

# BRISTOL HERALD COURIER



**ON THE BOARD:**  
City Council picks  
Tony Turner to fill  
vacancy on Bristol  
Tennessee Board  
of Education

**B1**

INSIDE



**NEWS**  
**Blessing of the Animals:** A Bristol church continues a tradition of celebrating our four-legged friends' lives — including a pony — that coincides with the observance of the life and work of the patron saint of animals. **B1**

**New lows:** Public approval for President Bush and Congress is still sinking. **A4**

**Taking aim:** The Supreme Court is asked to rule on Washington's 31-year-old ban on handguns. **A5**

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**Ancient weed-whacker:** Scientists are amazed at the chomping ability of a newly described duck-billed dinosaur. **A2**

**HOME & GARDEN**  
**Finding closure:** Screen fences can be a garden maker's most valuable element. **D1**

**THE ZONE**  
**iCarley:** In a year of all things i-something, Nickelodeon is launching a perfectly timed series. **D6**

**SPORTS**  
**Sponsor-driven:** The future of NASCAR veteran Dale Jarrett may hinge on whether UPS can deliver. **C8**

OUTSIDE



**Variably cloudy**  
There's a 20 percent chance of rain today. Highs in the lower to mid-80s. Lows tonight in the upper 50s.  
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ON THE NET

**Bristol Herald Courier News Channel 11**  
www.TriCities.com  
**Southwest Virginia weeklies**  
www.SWVAToday.com

NEWS PARTNER



**Junk**, run-down properties, old cars — residents of one area community want to clean house, but many are at odds on how to keep their neighborhood clean.  
**Tonight at 5 & 6**



## Skeletal remains identified

**DNA tests show woman was missing Bristol Virginia resident; authorities await more forensic details for clues about cause of her death**

**BY BECKY CAMPBELL**  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

**BRISTOL, Tenn.** — Human skeletal remains stumbled upon by a city worker in February have been identified as those of a 20-year-old Bristol Virginia woman missing since 2005, police confirmed Thursday.

Leah Feltner was a resident of Springdale Village Apartments when she was reported

missing in December 2005, according to Bristol Tennessee Detective Capt. Charlie Thomas.

Police confirmed the identity after the *Bristol Herald Courier* received a letter from Feltner's father, Steven G. Feltner, of Texas, on Thursday. He signed the letter, "A Desperate Father."

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BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

**The remains of a woman now identified as those of Leah Feltner, a 20-year-old Bristol Virginia woman missing since 2005, were found Feb. 12 by a city employee working in this area near the city's transit garage.**

Homeowners still not ready to display the welcome mat for the new occupants of Ridgcrest Town Apartments as housing complex nears completion

## Nervous about the neighbors



**Construction workers prepare to pave the parking lots on Ridgcrest Town Apartments site.**



**ANDRE TEAGUE** BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

**John Stiltner of Rehab Builders talks Thursday about the Ridgcrest Town Apartments development in Bristol Virginia. Rehab Builders is the contractor for the development's construction.**

**BY DAVID MCGEE**  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

**BRISTOL, Va.** — Pat Stapleton is reserving judgment about the once-controversial Ridgcrest Town Apartments.

Sitting on the front porch of her Heritage Drive home Thursday morning, Stapleton said she and her husband remain concerned about the 72-unit affordable housing complex being built next door.

See **NERVOUS**, Page A7

### RIDGCREST TIMELINE

■ **February 2006** — Bristol Virginia's Planning Commission unanimously approves the request to build apartments at Suncrest and Heritage drives.

■ **August 2006** — Neighboring homeowners voice strong opposition to the project during an informational meeting organized by the developer.

■ **September 2006** — The homeowners band together, attend a series of city meetings, circulate petitions and plead for a reversal.

■ **September 2006** — After a series of emotionally charged meetings, the Planning Commission declines to

See **TIMELINE**, Page A7

## Hondurans mourn loss of Sullivan mayor's dad

**BY MAC McLEAN**  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Flags in a Honduran city have flown at half staff for the past three days as its government officially mourns the loss of a Sullivan County, Tenn., official's relative.

County Mayor Steve Godsey's father, Harold Marvin Godsey of Bristol, Tenn., died Monday at age 73. When the municipal government of Siguatepeque, Honduras, learned of the death, it declared an official three-day period of mourning that ends today.

"Wow," said Godsey, who was back at his office working on Thursday, one day after his father's committal service and entombment at the Glenwood Cemetery Mausoleum Chapel. "My mother will get a shock out of that."

The three-day period of mourning is the latest development in the relationship between the county and Siguatepeque, a city of 75,000 residents located in the central mountain region of Honduras.

County commissioners passed a resolution officially making Siguatepeque the county's sister community in April. The county sent an 18-member delegation including Godsey and six commissioners to visit the city from June 30 to July 2.

The delegation established a not-for-profit group designed to coordinate relief efforts between the county and Siguatepeque, called the Sister Community Project, when it held a reunion meeting Tuesday afternoon.

Godsey missed the meeting because of his father's death. Luis Vega, a Honduran national who's been working to move the sister community relationship forward, was at the reunion.

Vega said he called Siguatepeque Mayor Guillermo Martinez and let him know about Godsey's father as soon as he heard the news. He said Martinez then convened a special session of Siguatepeque's municipal government later in the day.

Siguatepeque's municipal government adopted an official

See **GODSEY**, Page A8



**Steve GODSEY**  
Sullivan County mayor

## Note about school benchmarks angers some parents

**BY KRISTOPHER J. BROOKS**  
BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

**BRISTOL, Va.** — Some Virginia Middle School parents are upset about a letter sent home explaining why the school didn't meet its federal testing benchmarks.

On Wednesday, school officials sent home a one-page letter saying that black students didn't perform well enough on reading and students with disabilities didn't do well enough on math. Because of the shortcomings, Virginia Middle

and the entire city school system did not receive an adequately yearly progress, or AYP, status under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, the letter stated.

But after reading the note, which was attached to students' report cards, parents say they think it was worded insensitively and singled out black students and the disabled.

"In the letter, it's basically bad-

mouthed black students to a standard of them not being smart, in my opinion," said angry parent Robert Worley, who has a stepdaughter at Virginia Middle School. "The more and more I read it, the more I got angry."

School Superintendent Douglas Arnold defended the letter, saying it simply relayed the facts.

Tracey King, another angry parent, said her child was negatively affected by the letter.

"My daughter didn't even want

to go to school today because of the letter," King said. "It was stereotyping and singling out."

King said she read the letter Thursday afternoon and couldn't believe school leaders would give it to students.

"When the kids saw 'black students' in there, they thought, 'Wow, what did I do? They are talking about me,'" King said.

According to a copy of the letter

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