

Thursday

YOUR NEWS. YOUR PAPER.

NASCAR contest

See the NASCAR page and enter the E-G contest PAGE 3C



Summer movies 2002

Check out this week's Let's Go! section for previews of this year's summer blockbusters



Wednesday Scores

- MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL
- Angels 7, Indians 2
- Athletics 4, Yankees 1
- Expos 5, Astros 4
- Braves 3, Brewers 1

Details in Section C

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INSIDE TODAY



Your Music Lindsay Pagano climbs the MTV popularity ladder.

PAGE 3B Coming Up



Spider-Man Collectable poster in USA Weekend

Sunday Weather

Friday will be mostly sunny.

High: 62 Low: 42

Details on page 2A

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Computer virus hits county

By WALT WILLIAMS The Eagle-Gazette Staff

A new computer "worm" is spreading through local e-mail and computer systems, and computer experts say it's a particularly nasty bug. The "W32.klez" or "klez" worm has already hit Lancaster schools, where it ba-

Klez infects Lancaster schools

sically shut down the school district's e-mail systems. Student records are unaffected because they are kept on separate servers. "The viruses for us are inconveniences," said Principal Bob Richards of Lancaster High School.

The worm — essentially a computer virus — probably infected the district's computers sometime Monday or Tuesday. There it spreads through the system, producing headaches for those in charge of keeping the computers running.

"It's not been good," said Steve Clippinger, education information and technology services director. "It hasn't done any damage yet. We have been fighting for two days or more."

Any computer either part of a network or using Microsoft Outlook to read e-mail is vulnerable. The worm gets into a user's system where it makes copies of itself. Those copies are then e-mailed to people in the user's Internet address book or spread along the network.

What makes the klez worm harmful is a virus that "piggybacks on top of it," said Keith Swartz, a technician at Green Apple Inc. of Lancaster. The virus removes files on the computer, including the anti-virus software. The software must then be reinstalled.

(See VIRUS/10A)

Exec: Plant will keep running

From staff reports

The chief executive officer of Newell Rubbermaid indicated Wednesday that if Anchor Hocking cannot be sold, the Lancaster-based glassware maker will remain open. Newell's Chief Executive Officer Joseph Galli made his comments during an interview with Reuters news service after his company reported a large loss in the first quarter of 2002.

Toledo-based Libbey is trying to purchase Lancaster-based Anchor Hocking for \$275 million. The Federal Trade Commission sued to block the deal, claiming it would result in higher glassware prices for restaurants, hotels and other food service companies.

A federal judge agreed last week and sent the merger back to the FTC for it to decide on a hearing date. Because of the delays since the deal was announced last June, Libbey officials have said that financing for the merger is in jeopardy and have not decided whether to continue pushing for the merger.

Galli said Wednesday that it does not look like the deal will go through. "If we can't sell it, we're going to do a good job running that business," he said. In the first quarter, Newell took \$19.8 million restructuring charges and posted a loss of \$463.9 million, due to a change in accounting rules that forced the company to write down more than \$500 million in asset value. Galli said that the restructuring at the household and business products maker is almost over after a year of job cuts, plant closings and hiring new executives. "We're in an operating rhythm that we can perpetuate for the next decade," Galli, who took over the reins at Freeport, Illinois-based Newell Rubbermaid about a year ago. Newell shares were up 78 cents at \$32.18, a rise of 25 percent on the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday. The stock has risen about 14 percent since the beginning of the year.

Weighty concerns

39 percent of county teen-agers trying to lose weight

By WALT WILLIAMS The Eagle-Gazette Staff

BLOOM-CARROLL senior Betsy Miller, 18, doesn't stress over her weight, but like many high school girls, it's usually in the back of her mind. "Some days I come in and I feel I need to work out," she said. "And other days I feel better about myself."

Fairfield County youth do worry about their weight, according to a recent survey by the county health department. Forty-two percent of the survey's young respondents said they are overweight, and 39 percent said they are trying to lose weight. In some cases the weight loss may be unnecessary, but the fact is today's youth are getting fatter and more out of shape. The problem has become so bad that the Center for Disease Control labeled it a "public health epidemic."

The CDC says that 17 percent of today's youth are seriously overweight, a figure that has more than doubled since the 1970s. In Fairfield County, only 49 percent of youths said they had exercised in at least three of the past seven days. "We do get a fair amount of younger children or preteens that are severely overweight," said Kathleen Meyer, dietitian supervisor for Fairfield Medical Center.



BETSY MILLER, 16, and JULIA ALLEN, 17, both of Carroll, run during their Fitness and Wellness class at Bloom-Carroll High School. (E-G photo by William P. Cannon)

Meyer blames today's obesity problems on three things: "super-

(See WEIGHT/10A)

Father looks for missing daughters

Mother suspected of taking girls to Florida

By JENNIFER LAWSON The Eagle-Gazette Staff

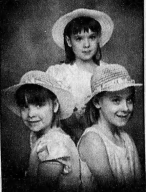
It's been four months since Rob Blackmon has seen his three daughters.

