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Section B

Students come up short in statewide tests

More than 30% fail English 1, biology, physical science

BY MINDY B. HAGEN
The Post and Courier

More than 30 percent of students across the state taking end-of-course exams in biology, English 1 and physical science last year failed the tests, leading State Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum to admit that low scores are cause for concern. Last year marked the first time that middle and high school students sat for exams in those three subjects, with stu-

dents averaging 72.8 in biology, 75.4 in English and 67.3 in physical science. In physical science, 59.4 percent of students received an F, with only 18 percent scoring in the A or B range. In English 1 31.7 percent failed, and in biology 38.3 failed. Any score of 69 or below is considered failing. In a press release, Tenenbaum talked about "the large percentage of students who didn't score well on the new tests. "Certainly, teachers need to make sure

that they are covering the material and academic standards they need to cover," she said. On Friday, the state Education Department released the scores in the three new subjects, along with Algebra 1 end-of-course test results. In Algebra 1, the only subject also tested the previous year, the statewide average inched up from 79.4 in 2004 to 79.9 in 2005 for the 58,019 students tested. End-of-course exams are designed to

measure how well students are meeting the state standards in core subjects. The tests count for 20 percent of a student's final grade in the class. When students are tested this May, social studies will also be tested. Tenenbaum said she expects to see improvement as teachers and students become more familiar with the standards of the exams. "This is the first time that a standards-based, uniform test is being given to all students in the same course statewide," she said. Locally, Dorchester District 2 was the

only district to do better than the state average on the Algebra 1 exam. Dorchester 2, Berkeley and Colleton scored above the state average in biology, and Charleston and Dorchester 2 scored higher than the state average in English 1. In physical science, no local district averaged above 70, although Charleston and Dorchester 2 scored above the state average. School district officials across the Lowcountry called the 2005 test results unacceptable and agreed that changes to Please see TESTS, Page 6B

Artisans board of trustees fires center director

BY ANDY PARAS
The Post and Courier

WALTERBORO — The South Carolina Artisans Center board of trustees fired its executive director Thursday night, less than a month before it is expected to complete a new expansion project. Carol Privette said Friday she was completely surprised when the board's president and vice president told her trustees had met without her knowledge and chose to fire her. "I was shocked; it came totally unexpected," she said. "I have been there for three and half years and I made a huge commitment to become involved with the Artisans Center and move it forward." Rebecca Brewer, vice president of the board, praised Privette's accomplishments but said the board was looking for a different management style. The separation was amicable, she said. "It was strictly a business decision," Brewer said. "This is an opportunity to do things differently for the artists and the Artisans Center." The center sells arts and crafts made exclusively by 340 juried state artists. It is designated the official state marketplace for arts and crafts and is one of the city's top tourist attractions. As executive director, Privette has been overseeing a remodeling project that will double the center's retail space and create classrooms for the community. She said she has no ill will toward the board and it has the right to hire whom-ever it wants. "The Artisans Center was a huge part of my life and I will miss it," Privette said. "I wish them nothing but good luck in the future." Brewer said they will begin recruiting for a new director immediately.



Privette

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Police seek leads in man's beating death

BY JOHN CHAMBLISS
The Post and Courier

Charleston police questioned nearby residents and searched for leads Friday, a day after a 36-year-old man was found beaten to death in a field across from his home on Meeting Street. Richard Simmons Jr. was leaving the Snack Shop about 8:30 p.m. Thursday when he got into an argument, said Capt. Gary Tillman, supervisor of the detective division. A short time later, a family member found Simmons dead, face-down in the field. Citing an ongoing police investigation, Charleston County Deputy Coroner Dottie Lindsay declined to release the details of an autopsy performed Friday afternoon. A construction worker, Simmons, of 655 Meeting St., returned home from a month-long business trip in Greenville, N.C., on Thursday afternoon. He visited with his mother, who lives next door, and then went home to take a nap, said his older sister Blondell Simmons. When Simmons awoke from his nap, he started cooking dinner and walked next door to the Snack Shop to buy a soda. An argument started outside when Sim-

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Cody Russell (from left), Ron Russell and Ronnie Russell pose with an alligator caught in Pinopolis last year. It measured 13 feet, 5.5 inches and weighed 740 pounds. RON RUSSELL

