

BUNDLE UP
Sunny but cold today with highs in the mid-20s; clear and cold tonight.
Forecast, A10

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Women advised to limit caffeine

New research finds that, for pregnant women, even the amount in 10 ounces of coffee may double the risk of miscarriage.

BY DENISE GRADY
THE NEW YORK TIMES

Too much caffeine during pregnancy may increase the risk of miscarriage, a new study says, and the authors suggest that pregnant women may want to reduce their intake or cut it out entirely.

Many obstetricians already advise women to limit caffeine, though the subject has long been contentious, with conflicting studies, fuzzy data and various recommendations given over the years.

The new study, being published today in the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, finds that pregnant women who consume 200 milligrams or more of caffeine a day — the amount in 10 ounces of coffee or 25 ounces of tea — may double their risk of miscarriage.

Pregnant women should try to give up caffeine for at least the first three or four months, said the lead author of the study, Dr. De-Kun Li, a reproductive and perinatal epidemiologist at the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research in Oakland, Calif.

"If, for whatever reason, they really can't do it, think of cutting to one cup or switching to decaf," Li said. "Stopping caffeine really doesn't have any downside."

Professional groups like the American College of Obstetri-

SEE **CAFFEINE, A7**

Man shot to death outside strip club

Providence records its first homicide victim of 2008, in the parking lot of Club Desire.

BY CYNTHIA NEEDHAM
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — A man was shot to death in his car in the parking lot of a strip club early yesterday, becoming the city's first homicide victim of 2008.

The police said the man, whom they would not identify, was shot shortly after 2 a.m. outside Club Desire, at 1 Franklin Square off Allens Avenue. Friends said he was sitting in his car, at about the time the club was closing, when he was shot.

By mid-morning yesterday, memorial candles had already cropped up amid shattered glass and discarded crime scene tape. Relatives of the victim who visited the site declined to speak with reporters. A security guard at the club said he recognized the victim as a "regular" but did not know his name.

SEE **HOMICIDE, A6**

AFC CHAMPIONS

A promise fulfilled



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BOB BREIDENBACH

Victory proves Pats a team for the ages

FOXBORO — The Patriots had beaten the Chargers to win the AFC championship and advance to the Super Bowl for the fourth time in seven years.

BILL REYNOLDS



Most of the crowd of 68,000 remained in their seats as "Party Like A Rock Star" blasted through the stadium and confetti glittered in the air like tiny pieces of stardust.

Cameras in the stands focused on the stage set up on the 30-yard line as, once again, Foxboro, Mass., became the center of the football universe.

It was another snapshot of a season that will live forever in New England sports history. Another victory celebration on the field at Gillette Stadium. Another day of drama, the emotion so real you could almost hold it in the palm of your hand.

This one was the one we'd all been waiting for.

This was the game they had to win, the game that gets them back to the Super Bowl and a chance to finish 19-0 for the season and make history.

Their final obstacle will be the New York Giants, who earned the right to compete in Super Bowl XLII in Glendale, Ariz., in two weeks by beating the Green Bay Packers, 23-20, in overtime to capture the NFC championship.

For hasn't this been the promise?

It's been there for a long time now, ever since the beginning of

SEE **REYNOLDS, A6**

Complete coverage of the AFC Championship Game and a look ahead at the Super Bowl matchup in **Sports, B1**, and online at **projo.com**

Patriots' linebacker Junior Seau, a former member of the Chargers, displays the Lamar Hunt trophy, awarded to the winner of the AFC Championship Game, following New England's 21-12 victory over San Diego.

GOP contenders look to Florida's primary to anoint a front-runner

BY DAN BALZ
THE WASHINGTON POST

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Riding the momentum from his weekend victory in South Carolina, John McCain turned his attention yesterday to Florida and the high-stakes primary there that will test whether the Arizona senator can consolidate support among Republican voters and take control of the GOP nomination battle.

The Jan. 29 contest in Florida will be the first Republican primary closed to independent voters, who have provided McCain with his margins of victory in both New Hampshire and South Carolina. A victory, strategists agreed, would stamp McCain as the

SEE **CAMPAIGN, A7**

Can R.I. count on its voting machines?

The optical-scanning equipment purchased from a Nebraska firm a decade ago still works fine here, but the firm is taking heat in other states over the quality of its new generation of machinery.

BY BRUCE LANDIS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — The company that Rhode Island depends on to record and count its votes in elections has seen its equipment decertified in one state and heavily criticized in another. It is also the target of a \$15-million lawsuit by a third state.

Election Systems and Software, based in Nebraska, is one of the handful of major suppliers of election systems.

The Rhode Island Board of Elections relies heavily on ES&S, both for supplying and maintaining its election hardware and software and for operating the system during elections.

ES&S's systems are the target of heavy criticism in Colorado and Ohio. The company has a different kind of problem in California, which has sued the company for illegally supplying 972 non-certified machines to five counties.

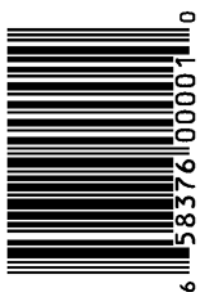
Robert Kando, the executive director of Rhode Island's elections board, said, however, that he is confident of the state's election equipment because it has been in service for many years and proved that it is dependable.

"Our equipment is among the oldest in the nation," he said. "I think it's one of the most-tested systems."

The present situation's roots lie in problems in the 2000 election symbolized by the "hanging-chad" debacle in Florida. Efforts followed to improve and clarify election results, but the initial answer in many places was touch-screen voting machines, where votes are entered on a computer screen and recorded electronically. They failed often and in sometimes mysterious ways, with votes apparently changing or disappearing entirely.

Touch-screen voting has lost favor, and optical scanning systems — such as Rhode Island's — have gained credibility. Their principal parts are scanners at the poll

SEE **MACHINES, A7**



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UTILITY BILL GETS A NEW LOOK

The rates won't be any different but the next electric bill you receive will have a new look that National Grid says will make it easier for its Rhode Island customers to understand. **A8**

COLLEGE PROBE EXPANDS

An investigation into whether study-abroad providers offered anything of value to U.S. colleges and university in exchange for having their programs selected expands to 15 additional schools, including Brown University. **A4**



TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING

Millions of young male and female athletes each year are forced to seek medical treatment because of injuries or chronic fatigue they suffer due to overtraining. **D1**