His ex-wife, Laura Blackmon, is suspected of abducting them and fleeing to Florida. "It's really hard. I don't know how to describe it," Rob Blackmon said while sitting in his mother JoAnn's dining room in Pickerington.

Rob and Laura, who divorced in 1998, had shared custody of 9-year-old Tiffany, 7-year-old Kaitlynn and 5-year-old Brittany. Laura, 24, picked the girls up from Rob's Fairfield County home Jan. 10 for a scheduled visit and never returned.

"It's been unreal," JoAnn said. "We don't sleep, we don't eat. We hang on every call that comes in."

On Jan. 3, a week before she fled, Columbus police arrested Laura for prostitution, Pickerington Police Detective Matt Delp said. Members of the vice squad were running a sting operation and called an escort service. When Laura arrived at a motel on Olentangy River Road, she was arrested. "She might have felt she was going to lose custody because of her arrest," JoAnn Blackmon said. Since then, there have been sightings of them. Someone reported seeing Laura and Brittany at the end of January at a market in Lithopolis, but police did-



ROB BLACKMON'S three daughters — Kaitlynn (from left), Tiffany and Brittany — have been missing for four months. His ex-wife Laura Blackmon is suspected of abducting the children and fleeing to Florida.

n't get the tip until weeks later. Bank records showed Laura used her automated teller card Jan. 30 in Hilliard, Delp said. Records also show Laura used her ATM card in Acapulco, Mexico, between Feb. 13 and March 26.

The most recent information came at the end of March, when Laura left a voice mail message on relative's workplace phone. Records showed she called from Fort Lauderdale, Fla. "She said, 'I hope to see you soon, I love you,'" Delp said. "But she called at 2:15 in the morning, when no one was there, so we don't think she really wanted to talk to anyone."

Laura had been behaving strangely before that, JoAnn said. She dropped out of nursing school in December, just a few months shy of getting her degree. She has a history of "mental problems," JoAnn said, and was supposed to be getting help.

A private investigator hired by the Blackmons is working on the case along with Delp. One of their theories is that Laura has just Brittany, the youngest, and Tiffany and Kaitlynn may be with relatives. However, that's just speculation. Wherever they are, investigators are almost certain Tiffany and Kaitlynn

(See DAUGHTERS/10A)

Lantz loses law license

By JIM SIEGEL Eagle-Gazette Columbus Bureau

COLUMBUS — The Ohio Supreme Court on Wednesday indefinitely suspended the law license of Lancaster attorney and former city councilman Charles J. Lantz. The 7-0 ruling agreed to enact the recommendations of the Office of Disciplinary Council, which charged Lantz with violating numerous codes of professional responsibility.

A Fairfield County court found Lantz guilty in June 2001 of aggravated theft, grand theft and two counts of passing bad checks, all felonies. He was sentenced to 60 days in jail and three years probation, but that was stayed pending an appeal. According to court records, in 1998 Lantz failed to make timely payments to his clients from a \$300,000 settlement he had negotiated on their behalf,

based on injuries from a prior traffic accident. In addition, a \$59,000 check written from that settlement bounced twice. In 1999, Lantz took a \$500 retainer from a client in a child support case, but never again made contact with that client and filed nothing on his behalf, court records said. The panel also found that Lantz, in 1997, did not keep proper accounting of his time spent on a client's divorce.

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Weight

(from page 1)

sized) meals as fast food restaurants such as McDonald's, children spending more free time with TV, video games or computers, and the availability of soda through vending machines like those found in schools.

"If you drink six cans of pop you're looking at about 840 calories," she said. One can of Mountain Dew, for example, has 170 calories, nearly as much as a small bag of potato chips.

Parents can cut back on their children's calorie intake by removing soda and sugar drinks from the home. Kids should drink low-fat milk (except for infants under 2 who need whole milk), and parents shouldn't keep fatty snack foods around the house.

Eric Brandt, manager of Fairfield Medical Center sports clinic, said families need to participate in physical activities as a group.

Any children's sport should stress participation, not competition, so kids will remain interested as they grow older.

"The biggest thing is having the kids have a safe place to walk, cycle and play games," he said.

The hospital is partnered with the Robert K. Fox Family Y, where the Wellness Center provides fitness programs for youths.

But Wellness Center Director Randy Curtis said every successful program has one key component.

"In order to get kids into exercise, the parents need to be involved," he said.

Of course, parents can't be around all the time in Florida, but when their children are at school. They can pack their children's lunches, which health experts recommend if parents want to control what their children are eating.

