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Who will make it to the Super Bowl?

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Brittany Gil / Valencia Voice

Cristina Almelda informing a student about the Hospitality Program.

SGA welcomes students back to semester routine College helps ease return to classes

By Michelle Saddic
msaddic@valenciavoices.com

Valencia College Student Government Association (SGA) hosted a "Welcome Back" meet and greet for new and returning students at the Winter Park campus on Wednesday, Jan. 11 at 11 a.m.

The SGA offered free coffee and school supplies to any student who passed by SGA President Scott Schaare, along with Bryan Vick, the Senator of Legislative Affairs for the SGA in the Winter Park campus, were there to greet students and offer them coffee as they headed to their classes.

Next to the SGA counter was the career center booth,

— See 'Welcome back' on page 2

President's concert supports new internships

Show benefits performing arts

By James Tutton
jtutton@valenciavoices.com

A special musical performance by Valencia's president and singer-songwriter Sanford Shugart was held at the Garden Theater in Winter Garden. Funds raised from this event will be used to create future internships at the Garden Theater for Valencia's performing arts students.

This money will be set aside to create real job opportunities for arts and entertainment students.

"It's just a little way to continue to weave the connection between the college and the community," said Shugart.

This performance marked the release of Shugart's fourth album, called "Distance We Keep," through Valencia supported FlatFoot Records. Shugart is a busy man, overseeing more than 75,000 students and five different campuses, so live performances are indeed a rare treat for any of his fans, friends, and family. His family, Shugart adds, has a deeply rich love of musical performance and singing.



James Tutton / Valencia Voice

Sanford Shugart stands center stage with his band performing songs from his latest album "Distance We Keep" at the Garden Theater.

The nearly sold out 299 seat garden theater was an ideal setting for such a laid-back and intimate performance. The stage was set like a simple living room with an old worn-in couch and a small beige acoustic upright piano.

Shugart's musical style is the purest form of classic American folk, complete with mandolin and violin accompaniments, steady, low pumping bass rhythms, and a simple and warm singing style similar to the

late, great John Denver.

"I couldn't compare him to another artist, but I can say he's an original mix of folk, country, a little contemporary," said Bruce Young, a financial advisor at Edward Jones and friend of Dr. Shugart.

Throughout the show there were also light hearted moments of story-telling by Dr. Shugart with what inspired certain songs. One audience member even joked during a quiet moment in one particularly

emotional song, "Sandy I thought you said you weren't going to make us cry tonight."

Emotions truly run high in touching folk songs like "Carolina Pine" and "The Way Back Home." And in addition to easy going songs were some upbeat tunes with funny lessons, like how the rat-race of life can turn you into a rat, or the classic southern story of the crazy uncle

— See 'Shugart concert' on page 2

Shugart concert

— Continued from page 1

that taught you how to drive, shoot, and swear as a “youngin.”

Audience member and professor of English Rebecca Shevlin said, “It shows you can have your independence, your education and your talent all combined into one. And I think that’s brilliant.”

The “Garden Theater” is a historical location that was originally used to show tractors to local farmers back in the 1930s. Shugart worked with the theater over four years ago during their most recent renovations to help build the location into a functional live performance location.

Though now viewed by some as a celebration of Valencia’s Aspen Prize win and recognition of Shugart’s work, this connection with the “Garden Theater” and Valencia has been ongoing for several years. It’s further strengthened by the plans for new internship opportunities for Valencia arts and entertainment students.

More information about this and future events can be found at the Garden Theater’s web site at www.gardentheater.org. And Sandy Shugart’s music can be found on iTunes and www.flatfootrecords.com

Shugart stated that he feels strong for the arts



James Tutten / Valencia Voice

Throughout the performance Dr Shugart joked and told stories about what inspires him to write and play music.

and entertainment program at Valencia. Being a musical performer himself he is continually inspired by the hard work and continued success of the student body at Valencia.

Welcome back

— Continued from page 1

where Cheryl Miller, the career adviser at Winter Park, shared information on what classes to sign up for and how to pick the right career choice.

“Students need to use Atlas as a tool,” Miller said when asked what she thought was most important for new and returning students to know.

Many students do not use Atlas to its full potential. Atlas is not only for student email, but it is also a tool to help students plan the route to graduation. There are many students on campus who are not aware that the Career Center can help them choose

what career path they would like to pursue. The Career Center is out there to help students become more informed.

Julian Duncan, a math tutor at the Winter Park campus, greeted students as well. “Winter Park campus is the best Valencia campus,” Duncan said. The Winter Park campus has been growing in size each semester and continues to show potential to grow.

Winter Park was not the only campus to welcome back students; each Valencia campus had their own Welcome Back service at the beginning of the school week. West campus celebrated students coming back on Friday, Jan. 13, with a barbecue lunch, create-your-own bumper stickers, and body art. East campus celebrated students coming back on Jan. 11 and 12 with a cappuccino cart, live music, and refreshments.

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Dozens missing from stricken Italian cruise ship

Ship's captain taken into custody will face manslaughter charges

By Peter Mayer
DPA

At least 11 people died and dozens more were missing after a cruise ship ran aground off Italy's western coast, officials said Saturday.

The ship's captain, Francesco Schettino, was taken into custody, ANSA news agency reported, citing a prosecutor in the Tuscan city of Grosseto, Francesco Verusio.

Earlier, Schettino had been questioned by investigators trying to determine the causes of the accident.

More than 20 hours after the accident occurred, government officials indicated that many people who had been on board the Costa Concordia were still unaccounted for.

Rescue teams discovered two survivors, an Asian man and woman, reported ANSA just after midnight Sunday morning.

The officials said that they were revising downwards the number of people reported as missing at one stage more than 70 as survivors were gradually tallied.

The bodies of the three people who died were identified as two French passengers and one Peruvian crew member.

The three, all men, are thought to have drowned after the Costa Concordia ran aground late Friday near the Isola del Giglio, an island off Italy's western shore.

The search for survivors including the deployment of divers would continue overnight, said rescue official Luca Cari.

"It is a dangerous and very difficult operation," Cari told television news channel Sky TG24.

He was referring to efforts to explore the inside of the 290-metre-long (951-foot-long), 114,500-ton Costa Concordia which was half-submerged and listing 80 degrees, with a gaping crack down its hull.

The ship's Genoa-based owner said 4,229 peo-



Rescuers work to enter the capsized ship Costa Concordia in search of more survivors on Sunday, Jan. 15 in Giglio, Italy.

ple had been on board at the time of the accident, 3,216 passengers and 1,013 crew members.

Around 40 passengers were receiving hospital treatment. Two of the injured were in a serious condition, ANSA reported.

The Costa Concordia had set off on Friday from the port of Civitavecchia, near Rome, for the start of a Mediterranean cruise, when its crew signaled an electrical fault to port authorities.

Officials said that the Genoa-based vessel may have veered from its course when it struck a shoal off Giglio island, rolling onto one side.

The ship owner said it was not immediately "possible to determine the cause of the problem."

The vessel's passengers included 989 Italians, 569 Germans, 462 French, and nationals from more than 50 countries including Japan, Brazil and Australia, Costa Crociere said.

Passengers said all lights aboard the vessel suddenly went out while they were having dinner.

"Then we heard a bang and a roar and the cutlery fell to the ground," Luciana Castro, a journalist on board, told Ansa.

"It was like a scene from the Titanic," added Mara Parmegiani, another journalist, in a reference to the famous passenger liner that sunk almost 100 years ago, on April 15, 1912.

— MCT Campus



Courtesy of Ugnés Umunna

Upcoming event: Liberian radio journalist speaks at Valencia College

By James Tutton
jtutton@valenciavoices.com

Stories about the violent First and Second Liberian Civil Wars will be presented at the Special Events Center at Valencia College west campus on Jan. 26 by guest speaker Agnes Umunna.

Umunna is a journalist who has produced and hosted a Liberian radio program called "Straight from the Heart."

The program is designed to encourage Liberians to call in and recount their experiences over the 14-year conflict that took hundreds of thousands of lives and embodied the horrors of war, including children armed with machine guns who were used as soldiers.

Umunna will be speaking with classes throughout the day, and is scheduled for a meet and greet event at 6:30 p.m. This will be followed by a free screening of the critically acclaimed film, "Pray the Devil Back to Hell," winner of best documentary at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2008.

The film tells the story of a peace movement called Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, which was organized by social worker Leymah Gbowee, whose actions helped end the civil war in 2003. She was also a recipient of The Nobel Peace Prize 2011.

This event is organized by Valencia's H.E.R.O.S. club, and in partnership with the Global Peace Film Festival and Valencia's Peace and Justice Initiative. H.E.R.O.S.'s main goals are furthering education about global injustices and empathy toward underprivileged individuals.

The free showing of the film "Pray the Devil Back to Hell" will be held at 7 p.m. in the Special Events Center, and will be followed by an open discussion lead by Umunna.

The event's organizers promise that this will be a powerful and engaging event that will inspire students to work for creating a better world. Detailed accounts of war violence may be disturbing to some viewers, but the lessons learned will enrich all who wish to learn from the past.

Discovering Autism: A hope for partial 'recovery' in near future

Studies find therapy improves behavior, language, intelligence scores

By Alan Zarembo
Los Angeles Times

In 1987, Ivar Lovaas, a charismatic UCLA psychology professor, published what remains the most famous study on the treatment of autism.

Lovaas had broken down the basic skills of life into thousands of drills, such as pointing, identifying colors and reading facial expressions. For 40 hours a week on average, the therapists he trained used rewards and punishments, ranging from food treats to slaps on the thigh, to instill those abilities in 19 autistic youngsters under the age of 4.

When the study began, most of the children didn't speak and were considered mentally retarded. After a few years, nine of them tested average or above in intelligence and moved on to mainstream first-grade classrooms, a far better outcome than in two control groups. Lovaas described the children as "recovered."

Autism, long considered a sentence of lifelong isolation, suddenly had a potential antidote. It was called "applied behavior analysis," or ABA.

As the diagnosis of autism has exploded, so has demand for ABA, the most commonly recommended treatment. It has become a thriving business, worth more than \$200 million a year in California alone.

Statewide, at least 75 firms, some with long waiting lists, offer ABA in a variety of styles. The cost, often \$50,000 a year or more for a single child has been covered primarily by taxpayers up to now.

In October, California passed a law requiring private health insurers to include coverage for ABA in their policies. More than two dozen other states have similar requirements, the result of relentless campaigning by parents and their advocacy groups.

Yet for all the belief and investment in

ABA, important questions remain about its effectiveness and how best to use it.

Researchers have established that the therapy can improve behavior, language and intelligence test scores. But no scientist using the gold standards of medical research has reproduced the success rate of Lovaas, who died last year.

When ABA isn't working, they often demand longer and more frequent sessions. When progress has been made, they often don't want to stop. The prospect of recovery is also a valuable marketing tool for the companies that provide ABA. One of the largest companies features success stories on its website, in a promotional documentary and at celebrity-filled fundraisers.

"We have people now in college doing extremely well," said Doreen Granpeesheh, a former graduate student of Lovaas who founded the Tarzana, Calif.-based Center for Autism and Related Disorders.

Paradoxically, ABA's popularity makes it harder to conduct studies that meet the highest scientific standards. Researchers say it can be difficult to find parents willing to have their children assigned to comparison groups, which receive less intensive treatment.

The scientific gaps make it hard to determine how best to use the limited funds available for treatment. If scientists understood which elements of ABA do what, for instance, they could better tailor the treatment to patients' needs and thereby serve more children.

