

AFTER THE DELUGE
Sunny and windy today
with highs in the low 40s;
clear and chilly tonight.
Forecast, A10

The Providence Journal

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MARCH 10, 2008

50¢
\$2.40 per week by carrier

BOYS BASKETBALL CREDIT UNION CHAMPIONSHIPS



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / GLENN OSMUNDSON

HOOPLA FOR HENDRICKEN

Bishop Hendricken coach Jamal Gomes joins his players in celebrating their 67-64 overtime win over Woonsocket at the Ryan Center in South Kingstown as the school captured its fifth-straight Division I state basketball championship.

Complete coverage of all of yesterday's divisional championship games in **Sports, B1**.
And you'll find additional photos and coverage online at HSGametime.com/rhodeisland

Results yesterday

Division I Hendricken 67, Woonsocket 64 **Division II** Classical 71, West Warwick 62 **Division III** Moses Brown 57, Central Falls 48

No bride? No groom? No problem in Montana

A unique law allows proxy marriages in Big Sky country.

BY DAN BARRY
THE NEW YORK TIMES

KALISPELL, Mont. — The blushing bride wears a hooded sweatshirt of red, offset by a bored expression that says she's done this dozens of times before. The distracted groom wears a sweatshirt-and-cap ensemble of matching olive, offset by his — not their — infant daughter, now fidgeting toward sleep just outside the cramped room where holy vows are about to be exchanged.

The judge, wearing a white outdoor vest,

takes her usual seat and exchanges nice-to-see-you-again pleasantries with the young couple, whom she hasn't seen since the last time she married them, a week ago.

The three principals get down to the business of solemnizing this marriage. And when they are done, they will have another to solemnize, and another, and another, and another, because this is Montana, the only state to permit that strange and sacred ceremony, the double-proxy wedding, wherein the presence of neither the bride nor the groom is required.

"Ceremony number one," says the judge, Heidi Ulbricht. That would be the marriage

between two members of the Air Force far, far removed from this room in the Flathead County courthouse. The real groom is 7,300 miles away, in Qatar, while the real bride is merely 1,700 miles away, in Kentucky.

"We are gathered here today in the presence of these witnesses to join in holy matrimony this man and this woman, who have applied for and received a marriage license from the state," the judge says.

Turning to Sarah Knapton, 22, college student and professional proxy bride, she asks: "Will you have this man by proxy to be

SEE **PROXY, A6**

Event more than a meeting of minds

The idea behind the Rhode Island Academic Decathlon, won this year by The Wheeler School, is to foster academic excellence through teamwork.

BY GINA MACRIS
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

WARWICK — Nearly two decades ago, when Michaela Kane Brockman competed in the Rhode Island Academic Decathlon, she was a "C" student from Toll Gate High School.

"I wasn't what the others expected," says Brockman with a laugh.

But the experience of working on the same team with the school valedictorian "made me realize my potential," says Brockman, now 35.

These days, Brockman, a graduate of Providence College, serves on the board of

directors of the Rhode Island Academic Decathlon, which celebrated its 25th anniversary yesterday with a daylong competition among 21 public and private high schools on the Knight Campus of the Community College of Rhode Island.

The Academic Decathlon, a nationwide competition, fosters academic excellence through teamwork.

"This is one of my favorite days of the year," Brockman said as she picked up the materials she would need after lunch for interviewing stu-

SEE **DECATHLON, A6**



PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KRIS CRAIG

Middletown High School student Margaret Maurer, center, takes a music test, one of 10 stages in yesterday's Rhode Island Academic Decathlon.

High demand sends cost of food soaring

Worldwide growth may mean that the era of relatively cheap food in America may be ending.

BY DAVID STREITFELD
THE NEW YORK TIMES

LAWTON, N.D. — Whatever Dennis Miller decides to plant this year on his 2,760-acre farm, the world needs. Wheat prices have doubled in the last six months. Corn is on a tear. Barley, sunflower seeds, canola and soybeans are all up sharply.

"For once, there's great reason to be optimistic," Miller said.

But the prices that have renewed Miller's faith in farming are causing pain far and wide, not just to American shoppers suffering from sticker shock at their local supermarket. A tailor in Lagos, Nigeria, named Abel Ojuku said recently that he had been forced to cut back on the bread he and his family love.

