



Friday
June 18, 2004

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IN TODAY'S EDITION

Better plan

The Sept. 11 panel to focus on preventing attacks. A2



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TAKE CHARGE

Young manager turns Elwood City plant around.

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Businessman reacts to one resident's complaint.

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Mercer Raceway places emphasis on the family.

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Sam Flora retires as athletic director — maybe.

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Obituaries

Rose M. Blawie, 83,
1 W. Edison Ave.
Helen T. Richards, 88,
Jameston Care Center



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County to refund tax overpayments

By DEBBIE WACHTER MORRIS
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Lawrence County is facing a new tax dilemma. The commissioners have learned that about 500 residents overpaid on 2004 taxes because they paid the face value amount during an extended discount period. The county must refund most overpayments, which range from seven cents to \$7,736.

REFUNDS About 500 county residents overpaid on 2004 taxes because of a delay with tax notices. The county will refund the overpayments.

Treasurer Gary F. Felasco sent a memo to the commissioners, which said the overpayments were received by mail. The problem arose because 2004 tax notices were not sent out in time for

residents to take advantage of the 60-day discount period. As a result, the commissioners extended the discount period — for county taxes only — until June 1. The county extension was publicized, but it was too late to extend the deadline on tax notices because they had been printed and mailed. Tax statements did not go out in time because the budget was reopened and not adopted until February. The Clean and Green program

changed some of the land valuations and the treasurer's office claimed to have been short-staffed. The commissioners agreed to instruct Controller Mary Ann Reiter to cut checks for every overpayment, except those less than \$1. Anyone who overpaid by more than \$1 will get a refund. Commissioner Ed Fosnaught said the commissioners will consult with solicitor John W. Hodge on the matter.

CLOSER LOOK

SAUDI POLICE CONTINUE TO SEARCH RIYADH FOR INFORMATION ABOUT AMERICAN HOSTAGE AS DEADLINE LOOMS.

DEADLINE



Vickie Vincent, her husband, Michael, and dad, William Vincent, of Port St. John Fla., shed tears during a vigil last night for Paul Johnson Jr. at Space Coast Sports Complex in Port St. John.

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia (AP) — With helicopters flying overhead, thousands of Saudi police searched for American hostage Paul M. Johnson Jr. today as a 72-hour deadline loomed for the kingdom to release al-Qaida prisoners or see him killed. Police went through several Riyadh neighborhoods from last night through this morning, but authorities gave no indication they were any closer to Johnson, an Lockheed Martin employee who was kidnapped Saturday by a group calling itself al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula. The organization is believed to be headed by Abdulaziz Issa Abdul-Mohsin

al-Mogrin, the top al-Qaida figure in Saudi Arabia. In Johnson's hometown of Eagleswood Township, N.J., relatives held a vigil last night to pray for his safe return. The kidnappers released a video tape of Johnson on Tuesday night saying they would kill him unless the Saudi government released all militants in its prisons within 72 hours. The Saudis have rejected the demand. It is not known exactly when the deadline expires as the time of the video

"I am afraid. I will do my best for him. Please bring him back to me."

Thanom Johnson
Hostage's wife

HOSTAGE, PAGE A3

Witness: Smith shot Respress

TRIAL Willie Smith, 64, of Butler is on trial for the shooting death of New Castle resident Torrence Respress. Two witnesses say Smith fired the deadly shot.

By RICK ELIA
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A second witness testifying in the homicide trial of Willie Smith said yesterday he saw Smith shoot Torrence Respress in the head. Smith, 64, of Butler is charged by New Castle police with criminal homicide, carrying a firearm without a license, receiving stolen property and discharging a firearm in the city. He is accused of fatally shooting Respress, 33, of New Castle the morning of Jan. 1, 2003, in the 100 block of Boyles Avenue. He died that afternoon at St. Elizabeth Health Center in Youngstown. On Wednesday, Angie Corbin of New Castle said she saw Smith fire the deadly shot. Yesterday, Anthony Eugene Alexander, 34, of New Castle, who is Respress' cousin, told the jury his version of what happened. Alexander said he and three other people were out driving around, drinking and using drugs when they stopped at the residence. "When we pulled up I heard someone yelling, arguing," he said. "It was Torry." Alexander said Zeon Alvarado was trying to keep Respress from going into the house. He said he heard a man inside say "shoot him in the leg." According to Alexander, Michael Malnar went into the house, came out with a gun and headed toward Respress, who was struggling with Alvarado. "He ran with the gun aimed low toward Torry's legs," he said. "Torry could see him coming. I tried to catch up with him. He fired a shot."

RESPRESS, PAGE A3

Fifth annual Soap Box Derby race to kick off

By NANCY LOWRY
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Almost 30 racers will participate tomorrow in the Fifth Annual New Castle Soap Box Derby qualifier race. Some 29 colorful cars — 14 stock and 15 super stock — were inspected and weighed in last night at the Union Township garage. The cars will remain there until 7:30 a.m. tomorrow. The winners of each division will compete as a local champion in the

RACE DAY Hopes are high for good weather and a safe race as the fifth annual New Castle Soap Box Derby qualifier race gets underway tomorrow.

67th All-American Soap Box Derby at Derby Downs in Akron on July 31. More than 500 cars in the stock, super stock and master's divisions are

expected. "This might be the first good year as far as weather goes," said Kathy Beltz, mother of racer Ashley "A.J." Beltz, who finished second last year in the super stock division and competing this year in her fifth race. "This forecast is good but the weather has been so bad every year." "I'm hoping for good things," Ashley agreed. "I'm looking for a second win," said her cousin, Heather McQuiston.

HEATHER, PAGE A3

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