"If all our interventions are based on one-to-one therapy for vast hours," she said, "very few children are going to get their needs met." Initially, ABA was available only to families who could pay for it. But citing Lovaas' study and federal law guaranteeing educational opportunities for disabled children, parents in the 1990s started suing suc-

cessfully to compel California school districts to provide the therapy.

"After the first 10 hearings, we were sure we could win anywhere," recalled Granpeesheh, who testified on behalf of families.

Though the focus of ABA is on intensive treatment starting around age 3, many providers have expanded their services well into the school years, offering their behavior specialists as personal aides in class and on the playground.

Granpeesheh's business, which she founded in 1990, has grown to employ roughly 1,000 people, with 12 clinics in California and eight more elsewhere in the United States and abroad. In 2009, it held more than \$21 million in contracts with schools and the developmental services system in California, according to state records. Few if any ABA companies promote "recovery" as vigorously.

Over the years, "several hundred" clients, out of many thousands treated, have progressed to the point that they no longer meet the criteria for an autism diagnosis, Granpeesheh said. They learned to speak and socialize and ceased their repetitive behaviors, she said.

She counts 8-year-old Justin Marroquin of Costa Mesa among her successes. His mother, Laura Marroquin, had realized something was wrong shortly after he turned 1. His twin sister was starting to talk and point while he incessantly flipped light switches on and off and pushed doors open and shut.

After he was diagnosed with mild to moderate autism at 2, the state began paying for ABA. But his language skills and behavior improved so rapidly that he was soon deemed ineligible for services.

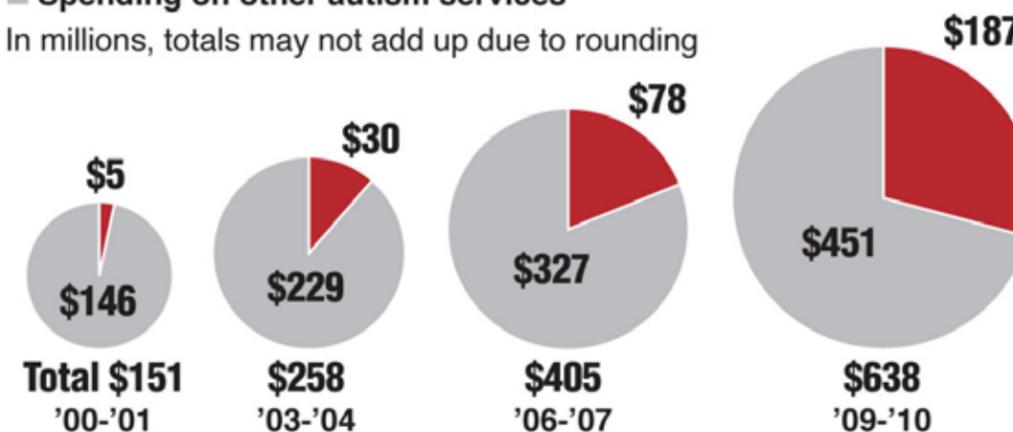
Determined to see him progress further, his parents hired an attorney and a psychologist to pressure the school district to pay for early-intervention therapy

ABA gains ground

Applied behavior analysis, or ABA, is the most commonly recommended treatment for autism. ABA and similar therapies consume a growing share of California spending on autism services.

■ Spending on behavioral therapies
■ Spending on other autism services

In millions, totals may not add up due to rounding



Source: California Dept. of Developmental Services
Graphic: Alan Zarembo, Sandra Poindexter, Doug Stevens, Los Angeles Times

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before he entered kindergarten. They insisted on Granpeesheh's company. Their lawyer, Bonnie Yates, had used it for her own son, now in college.

The district ultimately agreed, but wanted to scale back the hours after a year. Justin's parents fought the move and reached a legal settlement in which the district agreed to pay for ABA for two more years. "I knew in my heart recovery was the goal," his mother said.

That night, she and her husband sent an email to their friends announcing that Justin's diagnosis was being removed from his medical records and that they were now "Proud parents of a 5 year old typical son." In the subject line, they wrote "RECOVERED!!"

Such stories seem straightforward: A child is diagnosed with autism, receives ABA and gets better. But for scientists, they are difficult to interpret.

Children receive intensive treatment

when their brains are already undergoing rapid change, making it difficult to sort out its effects from the gains that come with natural development.

Studies that track autistic children over time show that some experience significant improvements in IQ and an easing of symptoms without any systematic treatment. Dr. Bennett Leventhal, an autism specialist at the Nathan Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research in Orangeburg, N.Y., said that in rare cases an autistic child receiving therapy can improve enough to pass for normal.

But others who are deemed recovered "probably never really had autism in the first place," he said. Promoting recovery amounts to "taking advantage of a vulnerable population," Leventhal said.

"These are families who are desperate. Their children are disabled. They'll do anything for them to make them well."

— MCT Campus

Obama appoints new chief of staff for fourth time

New right hand man an expert on executive powers, will attempt to end gridlock with unpopular Congress

By Peter Nicholas
Tribune Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON - With the appointment of Jacob Lew as his new chief of staff, President Barack Obama chose a Washington veteran who is well-liked on Capitol Hill, but just as important for dealing with hostile Republicans in an election year is also an expert on the executive powers Obama can use to advance his agenda without lawmakers' cooperation.

Lew, who replaces William M. Daley, steps into the role after a year of fierce partisan battles that saw Obama's policy goals largely stalled in Congress. More and more, the president relied on executive orders to enact small pieces of his economic, education and housing proposals.

Lew is skilled in such practices. For two different presidents, Bill Clinton and Obama, he has headed the Office of Management and Budget, whose mission includes putting in place rules and regulations that don't require congressional approval.

As Obama's fourth chief of staff, he'll be positioned to carry out the White House's pivot away from engagement with Congress in favor of unilateral action. The approach jibes with a re-election strategy that includes running against a deeply unpopular Congress.

"Clearly, since Labor Day, there has been this turn from talking to (House Speaker) John A. Boehner and (Senate Republican leader) Mitch McConnell all the time, Velcroing themselves to Congress, toward using all the tools of government to move the agenda forward," said John Podesta, who was chief of

staff under Clinton and worked closely with Lew.

"All the executive orders and initiatives and regulations move through OMB, and Jack is extremely experienced with that. He'll be able to shape and guide all the assets of the government to move the economy forward for the middle class."

Obama's appointment of Lew fits a pattern of hiring chiefs of staff suited to the needs of his presidency at a particular time.

Rahm Emanuel, the consummate Capitol Hill dealmaker, got the job when Obama was intent on moving an ambitious legislation through a Democratic-controlled Congress.

After Emanuel left to run for mayor of Chicago, longtime Obama adviser Peter Rouse stepped in on an interim basis. The more conservative Daley was hired partly in hopes of improving Obama's rapport with the business community.

Lew is far different from his predecessors. The famously profane Emanuel consolidated power in his office and had a hand in virtually all aspects of the White House operation. Daley had a political persona of his own, as a former commerce secretary under Clinton and a member of a famous political family in Chicago.

The even-tempered Lew is more in the mold of a traditional government aide.

A former White House aide said that after Lew arrived as director in 2010, he "brought a stability and an adult-in-the-room approach. He had experience and had been there before. He's calm, level-headed and respected."

The former aide spoke on condition of anonymity to speak more candidly about



Obama introduces new chief of staff, Jacob Lew (left), with former chief of staff William M. Daley (right).

White House personalities.

Lew, who served as an aide under former House Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, leans toward the liberal end of the political spectrum and is not reluctant to take a stand, according to people who know him.

Lew, 56, worked in Hillary Rodham Clinton's State Department before moving to OMB. He and his wife, Ruth Schwartz, contributed \$9,200 to Clinton's presidential campaign in 2007-08, according to disclosure forms filed with Congress. He gave \$2,300 to the Obama campaign at the end of August 2008, after Clinton dropped out of the Democratic primary fight, the forms show.

Before joining the Obama administra-

tion, Lew worked at Citigroup for three years, earning \$945,000 for his work in 2008, according to disclosure forms filed when he was nominated to head OMB. The forms also show he held between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in state of Israel bonds.

A native of the Forest Hills neighborhood in Queens, N.Y., Lew is an orthodox Jew who keeps kosher and observes the Sabbath: Between sundown Friday and Saturday, he doesn't drive, use electricity or work on his BlackBerry.

One aide recalls Lew walking to work at the White House on Saturdays. Lew is available to Obama should the president need to reach him during that time, according to the White House.

— MCT Campus

Zappos
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Zappos hacked

Information from users stolen

Online retailer Zappos.com and its discount affiliate, 6pm.com, disclosed Sunday a data breach that compromised customer account information.

The security problem did not affect "critical credit card and other payment data," Zappos Chief Executive Tony Hsieh wrote in an employee email, posted on the company blog on Sunday.

Hsieh explained that the company was "the victim of a cyber attack by a criminal who gained access to parts of our internal network and systems through one of our servers in Kentucky."

The retailer has more than 24 million customer accounts in its database, according to Hsieh's memo, and the company is notifying customers of the data breach via email. It has expired shoppers' passwords so they must create new ones to access their accounts.

In the letters, Zappos and 6pm said "there may have been illegal and unauthorized access to some of your customer account information ... including one or more of the following: your name, email address, billing and shipping addresses, phone number, the last four digits of your credit card number (the standard information you find on receipts), and/or your cryptographically scrambled password."

— MCT Campus

Deportations at 40-year high

Republicans stand firmly behind tough immigration laws

By James Rosen
McClatchy Newspapers

When it comes to illegal immigration, Republican presidential candidates are talking like it's 1999.

Listening to the GOP White House aspirants, voters might not know that the number of illegal immigrants in the United States is down, attempted border crossings are at a 40-year low and President Barack Obama has deported undocumented workers at twice the rate of his predecessor.

With slight variations, the top GOP candidates back mass deportations, tough state enforcement laws and extending the 675-mile fence along the U.S.-Mexico border, where illegal crossings were near their highest back in 1999. The top Republican candidates also oppose giving most illegal immigrants a path to legal residency.

"Border crossings are at a historic low, deportations are at a historic high, yet every Republican presidential candidate says the first thing we have to do is secure the border," said Frank Sharry, executive director of America's Voice, a Washington group that wants immigration enforcement to focus on serious criminals and national security threats.

The issue is likely to heat up in the next weeks as the candidate campaign in South Carolina's first-in-the-South Republican primary Jan. 21. Illegal immigration has long been a hot-button topic in South Carolina, where U.S. Sen. Jim DeMint was lionized by Republican activists for his leading role in killing 2007 reform legislation he branded as amnesty.

Conservative radio commentator Rush Limbaugh mocked U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., as "Senator Grahamnesty" for his efforts to pass the measure, and Graham has since adopted harder positions on illegal immigration.

Now, a federal judge has blocked a South Carolina immigration-enforcement law that was to have taken effect Jan. 1.

Sharry, other pro-immigration advocates and His-

panic lawmakers criticized former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney last week for saying that as president, he would veto the Dream Act, a bill that would provide legal residency to illegal immigrants who attend college or serve in the military, and who entered the country before they were 16.

Charlie Black, a North Carolina native and prominent Republican consultant who ran President Ronald Reagan's winning 1980 campaign, now is advising Romney.

Black acknowledged that Romney's hard-line immigration stance runs counter to Reagan, who granted the nation's last broad amnesty, and to Black's support for comprehensive reforms providing a path to legal residency. "That's the right thing to do, but I'm not running for president and Romney is," Black told McClatchy. "He's entitled to his own view, and I support him."

