



Inside GMLC  
Garden tour,  
more events set  
for weekend. **2B**

## Girl shot inside home

### Blast came from outside; 7-year-old in serious condition

BY NOAH HAGLUND  
*The Post and Courier*

Gunfire seriously wounded a 7-year-old girl sitting inside a townhome near Dorchester Road Friday night when a shot fired from outside pierced the front door, North Charleston police said.

The girl was sitting near a computer in the Collins Park Villas home around 7:30 p.m., police spokesman Spencer Pryor

said. People outside reported hearing three blasts.

"Right now, it doesn't appear to be an accidental shooting," Pryor said.

Investigators were not able to determine who the intended target was, but did not think it was the girl, he said.

From shell casings found in the area, police think a shotgun was used, Pryor said.

One shot went through the door at 4249

Big Ben Court and another through a front window.

The girl was rushed to Medical University Hospital in serious condition, he said.

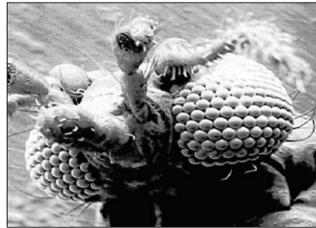
Pryor said that people in the area were providing "good" information about the incident. Officers were searching for a black man wearing all

Please see SHOOTING, Page 6B



A North Charleston police officer searches the area around the apartment at Big Ben Court and Parliament Drive where a girl was shot in her apartment Friday. The window in the upper right shows one of the shotgun blasts.

MIC SMITH/STAFF



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
Electron micrograph picture of the head of a sand gnat. The ball-like structures are compound eyes. Common around Lowcountry marshes, these tiny insects use sharp teeth and mandibles to rip your skin.

## Let the plague begin ...

### It's sand gnat time, and they really bite

BY CHRIS DIXON  
*The Post and Courier*

The sand gnat cometh.

As the spring weather turns glorious, plans will be foiled by a pest more savage than the most rabid mosquito and more dastardly than the fattest horsefly.

Also known as the punkies, marsh flies, sand flies, no-see-ums and biting midges, the sand gnat's scientific name is *Culicoides furens*. In Charlestonese, this roughly translates to: pure misery.

It's hard to believe a beastie so tiny could make residents from I'On to Kiawah prisoners of their million-dollar marsh-side homes or leave us all swatting the air in a "Beaufort salute" and picking our noses in a futile, shameless fury. But the sand gnat is a minuscule monster out of your worst nightmares.

"Mosquitoes have a hypodermic needle," said Charleston Mosquito Control Superintendent Martin Hyatt. "But sand gnats literally take a chunk out of you. They eat you."

According to Hyatt, the smallest of these midges can fly through the screens on your porch, and only the females bite. Locating victims by scent and an impressive pair of compound eyes, these she-beasts get under your skin by way of facial weaponry.

The gnat first inserts two machete-like blades into your skin. Then sharp teeth rip your skin open more as the gnat spits a vile stew of chemicals into the wound to keep your blood from clotting. She then uses a straw-like proboscis to suck up the blood. Sometimes her translucent abdomen becomes so engorged that she can barely fly.

Like the mama mosquito, the sand gnat uses blood to feed her eggs. But unlike the mosquito, she'll typically cause pain to everyone she bites. Some humans have allergic reactions to the anti-clotting chemical and can endure a lengthy agony of raised, itchy red welts.

But unlike mosquitoes, sand gnats don't

Please see GNATS, Page 6B



BRAD NETTLES/STAFF

Artisan David Gibney (left) shows American College of Building Arts student Stephen Browning how to use a smoothing plane on a window sash as part of a total window sash restoration Wednesday.

## Visiting masters teach building arts

BY ROBERT BEHRE  
*The Post and Courier*

Hurchail Barthe, a plasterer from Villa Rica, Ga., eyes the gray pile of mud on the table and explains that he must wait a minute or two before creating a plaster ceiling mold the hard way.

"I'm going to try to let this get a little hard, and then I'm going to try to put a big hunk up there," Barthe says. "It doesn't make a difference how it looks at this point because it's all going to be covered. I'm just trying to build it out."

These days, the ornamental ceiling

piece likely would be cast on a table and then screwed or nailed into place, but Barthe is showing students at the American College of the Building Arts how to do it the old-fashioned way.

The college didn't hold its festival of the building arts this spring — it plans to resume the event next year — but it is bringing in outside experts, such as Barthe, to give students a broader perspective on their craft.

"These guys work out in the real world," says President David AvRutick.

