

How chimps like Little Mama talk to each other



IN ACCENT

Back-to-school breaks

TAX-FREE WEEKEND BEGINS

IN LOCAL

SUMMER OLYMPICS



Gabby grabs gold in the All-Around

IN SPORTS

BREAKING NEWS AT PALMBEACHPOST.COM

WEATHER

TODAY: Chance of storms



HIGH: 91 LOW: 79

SATURDAY Storms likely 91/81

SUNDAY Storms likely 90/78

LIVE RADAR, PALMBEACHPOST.COM WEATHER PAGE, BACK OF SPORTS

The Palm Beach Post

Friday, August 3, 2012

REAL NEWS STARTS HERE

Final edition | One dollar

IN THE NEWS

Peace envoy to Syria resigns

The U.N.'s Kofi Annan exits in frustration, casting more doubt on a diplomatic solution. **3A**

NATION & WORLD

Tropical storm not immediate threat

Packing maximum sustained winds of 50 mph, Ernesto heads west into the Caribbean. **2A**

Aurora, Colo., aftermath:

Houston creates a video to teach residents what to do during a shooting. **2A**

Cybersecurity: The Senate fails to pass a bill protecting electrical grid and critical industries. **3A**

After U.S. election?: Palestinians seeking U.N. recognition debate the timing of the next push. **3A**

Tax split: Senators vote to renew business tax breaks; the House pushes fewer breaks but lower rates. **3A**

LOCAL & BUSINESS

W. Palm eliminates \$144,000-plus job

The city, facing a \$3 million budget gap, cuts Neil Melick, assistant to the city administrator. **1B**

Fall in ex-mall kills man:

A construction worker dies after falling 15 feet in closed Palm Beach Mall. **1B**

Marina decision: Boynton won't knock down the former Splashdown Divers dive shop anytime soon. **1B**

\$150 million job: Builders line up to work on Palm Beach Outlets, replacing Palm Beach Mall. **6B**

Publix reopens: Shoppers line up early at expanded Boynton Beach store. **6B**

SPORTS

Buzz: Garrard leads Dolphins QB chase

After one week of practice, David Garrard looks better than Matt Moore. **1C**

UM's contest: Junior Stephen Morris and sophomore Ryan Williams compete to start at QB. **1C**

Tougher training: Today, UF's Will Muschamp plans to start fixing a team that went 7-6 in 2011. **1C**

Dear Abby	2D
Classifieds	1E
Crosswords	5D, 3E
Deaths	4B
Horoscope	5D
Lottery	2B
Movie Listings	TGIF
Scoreboard	8C

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POST COVERAGE HOUSING MARKET

VACANCY BLIGHT

The county's high number of empty homes lowers values, increases crime and distresses neighbors.



BRANDON KRUSE / THE PALM BEACH POST

UNCARED FOR: Broken windows, trash and an unkempt yard mar a vacant home at 514 El Vedado in West Palm Beach. Only Detroit has more vacancies than Palm Beach County.

By Kimberly Miller
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

At the least, yellow phone books pile up, doorknob pizza fliers multiply and pools turn to swamp water.

At the worst, drug dealers loiter and raccoons move in.

Vacant homes abound in Palm Beach County in the wake of the housing bust, that's a given. But a new report adds empirical evidence to the anecdotes of knee-high grass and broken windows.

Palm Beach County ranks second among large metro regions for its percent of vacant homes, according to a study released Thursday by the real estate analysis firm Trulia.

With 6.7 percent of all housing units vacant as July, only Detroit is ahead with a 12.1 percent vacancy rate.

The study used U.S. Postal Service data that tallies "active" and vacant homes. Seasonal and vacation homes are not counted as vacant, the Trulia report says. A home is considered vacant 90 days after mail delivery to the address stops.

Jed Kolko, Trulia's chief economist and head of analytics, said he wasn't surprised Palm

Vacant homes continued on 8A



PHOTO BY SUSAN SCHONE

A vacant house at 619 Heron Drive in Delray Beach shows damage due to years of neglect. 'It's just a pit, it's awful,' said a neighbor.