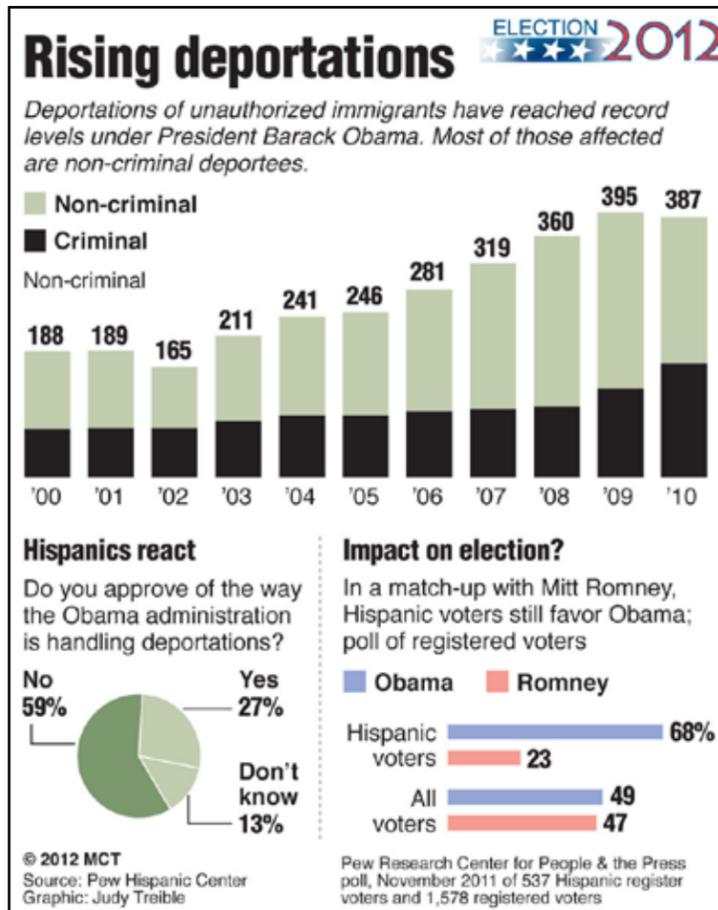
While Romney used the immigration issue to skewer Texas Gov. Rick Perry in an early debate, other influential Republicans have warned about reversing the inroads that Reagan, President George W. Bush and 2008 GOP nominee John McCain made among Hispanics, the country's fastest-growing demographic group with 21.7 million eligible voters, almost three times the number in 1988.

"The Republican Party has to discuss [immigration] in as humane a way as possible," McCain told CNN last month. "We have to have empathy, we have to have concern and we have to have a plan."

Former Bush adviser Karl Rove and former House Republican leader Dick Armey also have warned against alienating Hispanics. Their advice has not been heeded.

Former Sen. Rick Santorum's calls for mass deportations and opposition to any leniency helped him in Iowa, where he came within eight votes of defeating Romney in last week's GOP caucuses.

Romney and other rivals pilloried former House Speaker Newt Gingrich for saying in a November debate that undocumented workers who've been in the country for decades should be given a chance to gain legal status.



Under attack, Gingrich issued an "immigration fact sheet" detailing his past tough stances. He flew to South Carolina and declared his support for the state's new enforcement law, now enjoined by a federal judge.

An MSNBC poll last month of likely voters in South Carolina's presidential primary showed them split over a key issue, with 46 percent backing and 48 opposing "limited amnesty for some illegal immigrants."

DeMint introduced a bill in November to prevent the Justice Department from suing South Carolina, Arizona, Alabama, Georgia and other states that have passed toughened immigration laws.

"It's absurd that the Obama administration, which has failed to enforce the nation's immigration laws, is now stopping (states) from taking common-sense steps to protect citizens and uphold the law," DeMint said. "South Carolina has a duty to uphold the law and to protect our citizens from criminals who are in the country illegally."

Those states have suffered setbacks in federal courts. In the most recent ruling, U.S. District Judge Richard M. Gergel last month suspended provisions of the South Carolina law that criminalize the failure

to carry immigration papers, and requiring police to check the status of people they stop and suspect of being in the country illegally.

"The weight of the federal courts has sided undeniably with the Department of Justice and against those conservative legislators bent on pursuing a starvation strategy against their states' undocumented population," said Angela Kelly, an immigration analyst with the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank in Washington. The U.S. Supreme Court will take up Arizona's law later this year in a potential decision that will likely be applied to other states.

Hispanic lawmakers and advocates find irony in the claims by DeMint, Romney,

Santorum and other Republicans that Obama has been soft on illegal immigration. The federal government deported a record 395,000 foreigners in 2009 and 387,000 in 2010, compared with 189,000 in 2001 and 165,000 in 2002, George W. Bush's first two years in office. The number of illegal immigrants in the United States has dropped to 11.2 million from its peak of 12 million in 2007.

It fell in South Carolina from 70,000 to 55,000 in the same period and from 375,000 to 325,000 in North Carolina, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, a Washington policy group. Meanwhile, GOP presidential candidates don't seem to have noticed the decline. Their attacks on illegal immigration, some analysts say, could sabotage a chance to cut into Obama's political base.

A Pew Hispanic Center survey found widespread anger among Hispanic voters over Obama's deportation levels and his failure to fulfill 2008 campaign promises to pursue comprehensive reforms that would give a path to permanent residency or citizenship to some illegal immigrants. Yet in the same survey, Obama trounced Romney and Perry by 3 to 1 among Hispanic voters in head-to-head matchups.

In a remarkable protest by a fellow Democratic lawmaker, U.S. Rep. Luis Gutierrez of Illinois was arrested last July when he joined a rally outside the White House against Obama's deportation rate.

Clarissa Martinez will direct get-out-the-vote efforts for the National Council of La Raza, an advocacy group based in Washington. She plans to dispatch door-to-door canvassers to key swing states with large Hispanic populations, among them Florida, Colorado, Nevada, Pennsylvania and North Carolina.

— MCT Campus



Kristoffer Tripplebar, Abaca Press / MCT

Paul waves to the crowd after finishing his remarks at a campaign stop at the Nashua Airport in Nashua, New Hampshire.

Paul gains southern support

Influential S. Carolina senator endorses eldest candidate

Florence Morning News, S.C.

S.C. State Senator Tom Davis (R-Beaufort) endorsed Ron Paul for president in Myrtle Beach Sunday, the Paul campaign said.

A release by the Paul campaign said that "Sen. Davis is the most influential fiscal conservative in the South Carolina General Assembly and his endorsement virtually assures that fiscal conservatives in the "First in the South" primary state will take notice."

"We're excited and grateful to have Sen. Davis's endorsement, as it carries tremendous weight in South Carolina," said Ron Paul 2012 National Campaign Chairman Jesse Benton. "Sen. Davis knows a true fiscal conservative when he sees one. He's uniquely qualified to distinguish between establishment candidate Mitt Romney and the conservative alternative to Romney, Ron Paul."

The Paul Campaign released this text of Davis' endorsement: "It's easy to campaign on lower taxes, less spending and fewer regulations, it's another thing entirely to stand up for these limited government principles when the entire Washington establishment is aligned against you."

Yet for more than three decades Ron Paul has cast thousands of lonely votes in our nation's capital based on the constitutional principles that this country was founded on, and

that the Republican Party has promised to protect. Yet while generations of politicians, including far too many Republicans, were losing their way or caving to the status quo, Ron Paul was standing as a Tea Party of one against a towering wave of red ink.

"I'm endorsing Ron Paul because enough is enough. Despite this wave of unprecedented government spending, our unemployment rate has remained above eight percent for the last 34 months and 146.4 million Americans, one out of every two people in this country, are now classified as poor or low-income.

"Ron Paul's record matches his rhetoric, his fiscal plan matches the fiscal challenges that our nation is facing and his movement represents the taxpayers whose interests have been ignored in the political process for far too long.

"I'm also endorsing him because unlike what the pundits have led you to believe, he is the candidate who gives the Republican Party the best chance to beat Barack Obama in November.

"We have a choice: We can keep electing candidates who talk about change only during political campaigns as a way to get elected, or we can finally elect a candidate who will walk the walk and make that change a reality, restoring our bottom line, our individual liberties and our national pride in the process."

— MCT Campus

Jon Huntsman ends GOP bid

Former Utah governor drops campaign; endorses Romney

By Steven Thomma
McClatchy Newspapers

Jon Huntsman dropped his struggling campaign for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination Monday and endorsed rival Mitt Romney.

The former governor of Utah and ambassador to China bowed to the inevitable, hastening the end of a beleaguered campaign that had little money, next to no popular support and no prospect for significant gains in any states coming up on the primary calendar.

"Today I am suspending my campaign for the presidency," Huntsman said.

"I believe it is now time for our party to unite around the candidate best equipped to defeat Barack Obama. Despite our differences and the space between us on some of the issues, I believe that candidate is Mitt Romney."

Romney didn't attend the hastily arranged event.

Huntsman, 51, was joined by his wife, Mary Kaye, his daughters and his father at the Myrtle Beach Convention Center, the site of a GOP candidate debate Monday night.

He went out criticizing unnamed rivals and others for the attack ads that have flooded the airwaves in Iowa, New Hampshire and now South Carolina.

"This race has degenerated into an onslaught of negative and personal attacks not worthy of the American people," he said.

"At its core, the Republican Party is a party of ideas, but the current toxic forum of our political discourse does not help our cause. It is just one of the many reasons why the American people have lost trust in their elected leaders."

A favorite of many editorial pages The State, South Carolina's largest newspaper, which McClatchy Newspapers owns, endorsed him only Sunday Huntsman long touted his conservative credentials as a tax-cutting governor. But he never caught on with the conservatives who dominate the party, for several reasons. First, his acceptance of President Barack Obama's nomination to serve as ambassador to China along with praise for Obama at the time made him suspect to zealous anti-Obama conservatives.

Second, his low-key demeanor rendered him all but invisible in the nationally televised debates that have

dominated the campaign.

Third, his statement that he believes that human activity contributes to global warming, "I believe in evolution and trust scientists on global warming. Call me crazy." was out of line with conservative orthodoxy.

Though a fellow Mormon, Huntsman often sparred with Romney. He joined with rivals who called the former governor of Massachusetts a flip-flopper, saying Romney "has been on three sides of every major issue" and that he lacked a "core."

Huntsman skipped the Iowa caucuses, betting everything on New Hampshire, only to come in a distant third behind Romney and U.S. Rep. Ron Paul of Texas.

He bravely called that third-place finish a "ticket to ride" in next-voting South Carolina. But he's in a distant last place in polls here, a state that holds the first-in-the-South primary Saturday.

He's also in last place in Florida polls, a state in which he initially based his campaign in hopes of establishing it as a firewall that would restore his effort should it falter in any of the first three voting states.

— MCT Campus



Andy Jacobsen / MCT

Huntsman waves goodbye to the media after announcing in press conference he is withdrawing from the race and backing Romney.

Anxiety rises among evangelicals over Romney's momentum

South Carolina primary last realistic chance for Rick Perry, Rick Santorum to surpass front runner

By Paul West
Tribune Washington Bureau

The conservative contenders trying to slow Mitt Romney's sprint to the presidential nomination are running out of time, as the same dynamic that kept the right from coalescing in Iowa two weeks ago once again plays to the front-runner's advantage.

Saturday's South Carolina primary is the last realistic chance for a social conservative to emerge as a viable alternative to Romney. But a sharp split among the state's concentration of evangelical Christians and tea-party supporters has stubbornly persisted as Romney's rivals compete fiercely for them.

Rising anxiety on the right over Romney's momentum was reflected at a prayer breakfast Sunday in Myrtle Beach, attended by candidates Rick Perry and Rick Santorum.

