



OPP GETS FIRST WIN!

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Residents unsure of new committee

A group of about 30 concerned residents turned out Friday night to voice their concerns over how a planning committee was formed to help improve the beloved Hardin Street Community Center in Opp.

President Penny Daniels said the committee serves to help improve the conditions of the community center, which houses a variety of community events and is in need of many repairs.

Daniels said they are currently working on securing computers for children in an after school program to be held at the center.

Additionally, the committee is working to get the building up to par and safe for those who use it.

Among the issues facing the 90-plus-year-old building are problems arising from lead paint.

Still, some residents of Opp's District 4 were concerned about how the committee was appointed; though, they were not upset about the improvements being made to the center.

These residents are, however, upset about complaint forms the committee has asked them to submit.

The process is

See **UNSURE**, page 5A

Andalusia man sentenced

An Andalusia man was sentenced to life in prison this week.

Kevin William Phillips, 47, was convicted Thursday by a Walton County jury on charges of sexual battery on a child under 12, the *Northwest Florida Daily News* reported.

U.S. Marshals arrested Phillips at his River Fall Street address in 2011 for sexually abusing a 4-year-old child left in his care in Walton County, Fla.

According to records, the charges stemmed from a 2010 incident in which Phillips placed his penis against the sexual organ of his girlfriend's preschool-aged daughter and ejaculated.

DNA evidence belonging to Phillips was found on the child's clothing.

See **VERDICT**, page 5A

Elderly man dies in house fire

Blazes consume 3 homes

• **Kendra Bolling**

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A 92-year-old man is dead, and three homes are likely total losses as the result of separate house fires Thursday night.

State Fire Marshal Ed Paulk confirmed that Willie James Weeden, 92, of 915 Whatley St., died in his home Thursday night.

Paulk said the preliminary investigation shows that the most probable cause of the fatal fire was a wood-burning heater.

"We also saw some electrical

wiring that was a potential ignition cause," Paulk said. "We didn't see anything that looked suspicious that would lead us to believe the fire was intentional."

Andalusia Fire Department Capt. Russell McGlamory said the Weeden home was fully engulfed when firefighters responded around 10 p.m. They spent several hours extinguishing the fire.

Additionally, firefighters were called to 1108 Stanley Ave. around 11:30 p.m., to a home that was also engulfed, McGlamory said.

See **FIRES**, page 5A



The state fire marshal said Friday it is likely that the fire at this Whatley Street home was caused by a wood-burning heater.

Andrew Garner/Star-News

BRIGHTENING SPIRITS



Hundreds of area children's Christmases were brightened Friday night at the annual Community Christmas event.

Organizers and contributors provided Christmas for 575. Above: La'Niya and Zoeyanna Ward with Santa. Top right: Kai'den Wilson and Gal. The Covington Cowgirls sponsored with pony. Right: Rikirah Daniels is the proud owner of a new bicycle.

Michele Gerlach/Star-News

Shootings prompt school safety meeting

• **Michele Gerlach**

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Like most people in America, when Andalusia Mayor Earl Johnson heard about the deaths of 27 people, including 20 school children, in a

Connecticut rampage, he was stunned.

On Friday, a gunman opened fire on Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Conn., where his mother

worked as a teacher. The mother was found dead at her home, and 26 people, including 20 children, died at the school as a result of his ram-

In view of what happened in Newton, Conn., ... we can't rely on, "We're a small community and it can't happen here." -- Mayor Earl Johnson

See **SAFETY**, page 5A

Most touching letter: We have no socks

WAMI, JR's helping 92 families

• **Kendra Bolling**

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When Joe Richburg read aloud Sylar Webster's letter Friday morning, there wasn't a dry eye in the building.

The 10-year-old Samson girl's Christmas request was simple — a basketball for her brothers, clothes and socks.

"We have no socks," she wrote in her letter.

Webster was one of 92 students across the WAMI listening area who sent letters to JR's Lawnmower shop for the third annual Christmas Kids 2012 event.

Webster wrote in her letter that her parents — Brandy Tidwell and Schon Jackson — were not work-

ing and that the family lives in an old house.

"We cannot have Christmas this year," she said. "We need the money."

The family was awarded \$500 for Christmas.

"It feels good," Webster said. "Now we're gonna have a big Christmas. My brothers will be proud. I

See **SOCKS**, page 5A



Shown are WAMI employees, JR's employees and the children and families who were recipients of the Christmas prize.

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