

IN FOCUS | Work is play

Family with autistic son sees progress in his social and communication skills from intensive Son-Rise program **1C**



IN SPORTS | State track meet kicks off

West Virginia's best high school track and field athletes vie at Laidley Field to be called champion **1B**

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DETAILS, 9A



Saturday Gazette-Mail

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POLICE DOUBLE-DIPPING TRIAL

CPD corporal is acquitted

Jury rejects charge officer worked at mall while on city clock

By Andrew Clevenger
Staff writer

A Kanawha County jury has acquitted a Charleston police officer on charges that he worked a security job at the Charleston Town Center Mall while he was on duty for the city.

Cpl. Keith O. Peoples, 45, a former Charleston Police Department officer of the year, struggled to hold back tears as the verdict was read. He did not testify in his defense during his five-day trial.

The jury deliberated for more

"I'm overwhelmed. I'm happy and grateful. . . . Law enforcement is my life, and when I thought I could lose it, it was very emotional."

CPL. KEITH O. PEOPLES
Charleston Police Department



than eight hours Friday before returning its verdict. For a time, it appeared as if the proceeding would result in a mistrial after the jurors sent Chief Kanawha Circuit Judge Jim Stucky a note saying they

could not reach a unanimous verdict.

The courtroom erupted in emotion as Peoples' family and supporters, who included several of his fellow officers, celebrated the ver-

dict. Peoples hugged his wife and daughters as he left the courtroom.

Outside the courtroom, Peoples assembled his defense team, including attorneys Dwane Tinsley and Lora Arthur and forensic accountant Robert J. Rufus, before fielding questions from reporters.

"I'm overwhelmed," he said. "I'm happy and grateful. . . . Law enforcement is my life, and when I thought I could lose it, it was very emotional."

Peoples, who has been on ad-

SEE PEOPLES, 9A

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Manchin: Victims' fund won't be slashed

\$250K had been pulled in draft '09-'10 budget

By Alison Knezevich
Staff writer

A fund that provides lawyers for victims of domestic violence will not be cut in the upcoming budget year, Gov. Joe Manchin said Friday.

On Friday, The Charleston Gazette reported that a draft version of Manchin's 2009-10 budget included a \$250,000 general-revenue cut for the Civil Legal Assistance program, which provides Legal Aid lawyers for domestic violence victims.

The fund currently gets \$400,000 in general revenue funds, plus about \$300,000 in revenue from court-related fees.

In a statement released Friday, the governor's office called concerns about the proposed cuts premature "as the budget proposal they were based on was still in draft form and the governor had not yet approved those changes."

The state budget office gave a draft proposal to legislative leaders on Thursday, but it was a "working document" that the governor hadn't approved, according to the news release. The office submitted a final budget proposal Friday afternoon to Senate President Earl Ray Tomblin and House Speaker Rick Thompson.

"Up until this afternoon, the revised budget proposal was a work in progress, and it was not accurate or fair to make presumptions about what changes are in that budget proposal until it was finalized," Manchin said in the news re-

SEE CLA, 9A

Hay out there!



LAWRENCE PIERCE | Saturday Gazette-Mail

Clyde Bailey and his nephew, Ryan Bailey, bale their first cutting of hay for the year on Friday in their hayfield on Cross Lanes' Doc Bailey Road.

OBAMA'S CREDIT CARD LAW

A benefit, but with bugs

By Dave Carpenter
The Associated Press

CHICAGO — The new credit card law is receiving widespread praise as a victory for cardholders over the lenders that impose "gotcha" fees and penalties with scant justification and little notice.

Indeed, an industry that has been virtually unregulated will now be reined in, in many ways, to customers' benefit. Interest rates no longer can be raised retroactively if you pay your bills. Terms will be clearer, over-the-limit fees curtailed and rates fairer.

Still, there are pitfalls to the legislation passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by President Obama on Friday, and some likely will hurt consumers.

"People can start to feel a lot

SEE CARDS, 9A



AP photo

President Obama's new credit card law is receiving widespread kudos as a victory for cardholders over the lenders, but there are pitfalls.

WEST VIRGINIA BUDGET

Stimulus might offset cuts

Governor, lawmakers still expect at least 2% trim

By Lawrence Messina
The Associated Press

West Virginia is looking to offset nearly \$200 million in needed budget cuts with at least \$34 million from its share of federal stimulus funds.

Lawmakers and Gov. Joe Manchin's office say the temporary federal dollars should help cushion the blow, but they add that most agencies and programs will still see their spending reduced by at least 2 percent.

"I'd say it will be across the board," said House Finance Chairman Harry Keith White, D-Mingo. "Everyone will have to sustain a cut."

The Legislature must pass a new state budget that is \$197 million smaller than what Manchin first proposed in February. The recession has prompted the governor to scale back his revenue projections for general tax-

es and the state lottery by that amount. Even with that cut, the parts of the budget funded by those sources still will exceed \$4.2 billion.

Lawmakers typically pass a new budget immediately after their annual, 60-day regular session. Uncertain over how severe economic troubles would hurt the Mountain State, they and Manchin opted to delay action when this year's session ended April 11.

With the budget year starting July 1, the House and Senate reconvene Tuesday to finish the spending plan. Buoyed by that month's stronger-than-expected revenues, lawmakers and the governor expect to stick with his reduced forecast.

A chunk of the federal stimulus money is meant to help states with their budgets, particularly in

SEE OFFSET, 9A

FBI, DEA seize records from Mercer sheriff

Danny R. Wills also is a doctor; seizure was of his patient files

By P.J. Dickerscheid
The Associated Press

Federal agents who investigate the illegal diversion of prescription drugs have seized nearly 90 patient records kept by the Mercer County sheriff, who is also a licensed physician.

Agents with the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation executed an inspection warrant on May 5 at Sheriff Danny Ray Wills' offices at the county courthouse. The warrant was unsealed Thursday.

Court records were heavily redacted and had limited details, making further information about the investigation unclear.

In addition to patient files containing "dispensing records," agents confiscated a folder of invoices and drug-ordering information, and a document described as "State Treasury Investment Acc," according to records filed in U.S. District Court in Bluefield.

Wills, who was elected sheriff in 2004 and re-elected last year, has not been charged with a crime.

SEE MERCER, 9A



Danny R. Wills
Mercer County sheriff

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