One of the speakers, Eric Metaxas, said he hoped unnamed candidates "will hear from God and get out of the race." Metaxas, a conservative writer who backs Santorum, confirmed in an interview that he was talking about Perry and Newt Gingrich, both of whom were spurned in favor of Santorum this weekend in an endorsement by a group of influential religious broadcasters and commentators. Metaxas described South Carolina "the last exit before the bridge" for conservatives trying to stop Romney.

Gingrich, who is running second to Romney in polls here, told voters at a rally Sunday afternoon in Georgetown, S.C. that "if we split our vote three or four ways, we could end up with a moderate who I believe will have a very hard



Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney addresses supporters in Columbia, South Carolina.

time defeating Obama."

Earlier, on NBC's "Meet the Press," Gingrich said "if Romney wins here, he has an enormous advantage, going forward, which is why I think it's important for every conservative who wants to have a conservative nominee to rally around. And I am the one person who has a realistic chance of defeating him here."

The former House speaker is now calling himself a "Georgia Reagan conservative," an attempt to capitalize on his political background in a next-door state and fading memories of Ronald Reagan's 1980 victory in the inaugural South Carolina primary.

As the GOP field prepared for Monday's televised debate, the prospects of a

splintered vote on the right were, if anything, increasing because of the evangelical leaders' endorsement of Santorum. (The planned departure from the race by former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. is not expected to have an effect on the competition between Gingrich, Santorum and Perry.)

Support for Santorum among Christian evangelicals has already been evident in the first two tests of 2012, where exit polls showed the former Pennsylvania senator ran more than 10 percentage points better among white evangelical Protestants than among other Republicans.

At the sold-out prayer breakfast, he drew applause from the crowd of 350 when he referred to how "miraculously" the evangelical leaders, who weren't expected to

agree on a candidate, had backed him. He urged conservatives to ignore the advice of outsiders "who don't speak our language", as well as recent polls that show him tied for third here with Rep. Ron Paul of Texas.

Still, doubts about Santorum's ability to defeat President Barack Obama were reflected in interviews with voters at South Carolina churches on Sunday.

Ed Taylor, who is undecided, said Santorum's values probably match up best with his. "I think he's a great guy, but whether he can whip Obama, I don't know." As he greeted people entering Riverland Hills Baptist Church in Irmo, the 71-year-old said if he had to make a choice, he would go with Gingrich because he believes he is the most knowledgeable. "He's just got the answers," he said. "He knows what's going on. I think he's the one who will stand up in Obama's face."

As in Iowa, Santorum is counting on a late surge. He has begun running campaign commercials, but he still has far less TV and radio advertising working for him than his rivals. At the same time, his rising prominence has made him a target of attack ads from other candidates and their supporters, including Romney's.

"You can't hardly turn on a TV here without seeing an ad that is attacking Rick Santorum for his fiscal policies," Perry told CNN.

The Texas governor, the candidate with the strongest ties to evangelicals early on, has fared the worst so far in South Carolina. He summoned 30,000 people to a Houston prayer meeting a week before he entered the GOP race; he now struggles to attract more than 50 people to campaign rallies and has languished in the single digits in recent polls.

Romney finished fourth in South Carolina four years ago but is making a far more aggressive try this year. He has the backing of Republican Gov. Nikki Haley, elected on a burst of tea-party enthusiasm in 2010.

His campaign has mailed out brochures to South Carolina voters that feature a color photo of a prayerful Romney in coat and tie, his head bowed and eyes closed, along with a signed pledge to be true to "my faith" as president. The brochure notes that he has belonged to the same church "his entire life." But it does not mention his Mormon faith, a barrier for some Protestant evangelicals who don't consider Mormons to be Christians.

Ralph Reed, a longtime conservative Christian political strategist, said that Mormonism is less of a factor this year.

In Iowa, exit polls showed, 61 percent of caucus-going Protestant evangelicals voted for either a Mormon (Romney) or a Catholic (Santorum and Gingrich). Reed said Christian fundamentalists are voting on "electability, likeability, who shares their values" and the economy, especially in this hard-hit state.

"The sort of lazy narrative is that they're driven by identity politics, and all you have to do is come in here and say "Praise the Lord " and quote scripture and they're going to vote for you. It's not true," Reed said.

Along with all the other candidates, except former Utah Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr., Romney is to appear Monday at a rally for members of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, a Christian fundamentalist group organized by Reed that also sponsored Sunday's prayer breakfast.

— MCT Campus



Janet Blackmon Morgan, The Sun News / MCT

Texas Governor Rick Perry says, "These kids (troops who were videotaped urinating on Afghan corpse) made a mistake."

Politicians speak about viral video

Marines urinating on Taliban corpses under investigation

By Kim Geiger
Tribune Washington Bureau

Texas Gov. Rick Perry, who has been campaigning furiously in South Carolina in an effort to revive his sputtering presidential campaign, said Sunday that the Obama administration has gone "over the top" in criticizing Marines who were videotaped urinating on Afghan corpses.

"Obviously, 18-, 19-year-olds make stupid mistakes all too often, and that's what's occurred here," Perry said in an appearance on CNN's "State of the Union." He likened the incident to Gen. George S. Patton Jr. urinating in the Rhine River and Winston Churchill supposedly doing the same thing on the Siegfried Line.

"What's really disturbing to me is just, kind of, the over-the-top-rhetoric from this administration and their disdain for the military," said Perry, who has been wooing the military vote as well as evangelicals.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has called the in-

cident "utterly deplorable" and said those responsible will be "held accountable to the fullest extent."

President Barack Obama "shares in the sentiments expressed by Secretary Panetta," the White House has said.

The incident is under investigation. The four Marines, based at Camp Lejeune, N.C., could face charges under the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

"These kids made a mistake, there's no doubt about it," Perry said. "But to call it a criminal act, I think, is over the top."

On the same CNN program, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., said the administration's response has been appropriate. McCain, a Vietnam veteran and former prisoner of war, called the incident "a breakdown in discipline" that harms the war effort.

"I think a full and complete investigation is entirely appropriate," he said, noting: "We're trying to win the hearts and minds" in Afghanistan.

— MCT Campus

Santorum makes stop in Florence

Republican candidate criticizes Obama's defense budget

By Steffani Nolte
Florence Morning News, S.C.

U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum told a packed house at Percy and Willie's Sunday he wants to limit the federal government and protect our freedoms

"In America sometimes we need to stop and reflect about how exceptional we are," Santorum, R-Pa., said during a town hall meeting at the Florence restaurant. "As history has shown, we have transformed this world that goes far beyond any other civilization in the history of man."

Santorum said Pres. Barack Obama doesn't think America is a source for good in this world and that the world would be better off without America as a major player in world affairs. Santorum said Obama has shown these are his beliefs by cutting \$0.5 trillion from the defense budget and another proposed \$0.5 trillion and by shrinking the military.

Santorum said the defense budget 50 years ago was 60 percent of the federal budget. Today, he said, it's 20 percent of the federal budget and isn't an area in which government should be cutting spending.

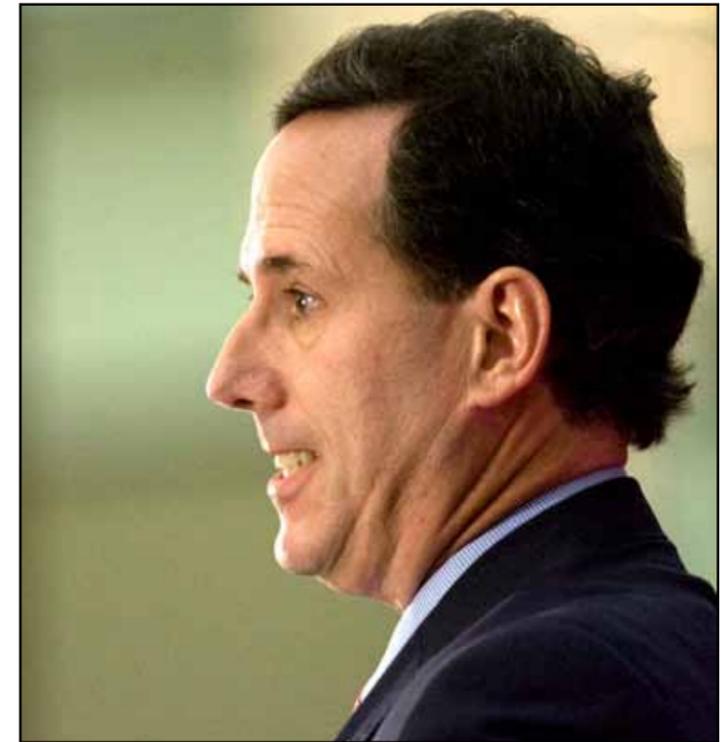
Santorum wants to cut the federal budget by \$5 trillion but keep the military budget strong. He said America's budget problems are entitlement spending, domestic discretionary spending and the interest on that debt.

He said the federal government's top responsibility is to keep its citizens safe from foreign aggressors. He said he thinks the federal government should be focusing on that and other things states cannot do for themselves.

South Florence High School Student, Phillip Rast said he enjoyed listening to Santorum talk about the military.

"He's just a great person," Rast said. "I really like everything he has to say. Everything he says is exactly what I think and what my parents think."

Rast said although he can't vote because he's only 15, he thinks it's good to get involved and listen to what the candidates have to say to know what's



Janet Blackmon Morgan, The Sun News / MCT

Republican Rick Santorum attends the Faith & Freedom Coalition Prayer Breakfast in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

right and what's wrong with each one.

Rast also said he like how Santorum got personal by sharing the story of losing his child.

During the question and answer portion of the town hall meeting, Santorum was asked what his greatest disappointment in life has been. Santorum said nothing is more disappointing than losing a child because it stays with a person forever.

His son Gabriel was born prematurely and lived two hours. Santorum said he and his wife found out their son was going to die during a sonogram when she was 20 weeks along in the pregnancy. Ironically, at that time, Santorum was working on the partial birth abortion bill.

"Its one thing to be pro-life and check the boxes," he said. "It's another to live it."

While it was a difficult situation, Santorum said it gave him perspective on life and understanding of God.

— MCT Campus

Who will win NFC, AFC football games this weekend?

Photos by James Tutten / Interviews by Joy Inzitari



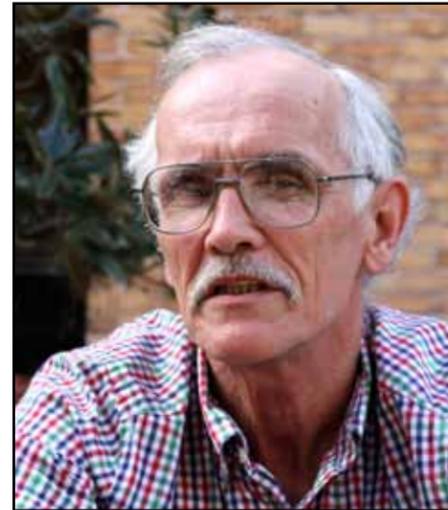
I pick the Patriots for the AFC, and I'm not a fan of either, but I'd have to pick the Giants.

— Briana Smith



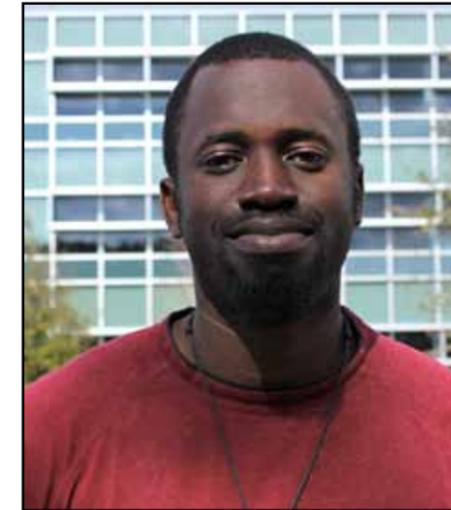
Well, I have got to pick the Patriots to win, and everyone in my family likes the 49ers to win.

