

SUNDAY

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FOR BREAKING NEWS, 24 HOURS

SPORTS, 3D

HEISMAN GOES TO BUSH

USC JUNIOR TAILBACK REGGIE BUSH LEAVES HIS COMPETITION BEHIND TO WIN THE TROPHY

TRAVEL, 1J

EGYPT



SOAKING UP HISTORY IN THE LAND OF THE PHAROAHS IS WORTH ENDURING THE HEAT AND THE HASSLE

● A LOOK AT TREASURES FOUND IN KING TUT'S TOMB, 6J

● IN MONEY: SOUTH FLORIDA BUSINESSES PLAN TUT MARKETING BLITZ, 1E

INSIDE

HIGH SCHOOLS EXTRA, 1D

DEERFIELD BEACH RUN ENDS

PALM BEACH GARDENS WINS THE STATE CLASS 6A TITLE BY DEFEATING THE BUCKS

TROPICAL LIFE, 1M

'BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN' BREAKS NEW GROUND

THE NEW MOVIE TAKES A FEARLESS APPROACH IN ITS STORY OF MEN IN LOVE IN THE AMERICAN WEST



MONEY, 1E

TIGHTER RULES ON RETURNS

RETAILERS' POLICIES ON RETURNING MERCHANDISE MAY REQUIRE YOU TO ACT FAST

HOME & DESIGN, 1H

ACCESSORIZING IPOD

A SEPARATE INDUSTRY OF GADGETS AND ADD-ONS MAKES THE POPULAR MUSIC PLAYER EVEN MORE VERSATILE



ISSUES & IDEAS, 1L

A LOT AT STAKE FOR HAITI

THE WORLD WILL BE WATCHING TO SEE IF THE COUNTRY CAN PICK A PRESIDENT AMID TURMOIL

WEATHER

FRONT BRINGING COOLER CONDITIONS
HIGH: 80 LOW: 54

● Bryan Norcross' forecast, back of section B
● Online: weather.herald.com



SUNDAY INDEX

| | | | |
|--------------------|----|--------------------|-----|
| ACTION LINE..... | 7B | LOTTERY..... | 8B |
| BOOKS..... | 7M | LOTTERY WEEK..... | 4A |
| CLASSIFIED..... | 1F | MOVIES..... | 10M |
| CORRECTIONS..... | 3A | OPPENHEIMER..... | 10A |
| DEAR ABBY..... | 9M | PEOPLE..... | 4A |
| EDITORIALS..... | 4L | SUDOKU..... | 9M |
| FLORIDA..... | 1B | SPORTS..... | 1D |
| HOME & DESIGN..... | 1H | TRAVEL..... | 1J |
| HOROSCOPE..... | 9M | TROPICAL LIFE..... | 1M |

HERALD WATCHDOG

DIPLOMAS ON SALE

A private high school in a strip mall offers quick diplomas, which students are using to land jobs or enroll in college.

BY SCOTT HIAASEN,
MATTHEW I. PINZUR
AND MANNY NAVARRO
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Struggling Miami-Dade high school students have bypassed the state's graduation exam by enrolling in a strip-mall private school that promises diplomas in as little as 48 hours, a Herald investigation has found.

Many of the students who attended American Academy High School Corp. were guided there by Miami-Dade school system employees, including the head football coach at Booker T. Washington Senior High and a state senator who runs the district's 5000 Role Models mentoring program.

Sen. Frederica Wilson, a former School Board member, said she has even paid the tuition for about 15 teenagers to get diplomas at American Academy. Wilson said the students, like many who have attended American, repeatedly had failed the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, which they must pass to earn a state-issued diploma.

With their American Academy diplomas, students have been able to land jobs, win athletic scholarships and enroll in colleges, including Miami Dade College and Florida International University.

Without those diplomas, Wilson said, many of them would have few options and could end up in prison.

"We can either let them get a diploma and get a job at UPS or the Omni hotel or as a security guard... or we can let them walk around, rob you and me, and sell drugs to our children," Wilson said.

Other educators worry that

•TURN TO DIPLOMAS, 18A

HERALD.COM: WHAT DO YOU THINK?
CLICK ON TODAY'S EXTRAS TO DISCUSS THIS STORY



VENEZUELA

Housing needs threaten parks

■ The Venezuelan government's plan to build housing for the poor in a national park overlooking Caracas caused concern for conservationists.

