

FRENCH OPEN

2013 CHAMPION SERENA FALLS, AS DOES SISTER VENUS, B1



IN MEMORIAM

POET, AUTHOR MAYA ANGELOU REMEMBERED FOR UNIVERSAL APPEAL, VOICE, SPIRIT, A8



147 YEARS OF SERVING THE GREATER GADSDEN AREA

The Gadsden Times

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PRIVATE SCHOOL TAX CREDITS

Judge overturns state Accountability Act

BY PHILLIP RAWLS
Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — A Montgomery judge on Wednesday struck down Alabama's tax credits for parents who move their children from failing public schools to private schools.

Circuit Judge Gene Reese ruled the Alabama Accountability Act violates the Alabama Constitution in several ways, including putting more than one subject in a bill. Proponents said they will appeal the ruling by the Democratic judge before the all-Republican

Alabama Supreme Court.

The Republican-controlled Legislature passed the act in February 2013. It started out as a bill to give city and county school systems more flexibility in trying new approaches to education.

Over Democratic objections,

the Republican majority expanded the bill to include state income tax credits for parents who move their children from public schools rated as failing to other non-failing public schools or private schools in the transfer program. The expansion also provided 100

percent income tax credits for companies and individuals for money donated for scholarships to private schools for families below certain income levels.

Proponents said the law offered school choice to students trapped in public schools with

a long history of poor performance. Members of the state teachers' organization, the Alabama Education Association, challenged the law in court. The group contends such tax credits divert state tax money from public education to **PLEASE SEE ACT | A7**

EDUCATION

Area students win National Merit Scholarships

TIMES STAFF REPORT

Three area students have won scholarships through the National Merit Scholarship program, which announced its College-Sponsored Merit Scholarship Winners on Wednesday.

Timothy W. Guice of Cherokee County High School, Centre, was awarded the National Merit Auburn University Scholarship.

Ani Sengar of Gadsden City High School was awarded the National Merit University of Chicago Scholarship.

Pooja A. Wagle, a Rainbow City resident who graduated from the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham, was awarded the National Merit UAB Scholarship.

This is the third National Merit Scholar release in 2014 by National Merit Scholarship Corp. NMSC named recipients of corporate-sponsored awards on April 23 and winners of National Merit \$2,500 Scholarships on May 7. Additional recipients of college-sponsored awards will be announced July 14. By the conclusion of this year's competition, about 8,000 academic champions will have won National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$35 million.

In this third round, about 2,500 winners were announced. U.S. colleges and universities finance these scholarships, and officials of each sponsor college selected **PLEASE SEE MERIT | A7**

COURTS

Greer not guilty by reason of insanity in wife's shooting

BY JAY REEVES
Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM — A judge on Wednesday found an Alabama preacher not guilty by reason of insanity in a shooting that left his wife dead and his daughter wounded.



Greer

Jefferson County Circuit Judge Tommy Nail issued the ruling during a non-jury hearing in which a psychologist testified that he and two other experts determined the Rev. Terry Greer was mentally incapacitated and didn't know right from wrong when he shot the two on Jan. 10, 2013.

Prosecutors and the defense waived having a jury present and agreed to have the judge hear evidence on Greer's mental capacity.

Prosecutor Laura Poston said Greer's daughter told investigators that her father had been acting oddly the morning of the shooting, and at one point asked: 'What if we all just drive up to Heaven today?'

After shooting his wife, Lisa Greer, in the family's church-owned home, authorities have said Terry Greer, former pastor of Central United Methodist Church in Gadsden and Christ Central Church in Rainbow City, stabbed himself eight times in the chest. He was found with a knife protruding from his body when police arrived.

Greer's daughter, Suzanna, was able to escape and recovered from gunshot wounds. **PLEASE SEE GREER | A7**

DEDICATION

Blooming Memory

Gadsden Middle plants tree to honor longtime secretary

BY JOHN DAVIDSON
Times Staff Writer

A year and a day after she passed, Gadsden Middle School planted a Japanese cherry tree in memory of Carla Banks, who was a secretary at the school from 2004 to her death.

"She was the face of the school," Principal Joel Gullledge said. "She was just a beautiful person to be around."

About 50 friends, family members, former co-workers and students showed up for Wednesday's planting. The tree and the memorial marker celebrating her 54-year life and her love of Gadsden Middle were given to the school through anonymous donors.

Gullledge said the school chose to plant a tree in her honor because she loved flowers and trees, and the cherry tree specifically was chosen because of an old and important tree she planted in the past.

About the time her first son, Tom, was born, Banks planted a cherry tree at her home. As life went on and eventually she moved to a different home, she would drive by her old home just to see the tree.

Gullledge said he and Banks had a strong connection and referred to her as his "Radar O'Reilly" because, like the "M*A*S*H" character, she al-



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A marker was placed at the base of a cherry tree on the lawn at Gadsden Middle School during a tree planting Wednesday in memory of Carla Banks, who was a secretary at the school.

ways knew what he was thinking before he did. As she was so close to so many people, her loss was felt deeply at Gadsden Middle.

He praised Banks' poise, elegance and dedication and said she was the kind of person who knew how to brighten up anyone's day, and her mere presence had a habit of doing just that.

"If she loved you, you knew it, and she made sure you knew it," Gullledge said.

Like the cherry blossoms that will one day bloom from her tree, Banks lived a beautiful life that made everyone around her smile. Unfortunately, her life was cut short too soon, just as a strong breeze can whisk away those same beautiful pink flowers. **PLEASE SEE MEMORY | A7**



ERIC T. WRIGHT | GADSDEN TIMES

Frances, left, and Tom Banks speak with Myra Reagan, a teacher at Gadsden Middle School, during the tree planting. **See more photos online at www.gadsdentimes.com.**



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Attendees bow their heads in prayer around the Japanese cherry tree at Gadsden Middle.

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THRILL SEEKERS

U.S. theme parks seek to delight guests with innovative new rides. **A5**

TODAY'S WEATHER

Humid with clouds, sun; afternoon, evening storms possible. High **85** Low **60** For details, see **A10**

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