 2,520 properties in county in '09

By David Benda

Record Searchlight

RealtyTrac reported today that foreclosure activity in Shasta County in 2009 reached its highest level in the five years the online database has been tracking the area.

A total of 4,390 foreclosure filings — default notices, scheduled foreclosure auctions and bank repossessions — were reported on 2,520 properties last year in Shasta County, a 102 percent jump in filings and a 54 percent increase in properties.

The number of homes in Shasta County that received a foreclosure filing in 2009 increased 469 percent from 2006, a year values in the north state's real estate market peaked.

Meanwhile, bank-owned properties contributed significantly to home sales last year in Shasta County, with about 50 percent of all transactions coming from either a short sale or closed escrow on a bank repo.

"They played a much bigger role than last year (2008)," Redding real estate agent Brad Garbutt said. Garbutt estimated that homes in distress accounted for about a third of all sales in 2008.

Nationwide, a total of 3,957,643 foreclosure filings on 2,824,674 properties were recorded in 2009, RealtyTrac reported today. The report showed that 2.2 percent, or 1 in 45, of all U.S. housing units received at least one foreclosure filing in 2009.

In Shasta County, 3.3 percent, or 1 in 30, of all housing units received at least one foreclosure filing during the past year.

See FORECLOSURE, A-5



Nathan Morgan / Record Searchlight

Houses in the Highland Park subdivision all have sub-surface drip-irrigation systems installed in lawns.

Landscaping to save water in subdivision

By David Benda

Record Searchlight

Home builder Jeb Allen has gotten the jump on a new citywide landscape program that could cut water usage in Redding up to 30 percent.

Among the water-saving measures Allen has installed in his Highland Park subdivision are a subterranean lawn sprinkler system and a timer that is synced with the weather so it automatically adjusts to conditions — no more sprinklers going on in the rain.

"I drive down into subdivisions where you have the water running down the gutters all the time," said Allen, who co-owns Palomar Builders Inc.

"We have got all these measures for energy and lights ... but nobody pays attention to this water going down the gutters."

Redding's "Water Efficient Landscape" program was adopted this month after a 2006 state mandate that required local agencies to enact water-conservation efforts by Jan. 1, 2010.

The new technology and water-saving program in Highland Park is expected to add \$1,000 to the

See LANDSCAPING, A-5

Report alleges misconduct

Investigation finds Piccinini created hostile workplace

By Dylan Darling

Record Searchlight

ANDERSON — Joe Piccinini created a hostile work environment at the Anderson Fire Protection District by misusing district property and funds, driving his pick-up after drinking and harassing female workers in his 20 months as chief, a district report released Wednesday claims.

In the report, Anderson's former police chief, Neil Purcell, substantiated several allegations against the former fire district chief.

The report was made public Wednesday by court order after the Record Searchlight filed a state Public Records Act



Joe Piccinini

More online

To watch video and to read the 41-page report, go to Redding.com.

suit against the district.

Piccinini resigned July 1 after the district board put him on administrative leave in May as the investigation commenced.

"Clearly Piccinini has

compromised honesty, fairness and integrity," Purcell concluded in the report.

Purcell — hired by the district to investigate the allegations — wrote that Piccinini created a brutal work environment, which included bursts of offensive language and temper tantrums.

"His inability to take

See PICCININI, A-5

Jury recommends death for Varner



Andreas Fuhrmann / Record Searchlight

A Shasta County jury unanimously agreed to recommend the death penalty for Scott Paul Varner, who was convicted in October of murdering a Redding woman.

Man convicted of murdering Redding woman in 2005

By Jim Schultz

Record Searchlight

After only about four hours of deliberations, a Shasta County jury unanimously agreed Wednesday to recommend the death penalty for Scott Paul Varner, convicted of murdering a Redding woman in 2005.

Varner, 28, stared straight ahead and showed no reaction as the jury's verdict was read.

A death penalty sentence carries with it an automatic appeal.

The seven-man, five-woman jury was given the case about 4 p.m.

Tuesday after attorneys delivered lengthy closing arguments.

It resumed its deliberations about 9 a.m. Wednesday, and its verdict was reached shortly after 1:30 p.m.

The same jury convicted Varner in October of first-degree murder and other related charges in the strangulation death of 35-year-old Jeanette Renee Marieth of Redding.

Deputy District Attorney Kelly Kafel, who was greeted by jurors outside the courtroom after their decision, hugged several.

"Thank you so much," she said,

telling them that the seven-month trial was one of the longest — if not the longest — in Shasta County history. "You guys sick of this place, or what? I get paid for being here."

Jury foreman Richard Heath, 48, of Redding said later that recommending the death penalty for Varner was not done lightly.

"That was the main theme," he said. "Who are we to decide if someone lives or dies? It is the hardest decision I ever made."

He praised Kafel for helping to

See VARNER, A-5

HAITI EARTHQUAKE

Death toll could reach into tens of thousands

By Jonathan M. Katz

Associated Press

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti — Dazed survivors wandered past dead bodies in rubble-strewn streets Wednesday, crying for loved ones, and rescuers desperately searched collapsed buildings as fear rose that the death toll from Haiti's devastating earthquake could reach into the tens of thousands.

The first cargo planes

More inside

The FBI warns Internet users of scams related to Haiti earthquake relief efforts. **Local, B-1**

with food, water, medical supplies, shelter and sniffer dogs headed to the Western Hemisphere's poorest nation a day after the magnitude-7.0 quake flattened much of the capital of 2 million people.

See EARTHQUAKE, A-3



Patrick Farrell / The Miami Herald

A family rushes an injured girl to a hospital in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, on Wednesday. The earthquake on Tuesday left a landscape of collapsed buildings.

STAYING IN THE COUP

Four chickens are allowed to stay in a Sacramento backyard after an uproar over code enforcement.

Milestones, B-2

NORTH STATE WEATHER

Get the latest weather conditions at redding.com/weather



Weather Central forecasts:

HIGH 60 LOW 38

Full weather report, A-6

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GOOD MORNING! Marsha Ham

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