BY STEVEN DUDLEY
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CARACAS — Every Sunday morning, hundreds of Caracas residents flock to the northern edge of the Venezuelan capital and climb the steep trails through the wooded mountainside of the Avila National Park. The routine has become as much a Caracas tradition as eating arepas after a night out dancing.

So when the government suggested earlier this year that it might build 30,000 apartments for the poor inside the capital's iconic park, the reaction was swift, especially from those who consider the Avila a national heritage. Local environmental groups called for a national debate, and urban planners openly criticized the

•TURN TO PARKS, 17A

UP FRONT | PHILANTHROPY

FIU'S BIGGEST DONOR WAS A BOY WITH HOLEY SHOES

■ The man who pledged FIU's single largest donation is filled with ideas and energy, yet he hasn't forgotten the tattered shoes of his boyhood.

BY GEORGIA TASKER
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Herbert Wertheim is an inventor, pilot, philosopher, philanthropist and university trustee.

He also is a charming storyteller. "Telling stories produces endorphins in me," he said. "I love my life."

As the self-made multimillionaire optometrist/entrepreneur who has pledged \$20 million to Florida International University for its proposed medical school, his fast-paced stories reflect a many-faceted man.

He has worked his way up from poverty to enormous wealth, from a school boy ashamed of dirty feet because of holes in his sneakers to a man with 100 pairs of "good stylish shoes" in the closets of his seven homes.

He arises at 3:30 or 4 in the morning to read five newspapers, take an online course in whatever has snared his interest or work on the design of new eyeglass lenses. His electrons, neutrons and protons are positively charged enough to carry him at the speed of light through



CARL JUSTE/HERALD STAFF

DONORS: Herbert and Nicole Wertheim are giving \$20 million to Florida International University.

the day, but at the dinner table he occasionally nods off for 10 or 15 minutes — a quirky habit that his family and friends have come to expect — to awaken recharged.

Not bad for a 67-year-old man who never got a high school diploma because, hampered by

•TURN TO WERTHEIM, 19A

RICHARD PRYOR
1940-2005

The comic and actor set a bold example for generations of comedians to come, 2A



AN APPRECIATION

Pryor's comedy was forged from a life of pain

A few words on the death Saturday of an authentic American genius.

It is the late '70s, early '80s, a nightspot on the Sunset Strip in L.A. Richard Pryor is talking and I wish he would stop. Just for a second. But he won't.

I am out of my seat, bent almost to the floor. Can't breathe. Stomach aching like somebody punched me there. In pain. Serious pain. From laughing. Never knew laughing could hurt so good.

Flash back a little. Same time period. Pryor is talking again. To me alone, this time.

We are behind the gates of his home in the San Fernando Valley. The incident in which he set himself on fire while freebasing cocaine is in the unguessed future. The episode in which he told the crowd at a gay rights benefit to kiss his "rich, black ass," the one where he shot at a car in which his then-wife was trying to leave him, his battles with NBC over censorship of his short-lived TV show, his tax troubles with the IRS, are all recent memory.

Pryor is talking about all of that, explaining how it is that his comedy flows so freely from that well-spring of disaster, controversy and pain. "Comedy and tragedy are flip

•TURN TO PITTS, 2A

HERALD.COM: TO VIEW A GALLERY OF PHOTOS FROM PRYOR'S CAREER, CLICK ON TODAY'S EXTRAS



IN MY OPINION

LEONARD PITTS JR.
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EUGENE MCCARTHY
1916-2005

A hero of antiwar movement

■ Eugene McCarthy, the senator whose run for the 1968 Democratic nomination galvanized the antiwar movement and crippled the presidency of Lyndon Johnson, died at age 89.

BY MARTIN MERZER
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An unpopular war was going badly. The nation was restless. One politician stepped up.

The year was 1968. The war was in Vietnam. The politician was Eugene J. McCarthy.

McCarthy died in his sleep Saturday at an assisted living facility in Washington, D.C. He was 89 years old, and in his way, he was a hero.

At a crucial point of his life and in the nation's history, McCarthy took a stand and he helped to end a war, and he showed that it could

•TURN TO MCCARTHY, 21A

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MCCARTHY

VENEZUELA

Housing needs for poor threaten parks

*PARKS, FROM 1A

plan in the media.

President Hugo Chávez's socialist revolution in this country of 25 million has spent billions of dollars in oil revenue on health, education, and housing projects. But now some worry that the revolution may trample national parks in its quest for social equality.