— Romarco Stribring



The Patriots because Tom Brady plays so well. And the Giants because great defense wins games.

— Mick Rock



I like the Giants because they are the best team in the NCF. For the AFC I like the Patriots to win it.

— Patrick O'Connor



I've loved the Patriots ever since I was a kid. And definitely the Giants are going to win the NFC.

— Shelby Webb



Patriots because Tom Brady is just the man. And the Giants have a great defense all around.

— Marshall Serres



I like the Giants because they beat the Packers. And Tom Brady will win again with the Patriots.

— Hector Figueroa



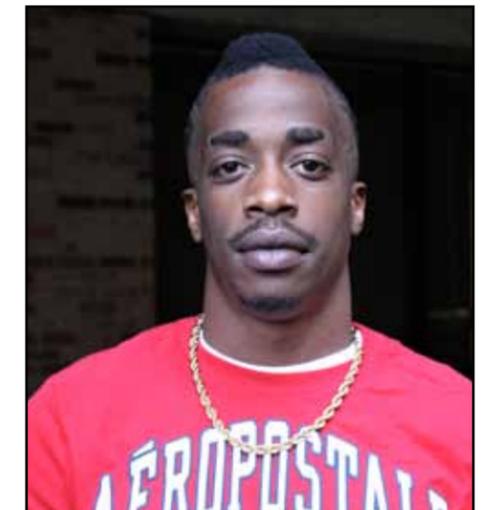
Well the Patriots did awesome in the last game. The Giants are hungry and are going to win also.

— Josh Jean' Louis



Ravens have good defense but the Patriots are gonna win. I hate to say it as a Jets fan, but Giants.

— Kevin Stodolak



The Patriots can put up more points than the Ravens. And the Giants have more experience.

— Nick Beckford

Tweets of the Week



Ellen DeGeneres @TheEllenShow
I love that you're on Twitter @MichelleObama! Finally a forum to discuss the important topics with you. Have you been watching The Bachelor?



jimmy fallon @jimmyfallon
What do you get when you cross Tim Tebow with David Bowie?
#Tebowie #LateNight pic.twitter.com/KkK4xeLS

Hide photo



Danforth France @danforthfrance
I'd delete my Facebook account, but there's some shaky marriages I'm keeping an eye on.



braden graeber @hipstermermaid

Happy MLK day to all you fans of Major League Knitting!



Conan O'Brien @ConanOBrien
The @GoldenGlobes claim they don't have a category for Late Night television, but it sure feels like an "Irish thing" to me.



Eric Stonestreet @ericstonestreet
Where do you go after you win a golden globe? The kitchen of the Beverly Hills Hilton. say.ly/hMw1h31



Photo courtesy of Eric Stonestreet



Sarah Silverman @SarahKSilverman
Josh Brolin wins largest head 4th year in a row! Diane Lane wins smallest (2nd time nom, first win!)



Kathy Griffin @kathygriffin
Brangelina met w Obama 2day @ the white house. Um, still waiting 4 my invite. Is it because I just rescue dogs & not kids?



Chris Colfer @chriscolfer
You guys and your trending topics are hysterical! If I'm perfect then this world is in trouble! #ButChrisAppreciatesIt



Stephen Colbert @StephenAtHome
Welcome to Twitter, @MichelleObama! Please ignore my following old hashtags #ExerciseSucks, #GardeningIsForGrannies, #FatKidsAreCooler



Gary Busey @THEGaryBusey
Sometimes you have to cry in the bushes to be a winner.
Retweeted by Fred Lambert

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'Devil Inside' a test of faith

What could have possessed Paramount Pictures to make such a bad film?

By Jeff Shedden
jshedden@valenciavoice.com

I've always been a sucker for horror films, and this can even include some real stinkers. My personal horror collection is around 130 titles, and includes gems like "Candyman" and "Re-animator" and junk like "The Gate" and "Xtro." I have the entire run of the "Nightmare on Elm Street" series, "Hellraiser," and even all of the "Saw" movies. "The Devil Inside" will never join this collection.

My favorite genre of horror film falls into the "haunting/possession" category, and "The Exorcist" is still my favorite horror film to this day. I'm not a huge fan of the "found footage" style of film either, but I'm not against it. I liked "Cloverfield" and "Paranormal Activity," but thought "Blair Witch Project" was dumb.

So you can see how a movie like "The Devil Inside" would appeal to me, right? I don't watch TV much, so I didn't even hear about this movie until the day before it hit theaters. Now, I've been burned be-

fore with "The Last Exorcism," which had a lot of build up and then just fell apart at the end. I deserved that one, though. I broke my cardinal rule of never watching a horror film that got a PG-13 rating, because they all suck.

"The Devil Inside" is rated R, and so was ripe for viewing. The trailer looked great, and I was ready for some devilish mayhem with heads a-spinning and pea soup a-puking. And I ended up watching the number one selling film of the weekend.

If you do a little research, you'll discover that this movie currently holds a 6 percent professional rating and a 25 percent viewer rating. This reveals that there are a disturbing number of inbred people watching movies. Seriously, 6 percent is worse than "Gigli," and they had to kill everybody involved with that one. Yes, that's correct, Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez are actually body doubles now.

The real tragedy is that it was almost a good movie. The premise was solid and the few scenes of exorcism were genuinely frightening. It's too bad that the filmmakers seem to have gotten bored with making a movie and decided to call it a day and take up macramé or something. I'm convinced that this film was merely a way to trick investors into giving the filmmakers and actors a trip to Italy.

You'll hear reviewers attempt to be tactful about the ending without spoiling anything, and you'll read tweets from jackasses who don't understand what went wrong with the movie. I heard one person laugh about how they had just gotten trolled by a movie. No, no, no, you got robbed of 13 bucks by a movie that had less payoff than



Courtesy of Paramount Pictures / MCT

Comedian Jimmy Norton as Evan Helmuth playing Father David. Don't get too attached to him.

the end of a bottle of ipecac.

I'm not that nice of a guy, but I will warn you of spoilers right now. Seriously, I'm going to ruin the ending of the movie. That's enough warning, so if I get an email from anyone complaining about me ruining the film for you, you will be ridiculed.

Ready? The big secret ending of "The Devil Inside" is THERE IS NO ENDING. The movie ends with the characters suffering from a huge dose of demon possession, and they're heading towards the home of some rock star exorcist, they get into a wreck and the screen goes dark directing you to a

website. This is criminal filmmaking.

There have been cop-out endings and deus ex machina endings, but I've never seen an ending that makes the audience have to go to Youtube afterwards to get anything remotely resembling closure.

I'm very serious when I say that if I hear that they're making a sequel to this complete waste of time, then I swear I will hire a gang of pygmies to speedbag the reproductive organs of everyone involved.

I was willing to boycott Warner Brothers for nearly 15-years over a number of bad decisions and worse movies, and I'm willing to do the same for Paramount or any studio who encourages this type of filmmaking.



Courtesy of Paramount Pictures / MCT

Isabella attempts to suck the demons from her mother, which is not a Vatican approved procedure.

More noise than joy

Even divine intervention could not save star team of Latifah, Parton

Director: Todd Graff

Starring: Queen Latifah, Dolly Parton, Keke Palmer, Jeremy Jordan



By Shannon Metherell
smetherell@valenciavoice.com

“Joyful Noise” features a gospel choir whose goal is to win a competition to help a small town in Georgia. Vi Rose Hill (Queen Latifah) is named the leader of the Divinity Church choir, which affects G.G. Sparrow (Dolly Parton), another member of the choir who wanted the same position. After a couple feuds, the two women pair together to put both their unique styles into the choir.

There are several side stories in the movie alongside the competition. Sparrow’s grandson, Randy (Jeremy Jordan) takes part in helping out the choir when he takes fancy to Hill’s daughter, Olivia (Keke Palmer). Randy gets into some trouble with Olivia, taking a turn on Olivia’s godly home life. The battle between Olivia, Randy, and Vi heightens when Olivia starts to disrespect her mother.

There are a handful of skeptics that do not think Queen Latifah and country singer Dolly Parton mesh



Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Dolly Parton and newly appointed choir director Queen Latifah square off in competition in Warner Brother’s “Joyful Noise.”

well together in a movie. Others would disagree.

“I came to see this only for a friend, and it actually ended up being an okay movie. Parton and Latifah can work well together,” said Kalyn Glover.

Overheard in many conversations, Queen Latifah appears to be the reason why many went to go see Joyful Noise this past weekend. “I love her [Latifah] and the powerful roles she plays in most movies. If she can play her role as well as she did in Hairspray, then I will definitely check it out,” said Cathie Williams.

According to Greg Barton, who works at the Cobb

Theatre downtown, there have not been many seats sold for the movie this past weekend. “I’m not sure if it’s going to be a top-seller,” stated Barton.

The film demonstrates morals of Christianity as well as the difficulties of achieving goals. Joyful Noise adds a bit of comedy to all the drama revolving the film.

Fandango’s critics say it’s a “so-so” film, while others say it’s a movie you should see. This weekend, Joyful Noise made about \$11.3 million, scoring below “Beauty and the Beast” and “Contraband,” which did not impress Warner Brothers.

Opening Jan. 20

‘Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close’



Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Director: Stephen Daldry
Starring: Sandra Bullock, Tom Hanks, Thomas Horn, Max Von Sydow

Rated: PG-13
Running Time: 2 hours 9 minutes
Genre: Drama

‘Haywire’

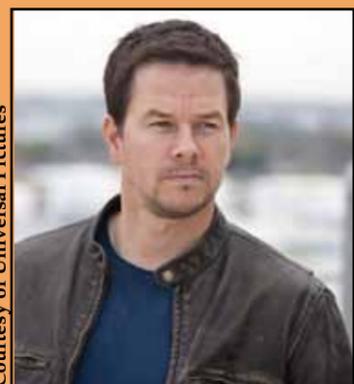


Courtesy of Warner Bros. Pictures

Director: Steven Soderbergh
Starring: Gina Carano, Ewan McGregor, Channing Tatum, Michael Douglas

Rated: R
Running Time: 1 hour 33 Minutes
Genre: Action

Box Office



‘Contraband’

Rated: R
This Weekend: \$24.1 Million
Total Gross: \$24.1 Million

Courtesy of Universal Pictures



Courtesy of Walt Disney Pictures

‘Beauty and the Beast’

Rated: G
This Weekend: \$18.5 Million
Total Gross: \$18.5 Million



Courtesy of Paramount Pictures

‘M:I-Ghost Protocol’

Rated: PG-13
This Weekend: \$11.5 Million
Total Gross: \$186.7 Million

'Contraband' has many ingredients, but they all taste similar

Mark Wahlberg steps into an overused formula that lives within films like 'Gone in 60 Seconds' & 'The Italian Job'

Director: Baltasar Kormakur
Starring: Mark Wahlberg, Kate Beckinsale, Ben Foster, Giovanni Ribisi



By Fred Lambert
 flambert@valenciavoice.com

Tension and grit run wild throughout the latest Mark Wahlberg film, "Contraband." Directed by Icelandic filmmaker Baltasar Kormákur, and fully loaded with familiar faces like Kate Beckinsale, Ben Foster and Giovanni Ribisi. "Contraband" tells the tale of a harsh smuggler workforce in New Orleans, and hits the mark for a somewhat typical crime thriller.

Mark Wahlberg's character Chris Farraday is your standard caricature of an expert criminal gone straight. His wife Kate (Kate Beckinsale) has much to do with this decision, as do their two adolescent sons. When Kate's little brother (Caleb Landry Jones) tries his hand at drug smuggling, he succumbs to the old "Han Solo" slip-up when he's forced to jettison his cargo of cocaine overboard into the ocean.