But most kids will eat what the school provides, and many school menus are dictated by federal and state guidelines. Lancaster school food service director Jim Karr said the city's meals must provide two servings of meats or proteins and one serving each of fruit, vegetable, milk and bread.

Both the federal government and Lancaster school policy limits access to unhealthy

"competitive foods" such as soda and candy bars.

Lancaster schools are not permitted selling competitive foods until the first lunch period, Karr said. If not, "when (kids) come to lunch they won't be hungry enough to eat a meal."

Other school districts across the country are going to more drastic measures to cut back on childhood obesity. Philadelphia schools are sending notes home to parents informing them their children are overweight. The Texas Board of Education recently mandated further physical education courses in all of the state's public schools.

Closer to home, Bloom-Carroll High School has implemented as "fitness and wellness

course of study" that is basically an advanced gym class. It stresses attendance, hygiene and requires students maintain daily logs of their activities.

Miller was one of nine students in Monday's afternoon class at the high school. Both males and females shared the school's weight room, working on a variety of muscle-building exercises.

Of the four students interviewed — two guys and two girls — all said they were happy with their weight. But at the same time they were all athletes, such as sophomore Whitney Piar, 15, who play volleyball.

"I don't think I need to lose weight," she said. "I think I need to get more in shape."

Police say teen was struck, killed by train

SHELBY (AP) — A teenage boy who police said often walked home along railroad tracks was killed when he was struck by a train early Tuesday.

Railway workers found 17-year-old Brandon Bays' body around 8:30 a.m. when they were doing maintenance work, said Paul Patton, a CSX Corp. conductor from Shelby.

Richland County Coroner Stephen Barks said he concluded Bays was hit by a train. An autopsy is planned.

"What we don't know is what he was doing there and when it

happened," Banks said.

Trains pass through the area on a single track around 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. daily, he said.

Richland County Sheriff James Stierhoff said Bays was last seen leaving a gas station around midnight Monday.

Bays had been known to stop to rest as he walked the tracks to his house, Stierhoff said. Bays was a junior who studied horticulture at Pioneer Career and Technology Center. School officials said he moved to the district in August from Ashland.

Daughters

(from page 1)

haven't been in school — any school — since they disappeared.

"It's typical that when you register your child for school, they ask which school they attended prior," Delp said. "We've been in contact with their school, Heritage Elementary. Everyone knows what's going on."

Tiffany should be in third grade and Kaitlynn should be in first.

Tiffany, described by Rob and JoAnn as smart and inquisitive, knows the telephone numbers of relatives and knows how to make long distance calls.

"There's a reason (Tiffany) hasn't called," Delp said. "She might have been told a story and believes her dad is gone. Who knows what story she's been told."

JoAnn Blackmon said: "If she wanted to know something, she'll question you to death. She never forget anything."

Kaitlynn is quiet and shy, JoAnn said.

As for Brittany, she said, "I don't think she's ever walked anywhere in her life. She's always running."

A felony warrant for interfering with custody has been filed against Laura. She also has to make a court appearance for the misdemeanor prostitution charge.

Since the disappearance, Rob has been awarded full custody of the girls.

Laura could be supporting

Virus

(from page 1)

The klez worm is different from previous viruses, such as the infamous "love bug" that hit computers worldwide more than a year ago.

"Actually, it's a derivative virus, meaning it's been about under different names," said Rex Heimberger of Heimberger Office Machines of Lancaster.

"But for some reason (the virus creators) were able to rewrite this and were able to put out a new version."

Heimberger said the worm is "the worst stuff I've seen in five years." Several local Internet providers have been hit by it, he said, and it's already listed as a major threat by companies that market virus-protection software, such as Symantec.

Computer users can protect themselves by not opening any strange e-mails. Also watch out for an e-mail claiming to "patch" — or cure — the virus, since it actually contains copies of the virus itself.

If you have virus-protection software on your computer, it would be a good idea to update it on a regular basis. Many programs allow updates through the Internet.

There is a software tool that removes the worm on infected computers. More information about it can be found at www.symantec.com.

"It's been unreal. We don't sleep, we don't eat. We hang on every call that comes in."

JoAnn Blackmon
Missing girls' grandmother

herself and the girls by working as a prostitute in Florida, but Delp said that's just a theory.

"She's drained her accounts and maxed out everything," Delp said. "That would only be speculation, but she also has relatives who have money."

The Blackmons are offering a \$5,000 reward to anyone with information leading to the recovery of the girls.

"It's been a very tumultuous situation. For the children's sake, I hope it's over soon," JoAnn said.

Anyone with information is asked to call Pickerington police at (614) 837-2330.

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Coming Up This Weekend

Who are the county's worst DUI offenders?

Repeat DUI Offenders

Also this weekend:

African Children's Choir will be performing in Lancaster this month.

In the Lancaster Eagle-Gazette