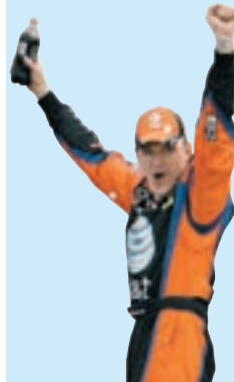


PETER AND PALS



Think twice before buying a bunny for Easter.
Life 1D

WILD RIDE



Jeff Burton steals win at Bristol.
Sports 3C

OLD FISH STORY

Biologist releases, catches fish in river

GREEN RIVER, Wyo. — Some people catch fish and release them. Bill Wengert releases them and then catches them — a quarter-century later.

In April 1983, Wengert and other state Game and Fish Department biologists stocked some 12,000 trout in the Flaming Gorge Reservoir in southwest Wyoming. Game and Fish spokeswoman Lucy Wold said Wengert was ice fishing recently on the 91-mile-long reservoir and caught a 23-inch Mackinaw trout, a type of lake trout.

Wengert noticed the trout's right pelvic fin had been clipped, indicating it was a hatchery fish that had been stocked. Examining historical stocking data, Wengert determined the fish was stocked on April 14, 1983.

"I may have actually clipped the fins on this very fish, and I know I was driving the barge when the fish were stocked, nearly 25 years ago," Wengert said.

SCHOOL BUS DRAM

Student stops bus; gets detention

SEASIDE, Calif. — A 15-year-old girl who stopped an out-of-control school bus she was riding on was handed a Saturday detention instead because she was skipping school.

Marina High School student Amanda Rouse was on a bus with 40 elementary school students Wednesday morning when the driver fell out of her seat after a turn and hit her head.

Rouse jumped up and applied the brakes, bringing the bus to a halt after striking two parked cars. No one was injured.

She said had asked the bus driver for a ride because she felt sick at school. "She is in trouble with school because she made the wrong decision," said Rouse's grandmother, Sally Correll. "But I can't help but believe that she was where God wanted her to be."

ONLINE TODAY

Week in pictures slideshow.



TimesDaily.com/multimedia

WHAT'S YOUR OPINION?

Sunday's question: Have you lost or are you in danger of losing your home to foreclosure?

Yes: 12.9%
No: 87.1%

Today's question: Do we need a more transparent government?

Vote daily online at: TimesDaily.com

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TOURNAMENT TIME

March Madness set to begin.
Sports 1C

Georgia wins SEC tourney plus a bracket for the NCAA Tournament.
Sports 4C



Officials seek tougher laws

Local authorities seeking revision of child abuse law

By Tom Smith
Senior Staff Writer

Franklin County District Attorney Joey Rushing said the crime of child abuse is particularly upsetting because it involves helpless victims.

"The victims of child abuse have no choice but to live with the parents or guardians who are inflicting abuse upon them," Rushing said. "It's one of the crimes that gets law enforcement, district attorneys and the public most upset."

State and local officials say one of the most disturbing things about child abuse is the penalty levied against an individual

who is convicted of the crime. Child abuse is a Class C felony, which is punishable by one to 10 years in prison.

"That's the same sentence someone gets for forging a signature on a \$5 check, or if someone is arrested for possession of marijuana," said Sheffield Police Chief Greg Ray.

Law enforcement officials point out that the unlawful exploitation of a bear, or bear wrestling, carries a stiffer punishment than child abuse. The exploitation of a bear is a Class B felony, punishable by two to 20 years in prison.

"Although laws like these are good

ones to protect animals, when you look at it that way, the scales of justice don't seem to equal out," Ray said.

Rushing said some of the most heinous crimes are inflicted upon children.

"We've seen a child who has been hit in the head with an object, been beaten with a belt across their back, slapped and punched in the face, being burned and, recently, there were two arrests where a man and woman were accused of locking the children in a room for prolonged periods of time without food, water or bathroom facilities," Rushing said.

Rushing said he has talked with state Sen. Roger Bedford, D-Russellville, about the possibility of strengthening child abuse laws.

Bedford, along with former state

Please see **Officials**, Page 6A

CHILD ABUSE FACTS

- Child abuse is reported every 10 seconds on average.
- The actual number of abuse and neglect cases is estimated to be three times greater than the number reported to authorities.
- Each day, more than four children die as a result of child abuse in the home; three of four of those victims are under the age of 4.
- Children 3 and younger are the most frequent victims of child fatalities.
- One third of abused and neglected children will later abuse their own children.

Sources: Child Help and Administration for Children and Families



Central Elementary School third-grade teacher LaSandra Davidson reads through language questions as she prepares her class for the SAT10.

When it comes to standardized tests, stakes high for all involved

By Lisa Singleton-Rickman
Staff Writer

Florence Middle School eighth-grader Ashley Grissom has one thing on her mind these days: those spring-time state standardized tests that will soon be consuming every hour of her school day for two weeks.

She believes she's prepared, but she also knows those tests can be tricky in sections. And she knows the academic stakes are high.

"I still get nervous about the tests because I know that the results will determine what classes I'm placed in next year," she said.

For Grissom, there's a method to the test-taking madness. She strategizes.

"With the reading portion, I pace myself and read the questions first, then read the passage so I kind of have an idea of what I'm looking for while I'm reading," she said. "With math, I just go over and over the

On the net

A sample math quiz from the Alabama Reading and Math Test at timesdaily.com/multimedia.

Inside

How a question makes it onto a standardized test, 6A

(formulas) so I know what I'm doing."

It's difficult to overestimate the importance of standardized tests in public schools today. The federal government has seen to that through accountability measures called for under the No Child Left Behind law which took effect in early 2002.

The high stakes of the tests go beyond school districts' getting the OK from the state on student performance. It can mean grade advancement for

Please see **Stakes**, Page 6A

Lions win again

North Alabama is one win away from reaching the Division II Men's Basketball Elite Eight. The Lions used another dramatic comeback in the closing seconds Sunday night, this time to force overtime, and then went on to beat Ouachita Baptist 99-93 to reach the South Regional championship game in Lakeland, Fla. UNA will play Benedict for the title Tuesday at 6 p.m., with the winner advancing to Springfield, Mass., for the Elite Eight. UNA led 44-33 at halftime against Ouachita Baptist, but needed Quinn Beckwith's 3-pointer with 13 seconds to play to force overtime.

SEE STORY, 1C



WASHINGTON

Media shield law or not, protection of journalists' sources uncertain

By Hope Yen

Associated Press Writer

As federal judges order more reporters to disclose their confidential sources, news organizations are pinning their hopes on congressional passage of a media shield bill the Bush administration opposes as a threat to national security.

The legislation being considered in the Senate offers only modest shelter for reporters wanting to protect the identity of confidential sources. In many cases, it would leave the fate of journalists — and their sources — to the discretion of judges who increasingly have been willing to jail or fine them.

Out of nine high-profile cases since 2003 where journalists were ordered to reveal information, four might have turned out differently had the proposal awaiting Senate action been law.

For them and dozens of other reporters subpoenaed for confidential information or the names of those providing that information, judges generally would have to weigh the "public interest" of the media reports; that is a factor many judges already consider. They would retain the power to jail reporters who refuse to name sources who leak information involving national security.

If the Senate bill were law, former New York Times reporter Judith Miller still may have gone to jail for 85

Please see **Protection**, Page 6A