

"I never knew about homelessness... there's good people who just get into bad circumstances and it's just so sad."

JOAN DEAM, currently staying at Crossroads Rhode Island



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / KRIS CRAIG

Women settle in for the night as best they can in the family room of Crossroads Rhode Island. The agency says the number of women seeking overnight accommodations has increased dramatically since another shelter closed last year.

Women at the Crossroads

The social service agency reports a dramatic surge in the number of women in need of emergency housing.

BY TOM MOONEY
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

PROVIDENCE — Donna Dexter and Joan Deam met several weeks back at the Crossroads Rhode Island social service agency, specifically in the room once reserved for teenage counseling and which now holds bunk beds for 10 homeless women.

Dexter is 49, drives a Chrysler and has a son at Columbia Law School. Until one day in January when her furnace blew up and spewed soot everywhere, she had been living in a raised-ranch house in Wakefield valued at \$389,000.

Deam is 32 and grew up in an upper-middle-class family, one of three children of a retired Navy SEAL. Her brother is an Army Ranger. Her sister works for the post office. They would all be "disap-

pointed" if they learned she was homeless, she says.

"I never knew about homelessness," says Deam. "It's just very depressing, but there's good people who just get into bad circumstances and it's just so sad."

Says Dexter: "I've been placed in a situation so unknown to me. It's like day and night."

They are part of a new, burgeoning population of homeless that officials at Crossroads Rhode Island say they've been struggling to help in the last year: women seeking emergency housing.

Crossroads, on Broad Street, is the state's primary provider of social

SEE HOMELESS, A7



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / BILL MURPHY

Donna Dexter, who until earlier this year lived in her home in Wakefield, now finds herself a resident of Crossroads Rhode Island in Providence.

Senators the focus of Iraq hearings

While President Bush is expected to support a recommendation that further troop withdrawals be delayed, tomorrow's status report will give the three presidential candidates a chance to express their views.

THE WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — For months, a debate raged at the top levels of the Bush administration over how quickly to reduce the number of U.S. troops in Iraq. But the discussion shut down soon after President Bush flew to Camp Arifjan, a dusty Army base near the Iraqi border in Kuwait, in January for a face-to-face meeting with the man whose counsel on the war he values most: Gen. David Petraeus.



PETRAEUS

During an 80-minute session, the president questioned his top commander in Iraq on whether further troop reductions, beyond those planned through July, would compromise security gains. According to officials familiar with the exchange, Petraeus said he wanted to wait until the summer to evaluate conditions — and Mr. Bush made it clear he would support him and take any political heat.

"My attitude is, if he didn't want to continue the drawdown, that's fine with me," Mr. Bush said before television cameras later, with Petraeus standing by his side. "I said to the general: 'If you want to slow her down, fine; it's up to you.'"

So there is little suspense as to what Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker are likely to say tomorrow when they report to Congress on progress in Iraq. Nor is there any doubt that Mr. Bush will support the general's decision.

By all accounts, Petraeus' view that a "pause" is needed this summer before troop cuts can continue has prevailed in the White House, trumping concerns by the Joint Chiefs of Staff

SEE IRAQ, A6

Advocates for children raise alarm

Rhode Island Kids Count officials, who will release the group's latest report today, worry that recent progress could be lost if proposed budget cuts are implemented.

BY JENNIFER D. JORDAN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

While the percentage of Rhode Island children living in poverty has dropped to 15 percent from 21 percent in recent years, child advocates worry this progress will be derailed by a series of deep cuts to welfare and other safety-net programs for low-income families proposed by Governor Carcieri.

Faced with an estimated \$384-million deficit for the coming fiscal year, Carcieri, a Republican who has vowed to not raise taxes, has proposed widespread cuts to early-childhood programs, child care, health care and cash assistance for low-income families. The Democrat-led state legislature is drawing up its own spending proposal for fiscal 2009, but lawmakers have indicated they are prepared to make significant reductions and are reluctant to raise taxes.

Without such support programs, says Elizabeth Burke Bryant, executive director of Rhode Island Kids Count, struggling families will slide back into deeper poverty. The advocacy organization today releases the latest information on

SEE CHILDREN, A5

Survey confirms service declining among U.S. airlines

BY MARK SHERMAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Late flights and lost bags, to say nothing of higher fares, are making air travelers grumpy, an annual survey of airline quality says.

The industry posted declines last year in every area of the Airline Quality Rating, amid rising fuel prices, safety problems and bankruptcy filings that shut down three carriers last week alone.

The biggest change was in the rate of consumer complaints, up 60 percent overall. The rate more than doubled at US Airways and Comair, and rose for 15 of the 16 airlines included in the study. The exception was Mesa Airlines.

On-time arrivals dropped for the fifth straight year, with more than one-quarter of all flights late, according to the survey. The rates of passengers bumped from overbooked flights and bags lost, stolen or damaged also jumped in 2007.

SEE AIRLINES, A6

Search continues at Texas compound



AP / TONY GUTIERREZ

Authorities in Eldorado, Texas, yesterday shepherd some of the 219 women and children they removed from a 1,700-acre compound about 200 miles northwest of San Antonio into school buses for the trip to San Angelo, Texas. The police continue to search the compound, built by followers of jailed polygamist Warren Jeffs, for a 16-year-old girl who was reportedly abused at the site.



INSIDE TODAY

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5 SECTIONS

Ask Amy	D4	Lifebeat	D1
Bridge	D4	Lotteries	B6
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	
Legal ads	A7	Happening	D4

PASSAGES: CHARLTON HESTON



The Oscar-winning actor best known for his film portrayals of such figures as Moses and Judah Ben-Hur, who in later years went on to champion conservative values as head of the National Rifle Association, dies at 84. **A4**

BARNEY TURNS 20

Barney the Purple Dinosaur is routinely held up as the epitome of sappy children's entertainment. But the children's TV and music icon must be doing something right: the giggly T. rex turns 20 this year and remains as popular as ever. **D1**

NO RELIEF IN SIGHT

Once again, Red Sox middle relievers fail to get the job done, allowing Toronto to sweep the three-game series with a 7-4 win over Boston. **B1**

TORCH RUN TURNS TO TUMULT

Shouting "Shame on China!" and waving Tibetan flags, pro-Tibetan demonstrators turn the running of the Olympic torch through the streets of London into a tumult of scuffles that left 30 people arrested. **A2**