This leads to a pay-up-or-die threat scenario from his employer, seedily played by a tattooed Giovanni Ribisi. Of course, Farraday is put back in the game as he gath-

ers a crew to smuggle in some "contraband" (high-grade counterfeit cash) from Panama to pay off the debt. The rest, as might be guessed, turns into a sour set of circumstances that walks the razor's edge of victory and chaotic defeat.

The main strength of this film is the pacing. One problem comes after another, only to be foiled by the tough and resourceful Farraday. But as soon as one issue is solved, another takes the lead as climaxes pile onto each other. This film technique could be unofficially termed "suspense-timing." It's an old trick familiar to those who are fans of films like "Ocean's 11," when the possibility of disaster is imminent, but averted at the fi-

nal desperate moments by criminal minds which are too cool for school. It should be noted, however, that "Contraband" is many times more violent than any "Ocean's" film.

"It all tied together," said audience member Cody Reynolds after the film. "It was very well scripted, I would say. The writers didn't make it up as they went – they knew where they were going from the beginning."

The mixture of suspense-timing, humor and street violence made "Contraband" an interesting and fun exposé of how well Mark Wahlberg can pull off a likeable but stern hard-case. At one point the movie peaks in wild grittiness when Farraday

and street violence made "Contraband" an interesting and fun exposé of how well Mark Wahlberg can pull off a likeable but stern hard-case. At one point the movie peaks in wild grittiness when Farraday



Courtesy of Universal Pictures



Courtesy of Universal Pictures

Wahlberg, with Foster, plans to head for Panama to score millions of dollars in counterfeit bills to protect his brother-in-law in Universal's "Contraband."

and his colleague are forced to go on an armored car heist by an unstable Panamanian crime lord, played by Diego Luna, of all people (who actually does a pretty good job).

Another standout performance comes from Jonathan Kimble Simmons as Captain of the barge used by Farraday's crew. Simmons seemed to share the role of comedic relief with Ribisi, even though each character plays an antagonist with the soul

of a hyena. Ben Foster also dishes out his typically well-acted performance as Farraday's best friend.

Despite this, "Contraband" doesn't break any barriers in the genre. Upon viewing, some may feel the tight grip of the film, but simultaneously be reminded of similar movies.

"It reminded of me of 'American Gangster' because of all the drugs," said spectator Hannah Martinez. Indeed, both films

deal with like themes – the clever smuggling of illegal cargo, and the murderous figures which control that environment.

And while the cast, writing and execution of "Contraband" is rather solid, it's still probably doomed to obscurity in the land where stories about reformed criminals forced into their old expertise float around, waiting to be viewed like a lovely landscape painting that's still too comparable with the rest to stand out.

Hollywood still can't resist 'Alcatraz'

Producer Abrams' imagination runs wild in exciting new FOX drama

By Chuck Barney
Contra Costa Times

Sometimes, just a single word can stir one's imagination. When, for example, producer J.J. Abrams was first pitched the idea for a TV drama pegged to Alcatraz, he was instantly intrigued.

"The mere mention of it is so provocative and compelling," he says, referring to San Francisco's legendary island prison that once housed such notorious criminals as Al Capone and George "Machine Gun" Kelly. "It just made me immediately lean forward. I couldn't believe that there never had been a show called 'Alcatraz.'"

Until now. On Monday the Fox net-

work will, indeed, premiere a fantastical crime series from Abrams called "Alcatraz." But while the show may be breaking prime-time ground, it's certainly not the first time Hollywood has been drawn to the little island in the heart of San Francisco Bay.

Movies such as "The Rock," and "Escape From Alcatraz" have been inspired by it. Various TV shows through the years have referenced it. Moreover, numerous books and even songs have been written about it.

The latest addition to this pop-cultural lore is a show that reflects Abrams' penchant for over-the-top concepts and Byzantine mysteries. "Alcatraz" is about a

small team of investigators struggling to discover why some of the prison's former inmates are now wreaking havoc in San Francisco, 50 years after they vanished without a trace. The cast is led by Sam Neill, Sarah Jones and Jorge Garcia, who made a name for himself in Abrams' biggest TV hit, "Lost."

Neill, who first visited Alcatraz 15 years ago, believes they've hit upon the perfect setting.

"Just the name puts a shiver down my spine," he says. "... Imagine the cruelty of a prison where you sit behind bars looking at something as lovely as San Francisco and San Francisco is looking at you. That's such an incredibly harsh reality."

Jack Bender, a director and producer on the TV series, recalls, as a kid, thinking of Alcatraz as a very scary place with an "Edgar Allan Poe vibe" to it. As for Abrams, he says it has the feel as a "ghost house."

That sense of gloom associated with Alcatraz is something storytellers have fed off _ and embellished _ over the years. As a National Park Service tourist guide to the island notes, "the truth of Alcatraz has often been overlooked, lost in the fog of its myths."

One of the most persistent myths, according to Alcatraz expert John Martini is that the facility was a horrific prison. In fact, he said, most inmates who made multiple stops in the penal system considered it to be their best experience.

"There were no gangs. It was safe and clean. You had one-man private cells and the food was OK," said Martini, who leads tours of Alcatraz and has extensively written about it. "The worst thing about it is that it was the end of the line. When you were sent to Alcatraz, it was as if you had



Liane Hentscher Fox/MCT

Parminder Nagra, left, and Jorge Garcia star in "Alcatraz" on Fox with Sarah Jones and Sam Neill.

fallen off the edge of the earth. But it certainly was no hellhole."

The film that exercised the most creative license, says Martini, was "Murder in the First," a 1995 release starring Kevin Bacon, who played Henri Young, a bank robber sent to Alcatraz in 1936.

"It portrayed the prison guards doing despicable things _ beating the inmates, locking them in dungeons ..." he says. "The Bureau of Prisons was livid over that film."

Much more palatable was "Escape from Alcatraz," the 1979 film starring Clint Eastwood as Frank Morris, an inmate who engineered what possibly was the only successful escape attempt in 1962. (He and his two accomplices were never found and assumed to have drowned).

Alexandra Picavet, a public affairs officer for the National Park Service, says curious tourists inquire on about Alcatraz's connections to Hollywood on a daily basis.

"They wonder, for example, where the

underground (ore-cart) tunnels that they saw in 'The Rock' are located," she said. "They're never surprised that they don't get to see them, but they're very surprised to learn that they never existed."

Still, Picavet believes there's a benefit to having the image of Alcatraz playing upon the big and small screens.

"Hopefully, viewers will be inspired to visit Alcatraz for themselves and to delve into some of its history," she said. "I think they'll find that it's just as fascinating as anything Hollywood can make up."

Various TV shows have referenced Alcatraz. Even "The Simpsons" were incarcerated there in a Season 15 episode. Also, the reality series, "Ghost Hunters" devoted an episode to finding paranormal activity on the island.

June Carter Cash recorded "Alcatraz" for her 2003 album, "Wildwood Flower"

In the videogame, "Alcatraz: Prison Break," players are challenged to test their survival skills.

— MCT Campus



Liane Hentscher Fox/MCT

The 'Alcatraz' two-hour premiere begins Jan. 18 at 8 p.m. Its normal timeslot will be Mondays at 9 p.m.

Otronicon consumes Science Center

Interactive technology of today inspires careers of tomorrow

By Fred Lambert
flambert@valenciavoices.com

A swath of technological innovation body-snatches the Orlando Science Center every year around Martin Luther King Jr. Day. In its seventh annual holding, the Otronicon swooped in this weekend to display the latest tech-wares in the fields of medical, military and police simulation training. Video games, 3-D image mapping, and laser tag complimented the fray amid the Science Center's usual intriguing exhibits.

"Otronicon is an event where we celebrate the impact that interactive technology has made on how we live, learn, work and play," said Jeff Stanford, Vice President of Communications at the Science Center. "We do that by joining with a number of industry partners – EA Sports, Lockheed Martin, Florida Hospital, Walt Disney World, a number of digital media schools in town, the military – and we come together to demonstrate the huge impact technology makes in our lives."

All three stories and every room of the

Science Center was brimmed with differing devices from varying entities, as music from popular video games like "Fallout 3," "Call of Duty Modern Warfare 2," "Tetris," "Battlefield Bad Company," "Mario," and "Legend of Zelda" played through speakers to set the ambiance.

In their first year at the convention, Disney had taken over the room originally designated as Dr. Dare's Laboratory for a lecture on potential and kinetic energy's place in roller coaster physics. The Saturday afternoon presentation was given over an intricate thrill ride model built from K'Nex pieces.

EA Sports also had their own area, inside the dinosaur bone exhibit. In one corner visitors lined up to be photographed and inserted onto the cover art of a Madden game. Another section showed off a prototypical device made just last week by A. J. Jeromin of Electronic Arts' Emerging Intellectual Properties Group. The steam-punk styled contraption, dubbed the "Reality Face Capture," held six cameras which devised a picture-quality 3-D image of a human face on screen within minutes. The whole thing was made out of wires, PVC pipe, toilet drains and cameras.

"This actually would have been really helpful for us in the past," said Jessie Mariani, Production Coordinator at EA Sports' Maitland location. "We had to do all sorts of 3-D imagery, then render it and outsource it – this stops all of that."

Despite marquee logos like Disney and EA, the crown jewels of the convention were the training simulation technologies.

"I think its good exposure, because otherwise most people won't get to play with this kind of stuff," said visitor Ryan Stowers, 33. "Normally you'd have to go to either college or some type



Christopher Correa-Ortega / Valencia Voice

Tyree Jackson of Carver Middle School tries on latest MRI headset and goggles at the Otronicon expo.

of technical school, or be enlisted in the military to see these things."

The medical training technology, provided by the Florida Hospital for Children, catches the eye most evidently when perusing Otronicon.