Record gator? Too late, but it sure was HUGE

BY CHRIS DIXON
The Post and Courier

MONCK'S CORNER — If you think you've killed a state-record-sized alligator, it would be best to let the Department of Natural Resources measure it. At least that's what Al Jones wishes he had done. Last October, Jones, 56, was given an emergency nuisance permit from the state Department of Natural Resources to kill three large alligators that had been frequenting his campground, marina and swimming beach at Angel's Landing on Lake Moultrie. "We killed one that was 10½ feet," he said, "one that was nearly 13 feet, and then I killed a real one." A veteran tracker who has assisted DNR officers on alligator harvests in years past, Jones said he and his son tracked a particularly large alligator near the campground. There, Jones plunged a harpoon into the creature's rough hide, but the stainless steel tip broke. A rope-secured harpoon is required on alligator hunts because it is vital that a wounded gator not be allowed to escape or sink to the bottom of the water. "I called the guys in Florida who sold me the harpoon" he said, "and asked, 'How do y'all use this thing again?' They said, 'How big is the gator?' I told them I thought it was 14 feet, and they said they

had never had to harpoon one that big." Two reports about huge, documented, Lowcountry gators came in the wake of recent Post and Courier articles on "Alligatorzilla," a decades-old bull gator that makes his home on Bull's Island. In one case, DNR gator tracker Ron Russell said a huge bull that he killed last July in Pinopolis had been officially measured by DNR at 13 feet, 5.5 inches. This would make the animal larger than the current record holder, a 13 foot 1 inch gator shot by poachers two decades ago in Sparkleberry Swamp. DNR doesn't expect to have a full run-down of last year's gator harvest until February. At that time, the creature may be recognized as the largest taken in the state. The largest documented alligator in the U.S. was a 19 foot, 2 inch monster killed in Louisiana. Emergency permits are the only means under which gators may be hunted in the state. The DNR gets around 500 calls a year for removal of nuisance gators from swimming areas, backyards and, increasingly, from in stormwater retention ponds. Two days after his first harpoon shot, Jones tracked his own monster into a slough where he was able to successfully land a harpoon. The gator then launched

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Al Jones, at 6 feet, 2 inches, is dwarfed by the alligator he tracked and killed in October of 2005. This monster was measured at 14 feet, 1 inch. SANDRA KOURAKOS

Funeral for slain boy today

Police still seeking clues in his killing

BY GLENN SMITH
The Post and Courier

North Charleston police on Friday continued to scour the city for clues in the killing of 11-year-old Robert Bailey as the community prepared to join together to mourn his death. More than 500 people, including Mayor Keith Summey and several police officers, are expected to attend Robert's funeral at 11 a.m. today at St. Peters AME Church, 4650 Sanders Ave. Summey said the community will do its best to support Robert's family members as they try to deal with a crushing loss. "It's a very sad situation to see such a young child's life snapped away from him because of recklessness," Summey said. "We teach our children to stay out of the streets and stay at home where it's safe, and we try to work with our parents to make sure that happens. Everything here was done right. These types of things just aren't supposed to happen." A bullet struck Robert in the chest Saturday night when he peered outside a back door window of his home on Westview Street in the NorthPointe subdivision. Detectives have speculated that the gunman was about 100 feet from the home across a 20-foot-wide drainage ditch when the shot was fired. Officials don't think Robert was shot intentionally. "The hearts of the whole community, the police and private citizens are certainly with this family, especially during this day when they are doing something they shouldn't have to, and that is bury a child," said the Rev. Rob Dewey, senior chaplain with the Coastal Crisis Chaplaincy. Police have received several tips since Summey announced a \$25,000 reward for information leading to an arrest in the case. So far, however, those tips have not led police to suspects, said Spencer Pryor, a police spokesman. At least four detectives have been assigned to work specifically on Robert's case and as many as 20 investigators have been involved in various facets of Please see BAILEY, Page 6B



Robert Bailey



North Charleston firefighters work Friday to put out a fire at the back of J.D.'s Auto Repair and Towing on Spruill Avenue. MIC SMITH/STAFF

Evening blaze damages auto repair business

BY NOAH HAGLUND
The Post and Courier

Fire burned through the upper floor of a North Charleston auto repair shop Friday night, harming what local residents said was the first successful business to occupy the building in years. Witnesses reported smoke coming out of the upper floor of J.D.'s Auto Repair and Towing at 4340 Spruill Ave. around 9 p.m. No one was injured. Fire shot out the back of the business near Bexley Street before firefighters brought the flames under control. "It's going to be a bad effect on me because, basically, we just got going," said shop owner Jay Johnson, who said he had been in business about 14 months. "I'm just hoping downstairs" — where most of

the machinery is — "isn't too far gone." Battalion Chief Edward Padgett of the North Charleston Fire Department said the fire was contained to the upper floor. Late Friday, investigators were still trying to determine the cause. Chris Proveaux and his father Frank Brown spotted the fire from across the street and dialed 911. A resident of the area for about nine years, Proveaux said several businesses had failed in the same spot before Johnson set up shop. "He's the only person who's even started to do anything with that building," he said. "That's his livelihood." Reach Noah Haglund at 937-5550 or at nhaglund@postandcourier.com