METRO REGIONS WITH HIGHEST VACANCY RATES

Detroit	12.1 percent
Palm Beach County	6.7 percent
Tucson, Ariz.	6.6 percent
Broward County	6.6 percent
Gary, Ind.	6.6 percent
Dayton, Ohio	6.4 percent
Toledo, Ohio	6.4 percent
Cleveland	6.2 percent
Brevard County	5.8 percent
Las Vegas	5.8 percent

Source: Trulia

POST COVERAGE OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Rubio: Don't tax Olympians' prizes

He wants U.S. athletes' medals, honorariums exempt.

By John Kennedy
Palm Beach Post Capital Bureau

With Olympic fever at its height, Florida U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio has found a way to get on the medal stand.

The first-term Republican has introduced legislation that would shield American medal winners from paying taxes on their gold, silver and bronze winnings.

"Athletes representing our nation overseas in the Olympics shouldn't have to worry about an extra tax bill waiting for them back home," Rubio said, after introducing the Olympic Tax Elimination Act this week.

Along with their medals, American winners receive honorariums through the U.S. Olympic Committee, with cash



Sen. Marco Rubio, R-Fla., introduced legislation to shield medal winners from having to pay taxes on their winnings.

payments of \$25,000 for each gold, \$15,000 for silver and \$10,000 for bronze.

For athletes gazing misty-eyed during flag-raising ceremonies, the stark reality is that they'll owe a piece of their success to Uncle Sam. Federal tax law requires that athletes include the value of their medals and honorariums in their reported taxable income.

Americans for Tax Reform,

Medals continued on 5A

POST ON POLITICS PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Obama calls rival tax plan 'fairy dust'

He says Romney would hurt middle class.

By George Bennett
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

WINTER PARK — President Obama derided Mitt Romney's tax plan as "trickle-down tax-cut fairy dust" Thursday afternoon and told supporters that the millionaire businessman and presumptive GOP nominee would raise taxes on the middle class so "people like him" could get a tax cut.

For the second day in a row, Obama pointed to a study by a Washington think tank that said Romney's call for a 20 percent across-the-board cut in income tax rates would require gutting popular middle-class tax breaks like the deductions for mortgage interest and charitable contributions.

Senior Romney adviser Eric Fehrnstrom blasted the study by the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center as "a joke" that doesn't take into account economic



President Obama, visiting Central Florida on Thursday, pointed to a study by the nonpartisan Tax Policy Center in saying GOP challenger Mitt Romney's tax-cut proposal would actually raise rates for anyone earning less than \$200,000.

Obama continued on 4A

POST COVERAGE MILITARY BUDGET

Scott to Congress: Slashing defense a Florida job-killer

By John Lantigua
Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Florida Gov. Rick Scott wrote a letter Thursday to congressional leaders pleading with them to avoid cutting defense spending during this year's crucial budget negotiations, cuts he said would badly damage the state's economy.

Instead, he suggested they repeal the Affordable Care Act.

The looming \$492 billion reduction in defense appropriations over the next decade — part of a last-ditch agreement reached during the 2011 debt-ceiling crisis — would cost thousands of jobs in Florida just as the state is bouncing back from the recession, Scott said.

Scott wrote to House Speaker John Boehner, a Republican, and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a Democrat, and addressed the issue of "sequestration." That is the name for the agreement reached last year when Congress could not compromise on ways to reduce the deficit.

Military budget continued on 7A

IDENTITY THEFT

IRS paying ID thieves billions in tax refunds

It is detecting far fewer fraud cases than actually occur, an audit finds.

By Josh Lederman
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service may have delivered more than \$5 billion in refund checks to identity thieves who filed fraudulent tax returns for 2011, Treasury Department investigators said Thursday.

They estimated that another \$21 billion could make its way to ID thieves' pockets over the next five years.

The IRS is detecting far fewer fraudulent tax refund claims than actually occur, according to a government audit that warned the widespread problem could undermine public trust in the U.S. tax system. Al-

though the IRS detected about 940,000 fraudulent returns for last year claiming \$6.5 billion in refunds, there were potentially another 1.5 million undetected cases of thieves seeking refunds after assuming the identity of a dead person, child or someone else who normally wouldn't file a tax return.

In one example, investigators found a single address in Lansing, Mich., that was used to file 2,137 separate tax returns. The IRS issued more than \$3.3 million in refunds to that address. Three addresses in Florida filed more than 500 returns totaling more than \$1 million in refunds for each address.

In another troubling scenario, hundreds of refunds were deposited into the same bank account — a red flag for investigators searching for ID thieves

Tax fraud continued on 5A