"If you wanted to buy three loaves, now you buy one," Ojuku said.

Everywhere, the cost of food is rising sharply. Whether the world

So far, Fed's been unable to revive economy

BY VIKAS BAJAJ
THE NEW YORK TIMES

In the last seven months, policymakers have cut interest rates, injected money into the banking system and approved a fiscal stimulus package in an effort to keep the economy from slipping into a recession. Often, the moves seemed to work at first, only to be overtaken by more bad news.

The failure of any of the usual fiscal and monetary policy tools so far raises questions about what the Federal Reserve and federal government can do in the near term to counter the forces that have battered housing prices, pushed down the stock market and is now causing a hiring slowdown.

"There are times when there is only so much the Fed can do," said Barry Ritholtz, chief executive of FusionIQ, an investment

SEE **FOOD, A7**

SEE **ECONOMY, A7**

Hospitals, state differ on cost of uncompensated care

The Health Department puts the value of care provided to those who could not pay at \$26 million in 2006; the hospital association's figure is \$124.9 million.

BY JOHN HILL
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — The state Department of Health estimates that Rhode Island hospitals provided \$26 million in unpaid-for health care in 2006 — a figure vehemently disputed by the state's hospital association, which pegs the amount at \$124.9 million.

The department, in a report released last week, said the \$26 million represents care to the needy or those who wouldn't pay what was not covered by federal subsidies or money the individual hospitals have set aside to pay for care to those who can't afford it. That was a \$1.4-million increase from 2005, the department said. The department said its analysis took the cost of care into account

and then subtracted the money it said was available to hospitals to cover those expenses.

But the Hospital Association of Rhode Island ripped the state's conclusions, saying the report's figures "grossly" understate the amount of uncompensated care its member hospitals provide.

"The methodology and data used in the report is significantly flawed," hospital association president Edward J. Quinlan declared in a statement Friday. "Using data provided to the Rhode Island Department of Health by hospitals, HARI has calculated uncompensated care to total \$124.9 million in 2006, an increase of 16 percent from 2005."

"We are concerned this report

SEE **CARE, A6**

Early win gives McCain a pause that refreshes

As Democrats continue to battle, the presumptive GOP presidential nominee has time to retool his campaign.

BY LIBBY QUAID
ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHOENIX — John McCain sees one downside to having clinched the Republican presidential nomination: there's less attention focused on him than on the volatile contest between Democrats Sens. Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York and Barack Obama of Illinois.

McCain understands that he must compete for the spotlight. "It makes me have to work harder, obviously, to make sure that

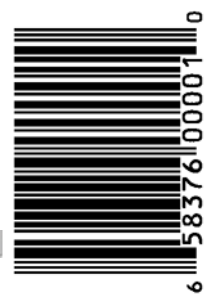
we maintain the visibility," McCain told reporters last week.

"It's also, when we think about it, a very long time from March to November. That's a long trip."

But it also provides him with something of potentially even greater value: time.

The current lull gives him a chance to unite a fractured Re-

SEE **MCCAIN, A7**



INSIDE TODAY

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5 SECTIONS			
Ask Amy	D4	Lifebeat	D1
Bridge	D4	Lotteries	B4
Business	A8	Obituaries	C2
Classified	E1	People	D1
Comics	D5	Rhode Island	C1
Crossword	D4	Sports	B1
Editorial	D3	Television	D6
Kidsbeat	C4	What's Happening	D4
Legal ads	A6		

NEW CHALLENGE FOR MUSHARRAF

Pakistan's opposition parties, the winners in last month's election, agree to form a government and immediately vow to challenge the policies of President Pervez Musharraf, a staunch ally of the United States. **A4**

WILL ONE SIZE FIT ALL?

A new grocery chain that carries only a fraction of the number of goods available in most supermarkets arrives in Rhode Island, saying that its limited assortment keeps merchandise familiar to its customers and allows it to buy huge quantities at lower prices than competitors. **A8**

A MATTER OF MOMENTUM

Neither the University of Rhode Island nor the Providence College men's basketball team is packing much momentum as they head into their respective conference tournaments this week. **B1**

RHODE ISLAND IN NAME ONLY



Don't expect to hear any Rhode Island accents when *Canterbury's Law*, a new short-run Fox series set ostensibly in the Ocean State, premieres tonight. **E1**