



Too sweet

U-pick strawberry farms open across the Lowcountry.
Food, 1D



Before his time

Earnhardt's team honors his birthday in black. **Sports, 1C**



The Post and Courier

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Briefly



Tom Cruise, how does he do it?

Cruise keeps furnace of stardom stoked

Despite some outlandish behavior, and eyebrow-raising statements on psychiatry and postpartum depression, Tom Cruise has mastered the art of staying hot in Hollywood. **2A**

N. Charleston budget plan contains surprise

Mayor Keith Summey's budget proposal for next year includes 24 new employees, performance raises of about 4 percent, replacement police and fire vehicles along with something not seen in a long time — a tax cut. **1B**

Lowcountry player waits, wonders about NFL draft



Page

Chase Page, who started his football career at Wando High School, blossomed into a hot college prospect at Summerville and started for three years at North Carolina, might be a late draft pick come Sunday. **1C**

Maryland educator wins national Teacher of Year

After meeting President Bush today, Kimberly Oliver will serve as a teacher advocate for the coming year. **8A**

Interest rate concerns send stock prices lower

Home sales and consumer confidence triggered speculation the Fed might raise rates higher than expected. The Dow industrials fell 53.07 to close at 11,283.25 while the Nasdaq composite fell 3.08 to 2,330.30. **9B**

Coming Thursday



THE BLESSING OF THE FLEET

Your guide to the McLellanville and Mount Pleasant festivals of food, music and blessings for shrimpers. **Preview**



Today's outlook
Thunderstorms.
High 79. Low 61.
Complete 5-day
forecast. **14B**

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Setting the record straight.....**2A**

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Cold cash for hard times

Area's pawnbrokers say higher gas prices helping boost business

BY CHRIS DIXON
The Post and Courier

On Tuesday, President Bush asked the Energy and Justice departments to investigate possible manipulation of gasoline prices. But that's likely to be little consolation to those who are so desperate to fill their tanks that they have turned to Charleston area pawnbrokers as banks of last resort.

"Everybody complains about it," said Bonita Winters, a sales associate at Cash America Pawn in North Charleston. "I'd say 50 to 75 percent of the people who come in are saying that's their reason for coming in. We're overstocked on tools and bicycles and people are bringing in DVD players, movies, video games and lots of tools. Anything they can pawn to



BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

Mike Bond, with Money Man Pawn, weighs gold jewelry Monday at the Savannah Highway store. Gold is a commonly pawned item.

try to get enough for gas." Though business does not appear to be

Please see **PAWN**, Page 15A

Bush looks for ways to ease pain of rising gasoline prices

BY NEDRA PICKLER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Under election-year pressure to reduce surging gasoline prices, President Bush on Tuesday halted filling of the nation's emergency oil reserve, urged the waiver of clean air rules to ease local gas shortages and called for the repeal of \$2 billion in tax breaks for profit-heavy oil companies.

Still, experts said Bush's actions wouldn't have much impact on prices at the pump. The president warned that motorists would have to dig deep into their pockets all summer long.

Bush urged lawmakers to expand tax breaks for the purchase of fuel-efficient hybrid automobiles, a politically popular measure that's also supported

by environmentalists. He also directed the Environmental Protection Agency to use its authority to temporarily waive air quality laws in states if that would relieve a local gasoline supply shortage.

The White House was unable to say how much Bush's actions could affect the price of gas.

Bush said, "Every little bit helps."

Wholesale gasoline futures prices for June delivery dropped 8 cents a gallon to \$2.10 on the New York Mercantile Exchange right after Bush's remarks. May gasoline

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Keeping candles lit, memories alive



MIC SMITH/STAFF

Phillis Kalisky-Mair from Charleston lights candles that were blown out from the wind at the end of the Holocaust Remembrance Service in Marion Square at the Holocaust Memorial Tuesday. In back are 11 candles to represent the 11 million victims of the Holocaust.

March is act of remembrance of Holocaust, Nazi death march

BY ADAM PARKER
The Post and Courier

For the Jews, the march never ends. Most Jewish holidays are cause for looking backward through time, to various history episodes when the Jews survived, often against all odds. They survived slavery in Egypt and 40 years in the desert. They survived the ruthless oppression of the Greek king

Antiochus. They survived the previous year — for even Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish new year, is meant for retrospection and repentance.

On April 12, 1951, the Israeli parliament established a new holiday: Yom Hashoah, or Day of the Catastrophe. Ever since, Jews have paused collectively to look back and remember the millions who died in the Shoah — the worst genocide ever wrought by man-

kind.

The Holocaust was memorialized Tuesday night at Brith Sholom Beth Israel Synagogue, and the infamous Nazi death march was symbolically recreated by hundreds, including survivors of the death camps and Mayor Joe Riley, who walked from the synagogue to Marion Square, where candles

Please see **MARCH**, Page 15A

Income up but state's rank falls

Average earnings of S.C. residents rose to \$27,185 in 2004

BY CAROLINE FOSSI
The Post and Courier

South Carolinians made almost 5 percent more money in 2004 than they did the year before; but compared with the rest of the nation, they're falling further behind.

State policymakers say any turnaround will be complicated and won't happen quickly.

According to figures released Tuesday by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, South Carolina residents on average earned \$27,185 in 2004 compared with \$25,972 in 2003, a 4.7 percent jump. But during the same period, the state's per capita income ranking

dropped two spots, from ninth from the bottom to seventh — its worst showing in a decade. For the United States as a whole, per capita income was \$33,050 in 2004.

Per capita income is calculated by taking the personal income of residents in a given area and dividing it by the population. Income, as measured by the bureau, is composed mostly of wages but also includes sources such as interest, dividends and rental earnings.

The District of Columbia and Connecticut had the highest per-capita income levels in the nation, at \$51,155 and \$45,318, respectively, the report said. Mississippi fared the worst, at \$24,518.

The newly released numbers don't come as any surprise to Palmetto State government officials and policymakers, who have long been concerned about the state's per capita income, historically among the nation's lowest. In recent years, South Carolinians have earned about 82 percent of the national average.

At the same time, economic experts say the state's wealth picture isn't necessarily as bleak as the ranking indicates.

For instance, goods and services in South Carolina in general are more affordable than in many other parts of the country, said Charleston Southern University economist Al Parish. In much of the state, he said, the cost of living is about 20 percent below the national average. That doesn't hold true in coastal areas such as Charleston and Hilton Head Island, however.

But people in those desirable places also have more money to spend on average, government statistics show. Charleston County had the second-highest per capita

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