Nearby, David Gibney, a master carpenter from Smithburg, Md., shows

student Stephen Browning three generations of wooden windows, including one from about 1740, another from about 1810 and a third from about 1910.

Gibney points to one and says, "I've done a big dutchman up here to show that any part of it can be replaced."

The surgical art of dissecting an old window, figuring out what repairs need to be made and making them, is actually an advanced topic for Browning, a first-year student in the college's in-

Please see ARTISANS, Page 6B

## Police sergeant convicted

### Woman gets jail, fine for tax evasion

BY SCHUYLER KROPP  
*The Post and Courier*

A North Charleston police officer was convicted on three counts of tax evasion Friday after a Charleston County jury rejected her claim that Americans don't have to pay taxes.

Sgt. Joyce Middleton could have received up to 15 years if given the state's maximum sentence.

Instead, Circuit Judge Danny Pieper gave her a two-year suspended sentence but with 60 days of actual jail time and a \$1,000 fine.

She'll be allowed to serve her prison time on weekends.

Middleton is expected to be fired from her \$40,000-a-year police supervisor's job because the verdict slapped her with a felony conviction.

She had been on leave without pay since March 2003, when she was arrested by state Revenue Department agents.

Middleton never testified in her defense. Her public lawyer portrayed her as a victim of the anti-tax movement, saying she was duped by videos and literature into believing that income taxes were unconstitutional.

"She was miseducated," said public defender Tree Martschink, "and then hung out to dry."

Assistant Attorney General Thomas McDermott rejected any notion Middleton was an innocent. She was given multiple chances by the state to file accurate returns, he said.

He described her as someone who tried to beat the system by finding ways out of her tax obligations while at the same time she was using other government services, such as keeping a state-issued driver's license.

Middleton's views are that "I earned this money, it's mine and the government ain't getting it," according to McDermott's characterization.

A cash restitution hearing will be scheduled later to determine what back taxes she owes, and whether she should also pay the cost to prosecute her. Estimates run to more than \$10,000.

Middleton was arrested after authorities reported she owed nearly \$3,000 for tax years 2000-02, when she began crafting suspect deductions.

She declared meals she ate while on duty, even though North Charleston's personnel policy doesn't allow them to be deducted. She deducted her police uniform expenses, even as her uniform was provided by the city.

She also claimed to be a non-resident alien in an effort to get out of paying her taxes. That ploy was rejected when police department officials said she couldn't be a sworn officer and an alien at the same time.

When she did file her returns, they were

Please see TAX, Page 6B

## Veteran news writer, golfer, poker player dies at 44 from ALS

BY BRIAN HICKS  
*The Post and Courier*

Arlie Porter, a veteran news writer for The Post and Courier, died Thursday night after a long fight with Lou Gehrig's disease. He was 44.

For 20 years, he left reams of award-winning journalism in his wake, tackling environmental and taxpayer rights issues as if Charleston depended on it.

As far as he was concerned, it did. "If the story mattered to as few as 25 people on the far reaches of Edisto Is-



Porter

land, it mattered to him," said reporter Schuyler Kropp, a close friend. "One moment he was writing about how your taxes were going up, then detailing the campaign to save the Morris Island Lighthouse. In between, he would write a feature story that would take you to the barrier islands where 1,000 shiny

### Services

A memorial service for Arlie Porter will be held in South Sioux City, Neb., at 1:30 p.m. Sunday at Becker-Hunt Funeral Home, 204 E. 15th St. South Sioux City, Neb. 68776.

A Charleston memorial service is planned and will be announced later.

horseshoe crabs were washing on shore in the moonlight."

Among his many honors was the South Carolina Press Association's Judson

Chapman community service award for his 1997 story "Pelicans vs. People," an early look at the effects of development on the natural landscape of the Lowcountry.

"I used to describe him as our Mike Wallace — the guy you would least want to see at your door," said Robert Behre, who followed Porter on the Charleston County beat. "That's because he loved the Lowcountry enough to try to tell the truth as plain as possible, as he saw it, even if it wasn't necessarily the story the politicians wanted told."

Porter famously had his own methods for producing his journalism. For years, he was a fixture in the newsroom 12 hours a day, sipping coffee and retiring to the smoking room to pace and await return phone calls. Between calls, he delighted in debating his colleagues.

Born on Bitburg Air Base in Germany, the college-bound Porter found his way to South Carolina, attended Wofford and served for some time as the Wofford Terrier mascot. After some work at a small

Please see PORTER, Page 6B