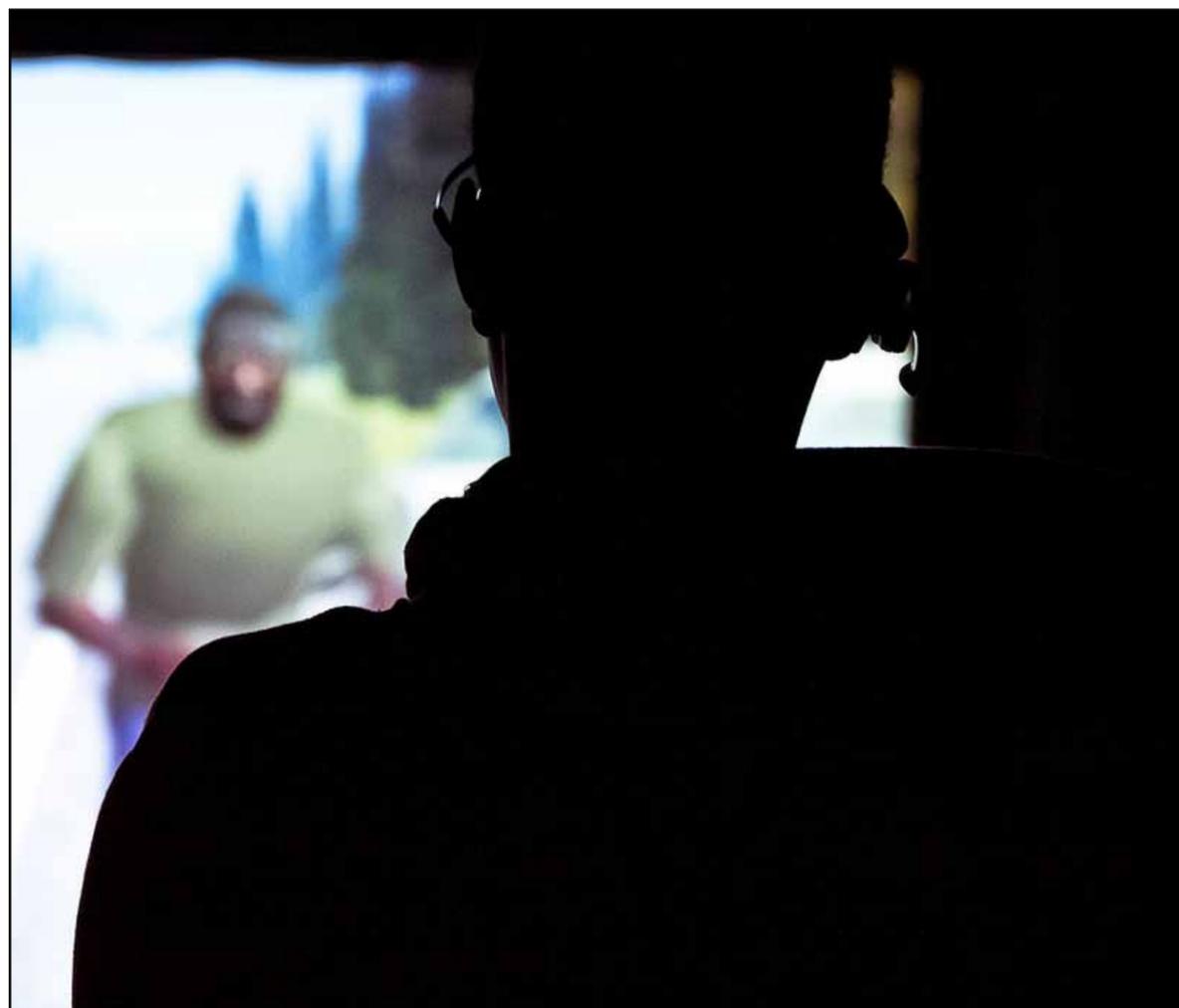
The SimMan is a flesh-colored dummy that has a pulse and rising chest to recreate respiration, and is connected to a computer screen which displays vitals.

"We'll take him to school groups, and we'll actually simulate a cocaine overdose," said Science Center employee Stephanie Esler. "You can simulate heart attacks, asthma attacks – all kinds of things."

Other models include SimKid, a wireless 3G version of SimMan, and SimBaby, which Esler described as "creepy." The newer 3G SimMan, unlike the SimMan on display at Otronicon, actually has eyes which can track movement, and even cry. Varying versions are used at Seminole State College, Valencia College, Orlando Tech, and Winter Park Tech, according to Esler.

Adjacent exhibits simulated surgery. Laparoscopic Training Boxes used clamp-like robot arms and a magnified image on a

— See 'Otronicon at Orlando Science Center' next page



Christopher Correa-Ortega / Valencia Voice

Student tests out law enforcement training technology at Otronicon 2012 in the Orlando Science Center.

Otronicon at Orlando Science Center

— Continued from page 16

screen to allow visitors to suture a flesh-like piece of foam. A neighboring section showed off the DaVinci, a giant robotic appendage used in surgery and operated from a station with 3-D rendering. A visitor patiently used the apparatus to pluck pieces out of the electronic shock game "Operation."

The AUFTS (Advanced Use of Force Training System) is an eight year old device used by Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers like those in Glencoe, Ga., and Artisia, N.M. Utilizing voice recognition technology, a laser pointed taser gun replica, a laptop and a huge screen, this US Navy-developed training tool was shown off in the

back corner of the Science Center.

An animated scenario played out on the screen where, as a police officer, the user must confront a disturbed man in an alleyway after receiving a complaint. The avatar responds to voice commands from the user with varying degrees of compliance, from full cooperation to complete antagonism.

Trainees must react by talking the suspect down or defending themselves with the taser. Other weapons available include a handgun, baton and OC spray. The outcomes vary, and can be controlled from the computer. There are around six different

endings for eight scenarios. In one the subject abruptly fell over and started having a seizure as soon as dialogue commenced.

After the exercise, trainees can go over the course of events with an instructor in an after-action review which records the entire engagement.

"A lot of systems don't have that right now, where you can interact with the avatar," said former police officer Al Uy of the Novonics Corporation. "It's going to change how we see training in law enforcement. The new generation's technology has really separated us from the interaction of people. This is going to bring us back to how important it is to talk to people, how to respect them, how to address them – it's all encompassing. It's not just going straight to the weapon. You have to talk through problems – de-escalate."

For gun-nuts and flyboys, the military simulators were the staples of Otronicon.

Lockheed Martin had a life-sized flight simulator with accurate controls, and US Marines oversaw a multi-desktop tactical decision making computer game called V.B.S. 2 (Virtual Battle Space 2), a component of the D.V.T.E. (Deployable Virtual Training Environment). Marines can use this training aid in non-field environments like barracks or on board ships.

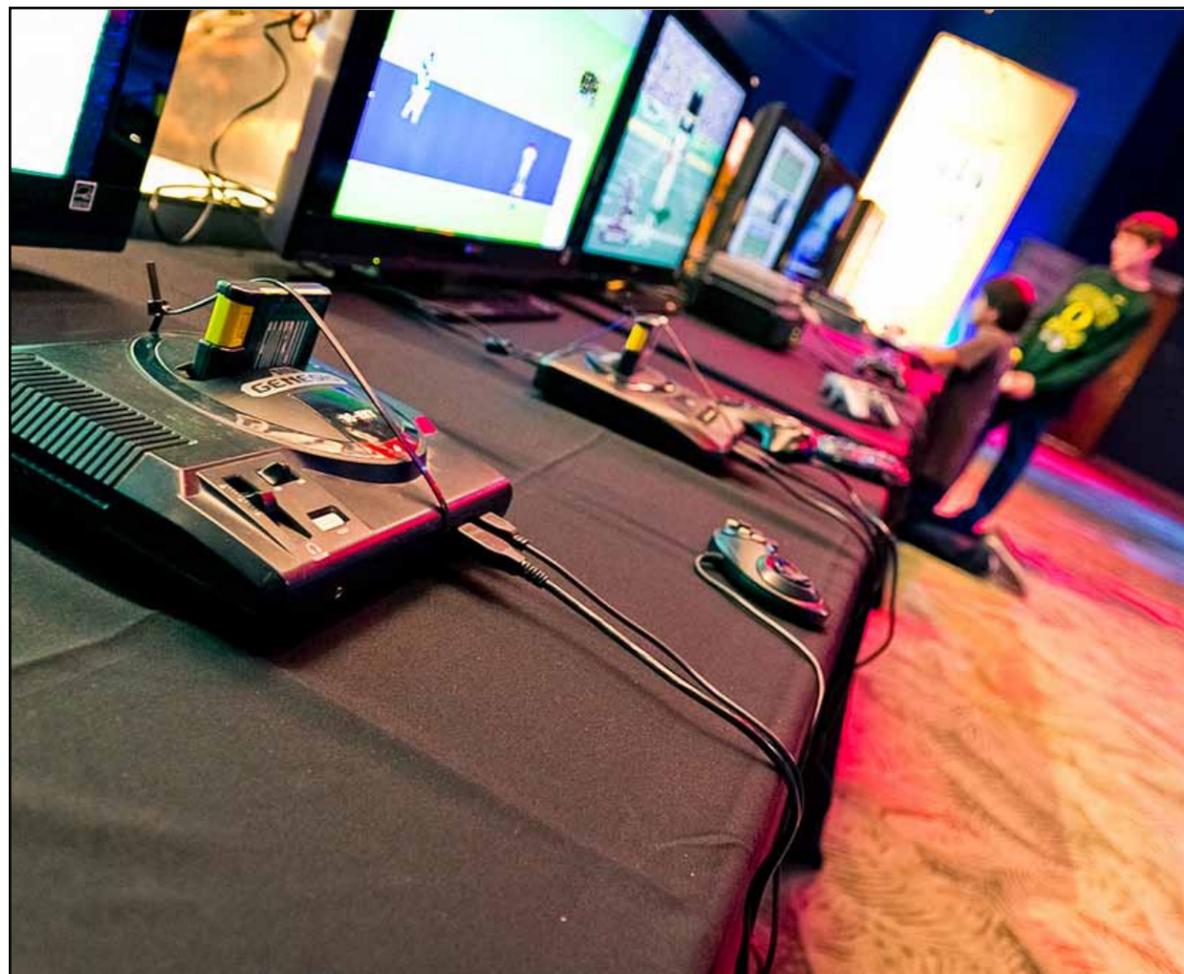
Basically an inflated online multiplayer game, the V.B.S. 2 includes all the intricacies and equipment assets of real-life expeditionary forces, including tanks, artillery and air power, all controlled by other trainees simultaneously. Young visitors occupied the station at each laptop, blasting Taliban in a virtual rendering of a US base in Afghanistan.

"It's scalable, so you can use a map of pretty much anywhere," said Marine Lt. Col Dennis Butler. "I can go to 29 Palms;



Christopher Correa-Ortega / Valencia Voice

Young girls sample racing simulator . Otronicon is an annual tech expo held at the Orlando Science Center.



Christopher Correa-Ortega / Valencia Voice

Two boys play classic EA sports and Sega Genesis games on consoles from mid 1980s to present day.

I can go to Baghdad; I can go to New York City. They'll scan the map, put it in there and build the town, and you can actually run the mission off of this."

These were merely a few of the techwares displayed at the four-day event. Otronicon's niche is essentially interactive simulation – video gaming, namely, but larger and more hands on. And despite the fun-factor involved in such an event, one of its main purposes is to educate younger crowds.

"Otronicon has a couple of major

priorities, and probably the biggest one is to get young people excited about science and technology careers," said Stanford. "The S.T.E.M. crisis is a really big deal for us – S.T.E.M. being science, technology, engineering and math – these are courses that American students are struggling with right now. So what we do is use the appeal of video games and interactive technology to bring the kids in, get them engaged, and show them that science is running through that."

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Jennifer Pritchard, MCF; Animalopolis: Courtesy of Graphic Films; Courtesy of Evanesence; Courtesy of The Cab; Courtesy of the Features; Courtesy of Jason Aldean; Courtesy of the Mountain Goats

Jan. 19
"Picasso and Einstein meet in a bar..."
 East Campus
 Building 5, Room 112
 1:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.

Jan. 20
New Orleans Portfolio: Works by Barbara Brainard
 East Campus
 Anita S. Wooten Gallery
 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Jan. 23
Conversation Compassion KickOff
 East Campus
 Mall Area
 8:00 p.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Jan. 24
MLK Program
 East Campus
 5-112 & Atrium
 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Jan. 24
MLK Program
 East Campus
 5-112 & Atrium
 5:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

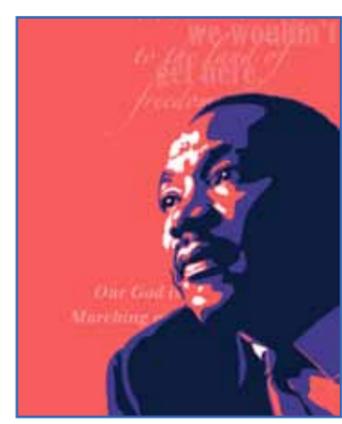
Jan. 24
MLK Speaker: Dr. Bernice A. King
 Osceola Campus
 Bldg. 1, Auditorium
 1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Jan. 25
Peer Educators Present: Health and Wellness
 Osceola Campus
 Bldg. 2, Atrium
 1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

Community

1/19
Globalization, Manufacturing, Sweatshops, Development/Aid Work and Ethical Consumerism
 3:00 p.m.
 Student Union Cape Florida Ballroom, UCF

1/21
Environmental Health & Wellness Event
 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.
 Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens 3755 N. U.S. Highway 17-92



1/21
Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Song, Poetry and Dance with a message of "Youth – Free From Drugs and Violence", Hope of Salvation, Inc.,
 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
 Jones High School, 801 S. Rio Grande Ave, Orlando, FL

1/24
First Generation Round Table
 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
 Libra Community Center UCF

1/25
Community Screening of American Teacher
 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
 Morgridge International Reading Center, University of Central Florida

On-going

1/19 - 1/22
Art Exhibition
 Maitland Art Center Galleries 231 W. Packwood Ave.
 Tuesday - Saturday
 11:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

1/19 - 1/31
A Distant Thunder: Florida Photography in the Civil War Era
 Mondays - Fridays
 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
 Barry University School of Law 6441 E. Colonial Drive



1/19 - 1/31
Animalopolis IMAX Film explores the life of wild animals like cheetahs and lions
 Sundays - Tuesdays,
 Thursdays - Saturdays
 Orlando Science Center 777 E. Princeton St.

