

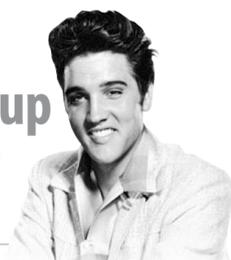
NASCAR's sleeping giant

Toyota's Nextel Cup entry worries rivals. **Sports, 1C**



Still shook up

50 years later, Charleston concerts still evoke vivid memories of the King. **Arts & Travel, 1G**



Down-home banjo strummin' at Boone Hall **Lowcountry & State, 3B**

The Post and Courier

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Briefly



Man of Steel returns to big screen after hiatus

In the 19 years since Christopher Reeve last donned Superman's red cape, Batman, Spiderman and other comic book heroes have reigned in Hollywood. But Superman's long absence at theaters is about to end. **1G**

Episcopal Church still divided on gay issues

Leaders at the Episcopal General Convention spent more than a week trying to make sense of the denomination's direction. But in the end, all of it led to more confusion. **1H**



Garden rooms can help enhance quality of life

Outdoor rooms, or garden rooms, are expanding traditional definitions of living space. And just like a spa bath or gourmet kitchen, these rooms usually increase the value of a house. **1D**

Man injured, arrested in fight after soccer match

A fight broke out in North Charleston after Argentina fans celebrated their team's 2-1 victory against Mexico in the World Cup. **3B**

N. Korea gives no sign on long-range missile

A New Zealand diplomat who visited Pyongyang said he saw no indication of whether North Korea intends to fire the weapon. Meanwhile, a top U.S. official expressed confidence in the ability to intercept such a missile. **1AA**

S.C. Tally
How your U.S. lawmakers voted. **9A**

Today's outlook
Heavy thunderstorms. High 85. Low 72. Complete 5-day forecast. **10B**

Index

Arts & Travel1G	Horoscope.....10H
Books.....4G	Local News.....1B
Business.....1E	Movies.....9G
Classifieds.....1F	Nation & World....1AA
Crossword.....7G	Obituaries.....4B
Editorials.....10A	Sports.....1C
Faith & Values.....1H	Television.....10G
Home & Garden.....1D	Weddings.....5H

Setting the record straight **2A**

On the Web



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During the next few years, 16 Charleston County schools will get new buildings, five existing schools will see additions or renovations and five sites will be bought for new schools or athletic facilities. It's all part of the district's \$495 million ...



BUILDING BOOM



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MIC SMITH/STAFF

Julian Hernandez (left) of ABC Construction installs bricks Thursday at Murray Hill Academy in North Charleston. Above, George Post of Judy's Electric installs light sensors at the Military Magnet Academy in North Charleston.

As buildings near end of usable lives, district embarks on ambitious project

BY DIETTE COURRÉGÉ
The Post and Courier

The Charleston County School District has launched the most ambitious construction program in its history, an effort that will remake one of every five schools and cost nearly a half-billion dollars.

The construction program rivals the construction of the new Cooper River bridge minus an off-ramp or two in cost, and it's a sequel to the district's just-completed \$430 million push to renovate more than 20 schools and build six new ones.

The previous construction program, the first major one in the district's history, took care of its critical patients, schools that were falling apart and in some cases making children sick because of mold. A 1997 survey found the school system needed \$610 million to fix its buildings, proof that the district had let its schools deteriorate through years of neglect and allowed small problems to swell into larger ones.

The first program added more than 150 classrooms to existing schools, installed new or upgraded heating and air-conditioning systems and



Carlos Caballero Lugo cuts brick at Murray Hill Academy.

brighter lights, and replaced existing windows.

That was only the beginning. When district leaders re-evaluated their building needs more than a year ago, they learned another lesson in how much it costs to play catch-up: Their report said the district needed at least \$614 million to pay for all possible projects.

Many buildings have reached the end of their usable lives, and with growing populations in some areas, the buildings are too small, said Bill Lewis, director of the district's building program.

The money that it would take to upgrade buildings to current codes, renovate them and expand them would be "mind-numbing," and it makes more sense to build new ones, he said. For that reason, many buildings will be demolished and replaced.

All told, this program will cost \$495 million, take four years and result in 16 new schools, five major additions or renovations to existing schools, five new sites for schools or athletic facilities and seven design plans for new schools.

Please see **BUILD**, Page 6A

No smooth sailing for Noisette Creek plan

\$30M waterway, marsh restoration facing many hurdles

BY CHRIS DIXON
The Post and Courier

The Noisette Company has just released a comprehensive plan for a 20-year, \$30 million project to restore what is perhaps the most abused and overlooked wetland in the Lowcountry. But as he watched a great egret preen above an alternately scenic and blighted stretch of old Cosgrove Avenue in North Charleston, project manager Jim Augustin said he knows the plan faces considerable hurdles.

Noisette has waded deeply into the degraded watershed that runs through the former Navy base with a bold plan to recast Noisette Creek as a centerpiece in its 3,000-acre redevelopment of the area. It aims to not only clean up the creek, but to restore as much of its marshland as possible, create a native plant nursery and to make the area a backyard biology laboratory for the 14 schools that lie within a few miles of the creek.

Key to this plan will be a series of scenic pedestrian and bicycle pathways that would cross the creek and connect sites along the Cooper River with neighborhoods as distant as Park Circle.

"If you look at the original 1913 plan for Park Circle, it showed streets all over

Please see **NOISETTE**, Page 4A



ADAM PARKER/STAFF

Many obstacles stand in the way of cleaning up Noisette Creek and restoring as much of the surrounding marshland as possible.

Insurgents scuff sheen of progress

BY STEVEN R. HURST
Associated Press

BAGHDAD, IRAQ — The new Iraqi government and its American patrons should have been basking in the glow of a two-week blitz of good news.

Violence had eased significantly in the Iraqi capital from a security crackdown that blanketed the chaotic city with 75,000 U.S.-backed Iraqi soldiers.

President Bush paid a surprise visit to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in a show of support for an Iraqi government that emerged from an agonizing six-month birth.

Most dramatically, al-Qaida in Iraq lost its leader when Abu Musab al-Zarqawi — the brutal terrorism boss — was killed by a U.S. airstrike.

But insurgents have counterattacked, scuffing the sheen of progress.

By week's end al-Maliki's government was forced to declare a state of emergency and shoo its citizens off Baghdad's streets

Please see **IRAQ**, Page 4A