1/19 - 2/8
Tribute to the Masters
 Mondays - Thursdays
 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
 Casselberry City Hall, 95 N. Triplet Lake Drive

1/19 - 2/19
Retrospective
 Sundays, Saturdays, 1-5 p.m.
 Tuesdays, Thursdays-Fridays, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
 Wednesdays, 11 a.m. - 7 p.m.
 Southeast Museum of Photography

Concerts

1/18
Evanesence
 7:00 p.m.
 House of Blues



1/20
The Cab
 5:30 p.m.
 The Beacham

1/21
The Features
 9 p.m.
 The Social



1/22
Jason Aldean
 7:30 p.m.
 Amway Center

1/24
The Mountain Goats
 8 p.m.
 The Social



Will All-Star Game affect Howard trade?

Orlando Magic can't let next month's showcase stop their big man's future



Howard dunks the ball during game. He has stated many times that he wants to be traded.

Stephen M. Dowell, Orlando Sentinel / MCT

By Clarence E. Hill Jr.
McClatchy Newspapers

The World's Greatest Pickup Game aka the NBA All-Star Game in Orlando could get a little serious come February 26. And, folks, these things are never serious.

But let me ask you this: Could a matchup pitting Dwight Howard against Andrew Bynum be just for fun?

Because it looks as if Howard of the Magic and Bynum of the Lakers will be the starting centers for their respective conferences ... and because the trading deadline is 18 days after the exhibition ... and because there's talk of Howard being traded for Bynum ...

Wouldn't it stand to reason that Dwight vs. 'Drew after two days of media saturation, might not be all uncontested alley-oops, layups and hugs? Oh, my kingdom for some real all-star drama.

Or here's an idea: Why not just save everyone in Orlando and L.A. the trouble and the moving expenses and trade Dwight and 'Drew minutes before tipoff?

Put Howard in the West jersey and Bynum in the East uni (and keep an extra East jersey on hand if Pau Gasol also has to trade one coast for another).

No muss, no fuss, Jim Buss.

Cover it on TV like a reality show, with Justin Bieber presenting the uniforms to Howard and Bynum.

Besides, the game would give Howard a taste of what it's like playing with Kobe Bryant.

Kobe doesn't pass during the reg-

ular season; you think he's giving it to Dwight (or Bynum) in the All-Star Game? He took 23 shots in last year's game so he could win MVP.

Howard says he doesn't think he'll be traded until after the game leaves town. True, but if GM Otis Smith gets an offer he can't refuse before the event arrives, he should act on it.

Why not?

Who cares if All-Star Weekend is in Orlando's backyard?

What, the Magic are going to worry about perception at this point?

Though it would be uncomfortable for Magic fans to see Howard in another all-star uniform, the club has to look out for its future, just as Dwight is looking out for his.

There won't be that many Magic fans attending the game, anyway, not with those ridiculous prices and the amount of tickets available.

I mean, Howard already has delivered the Magic and their fans the bad news.

Does it really matter when he leaves if the team finds a satisfying deal for him?

As I've written several times, Bynum would be the best return any team would have received in exchange for a player who has forced his way out.

Better than what Denver got for 'Melo and New Orleans got for Chris Paul, even with the commissioner's help.

The sight of Howard representing a visiting team in the city where he lives during a weekend in which the NBA celebrates its game is, ahem ... a black eye for the league.

Truth.

— MCT Campus

Local Team Schedule

NCAA men's basketball



Last: @ Marshall L 65-64
Next: vs. Memphis, Wed. Jan. 18

NCAA women's basketball



Last: vs. Southern Miss W 65-47
Next: vs. Rice, Thurs. Jan. 19

NBA



Last: vs. New York W 102-93
Next: vs. Charlotte, Tues. Jan. 17



Last: @ Denver L 114-107
Next vs. San Antonio Thurs. Jan. 19

NHL



Last: vs. Pittsburgh L 6-3
Next vs. Boston, Tues. Jan. 17

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AFC CHAMPIONSHIP



NFC CHAMPIONSHIP



VS.



Offense

While QB Joe Flacco is a decent game manager he is not in the same elite class as Brady, and the Ravens could struggle if he is asked to match Brady's production. The Ravens will lean heavily on the legs of the NFL's second leading rusher, Ray Rice, as they have all season.



Tom Brady is coming off a six TD performance against the Denver Broncos. TE Rob Gronkowski has been a matchup nightmare for opposing teams all season and looks to add to the 20 receiving TDs he has hauled in this year.

Defense

Baltimore had the second ranked rushing defense in the league and only allowed 3.5 yards per attempt. But, the real test will be with their fourth ranked pass defense, which has only allowed 11 touchdowns this season through the air.



New England's passing defense was 93 yards from being the worst of all time; they allowed 4,703 yards through the air. Their defense was also one of the most opportunistic in the league they tied for second with 23 interceptions.

Coaching

John Harbaugh is in his 4th year as a head coach and has not had a losing season in his young career. Although, Harbaugh has coached in one AFC Championship game, a 23-14 loss to eventual Super Bowl Champions the Pittsburgh Steelers.



The Patriots have one of the greatest coaches of all time in Bill Belichick and should have a huge advantage against the Ravens coaching staff. Belichick is 4-1 in AFC Championship games and has not had a losing season in the last 10 years.

Juan Gallardo's projected winner : Patriots



VS.



Offense

Eli Manning said at the outset of the season he regarded himself as a top-5 QB in the NFL. Now he's not the only one who thinks that, especially with arguably the best wide receiving corp in the NFL.



Although Alex Smith played very well against the Saints, he's going to have a tougher time against the Giants front four. Look for the 49ers to pound Frank Gore early to try to open up the play action.

Defense

This is not the same Giants defense which was regarded as one of the worst throughout the season. Plagued by injuries all season long, the Giants are finally healthy, and playing at the top of their game.



There's no arguing how great this defense is. They managed to force five turnovers against Drew Brees and his offense. They will need to force Eli to make mistakes if they want to win this game.

Coaching

Head coach Tom Coughlin is one win away from being the all-time leader in road playoff victories. The Giants coordinator issues seemed to resolve themselves with big wins over the last few weeks.



First year head coach Jim Harbaugh turned a 6-10 mediocre team into a 13-3 powerhouse, with virtually the same roster. His only downfall is his inexperience when it comes to post-season football.

Bryan Levine's projected winner : Giants

Does defense win championships?

Offensive players treated with glory, attention while other teammates left behind

By Clarence E. Hill Jr.
McClatchy Newspapers

The Giants and Eli Manning are one game away from a second trip to the Super Bowl in a span of five seasons.

Let that sink in for a minute, Cowboys fans, considering it is downright criminal that the Giants are even in the playoffs.



Gene Sweeney Jr./Baltimore Sun/MCT

Ed Reed comes up with a clutch, late-game interception during their win over the Houston Texans.

Remember, it was the Cowboys who had control of the NFC East heading to December with a 7-4 record and riding a five-game winning streak before choking away the division title by losing four of their last five games.

But I digress by bringing up that redundant and still mind-boggling fact.

Let's get on to the time-tested NFL truths we were reminded of during the past two exciting days of playoff football.

Defense still matters.

Yes, even in the age of the wide-open NFL where quarterbacks are seemingly at the control of their Xbox game while piling up yards and touchdowns at a record pace.

Defense still matters.

Leave it to the old-fashioned NFC to drive that point home in exclamatory fashion with two shocking upsets in the divisional playoffs.

The upstart San Francisco 49ers took us back to reality on Saturday with a 36-32 victory against Drew Brees and the New Orleans Saints.

Don't let the final score fool you.

The 49ers won their first playoff game in nine years and are one win away from their first Super Bowl since the 1994 season because of a bludgeoning defense.

San Francisco recorded three sacks and forced five turnovers, three fumbles and two interceptions.

That was only a precursor to the 37-20 beat-down the Giants put on the defending Super Bowl champion Packers, who were considered by many to be a shoo-in to repeat.

Of course, that was before the Giants took a page out of their 2007 Super Bowl title run by going to Green Bay and taking the life away from a favored opponent and

glamour quarterback.

Certainly, the Cowboys have no one but themselves to blame for the Giants being in the playoffs while they are sitting at home still with just one playoff victory since the end of the 1996 season.

But there is no question that the Giants are the better team and deserve to be where they are.

The Giants have the league's best defensive line and are simply a different team when they are healthy, which they weren't for most of the season.

They are now. And that pass rush made quarterback Aaron Rodgers and the Packers' seemingly unstoppable offense do a "discount double check" all game long.

Rodgers was sacked four times and the Packers turned the ball over four times. It should have been five, but they were saved by a horrible non-fumble call by the officials.

Add the Ravens-Texans matchup to the list of examples that show defense matters.

The defensive-minded Ravens have been almost perennial contenders since Ed Reed joined forces with Ray Lewis almost a decade ago.

After taking advantage of rookie quarterback T.J. Yates in a 20-13 victory against the Texans, the Ravens meet Tom Brady and the New England Patriots in the ultimate offense-defense battle in the AFC title game.

Clearly, momentum also matters.

The Packers, who rested their starters in the final regular-season game because they had locked up home-field advantage, looked like a team that hadn't played in three weeks.

They are now at home, just like the Cowboys, with a 15-2 record.

When the Packers made their Super



Tom Lynn/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel/MCT

Michael Boley imitates Aaron Rodgers' touchdown celebration after sacking the pro bowl quarterback.

Bowl run last year, they did so as a wild-card team.

That was also the path the Giants took to the title in 2007 and played again in the wild-card round this year as a No. 4 seed. What we also learned was that real quarterback play matters as well.

Sorry, Cowboys, but Eli Manning is elite. He proved it first when he took down Brett Favre and Brady en route to his 2007 season title. He outplayed the new standard bearer in Rodgers on Sunday.

The most telling numbers in the Patriots' 45-10 massacre of the Denver Broncos were those of the two quarterbacks. Brady completed 26 of 34 passes for 363 yards and an NFL-record six touchdowns.

Denver's Tim Tebow, who has sudden-

ly become the most popular player in the NFL despite his obvious shortcomings, was 9 of 26 for 136 yards.

The Tebow hype might be good for ratings but it was not good for football.

Playing like a stud for five minutes should not offset playing like a donkey for three and a half quarters.

Brady certainly didn't take kindly to being overshadowed by a quarterback with no rings, no records and no passing technique.

He also holds grudges and plays with a chip, a la Michael Jordan.

Unlike some of the wins Tebow pulled out of the hat this season that fueled the mania, Brady's performance was no accident.

— MCT Campus