"If they urbanize this, we can forget about social progress," said Belkys Jiménez, 53, a university administrator as she walked slowly up the Avila's dirt track on a recent Sunday.

LACK OF CONCERN

Throughout Latin America, national parks cover some of the most bio-diverse areas on the planet. They also attract millions of visitors and tourist dollars. But often the parks suffer neglect and abuse because of lack of government concern, shortages of resources and mismanagement by their administrators.

In Colombia, for example, coca growers are increasingly planting in parks. And in Ecuador, the Galápagos Islands are caught in the grip of a political battle that has led to overpopulation and the slow erosion of the unique ecosystem that Charles Darwin used as the foundation for his work.

"In Latin America, we have the disadvantage of having little resources and people already living inside the parks," said Alejandro Luy, the director of the Venezuelan environmental group Live Earth. "It's not like the U.S. where they declare a park, and no one is going to invade."

The Venezuelan government faces similar difficulties in an area where poverty and a lack of land and housing have pushed squatters onto public lands for years. Thousands of Venezuelans have



DAVID ROCHKIND/FOR THE HERALD

DEVELOPMENT: Jaider Blanco works on a construction site in Galipán, a hillside community in the Avila National Park that predated the park.

squeezed into crowded Caracas slums that spill over into the Avila since the 317-square-mile park was created in 1958.

But earlier this year the government said it needed to redraw the park boundaries to build public housing for some of the estimated 12,000 people per year who move from elsewhere in Venezuela to the coastal province of Vargas, where the Avila is located.

"If we don't change those borders, then Vargas will have to expand into the sea," said Pietro Vallone, a former president of the government's park service, INPARQUES.

The government's proposal for the Avila, which is only known in its broadest outlines, includes taking 8,000 acres for an estimated 30,000 new housing units and adding 16,500 new acres elsewhere, making for a net gain of 8,500 acres, Vallone says. Vallone, who supports Chávez, adds that the government

VENEZUELA'S AVILA NATIONAL PARK

The Avila is one of the most popular of Venezuela's 43 national parks. It encompasses 317 square miles that stretch along the north central coast and borders five urban areas, including the capital city of Caracas.

The Venezuelan government estimates that it needs to build about 1.6 million housing units nationwide, including about 30,000 in the Avila, for poor families who live in overcrowded conditions.

The government is planning to take 8,000 acres of the Avila for housing, and add 16,500 acres in other parts of the park, for a net gain of 8,500 acres.

But critics say the capital's iconic park should be protected, and that the new housing projects will spark an avalanche of poor squatters invading national parks across the country.

also would expand the boundaries of other parks across the country, but says the anti-Chávez media is ignoring these proposals.

POLITICAL QUESTION

"This seems like a campaign between those who want to save green lands and

those who want to destroy them. And that's false," he said at his final news conference in September. "This is a technical question that became a political question."

But some worry that park officials such as Vallone have not made the ecosystem a priority and are letting their pro-

Chávez politics guide their decisions as park stewards.

Marco Negrón, an architect and professor at the Central University in Caracas, says that the government plan may put another 150,000 people inside current park boundaries with little thought to sewage, garbage, transportation or safety. Hundreds of people died in the lower slopes of the mountain range that makes up the Avila during torrential rains and mudslides in 1999.

FRAGILE AREA

"It's an area that is very fragile," he said. "[And] the problem is that there is no plan. It's a surreal situation."

Critics also contend that urbanizing the Avila will set off an avalanche of squatters in other parks where land is bountiful and seemingly unused, but animal populations and fauna remain vulnerable.

"If you open up 8,000 acres, you're going to create a snowball effect," said Live Earth's Luy.

"We can't say that we're going to add here and take away there when we're trying to conserve places. These accounts can't be settled this way."

Even some of those who already live inside the Avila boundaries are troubled by the government's proposal. Alexander Toro is part of a five family cooperative in Galipán, a settlement 10 miles north of Caracas that long predated the park's existence.

The cooperative is using a \$1 million government loan to set up a restaurant, hostel and convention center for tourists. Not surprisingly, the cooperative strongly supports the Chávez government. But like Luy, Toro says that approval for housing will bring new waves of squatters.

"We aren't invaders," he said. "We're guards. We're protecting the park. We live

PARKS SERIES

This is the second part of an occasional series of stories on the slow destruction of national parks around Latin America.

This part focuses on the dispute sparked by a Venezuelan government plan to build apartment blocks for Caracas' poor on land now belonging to the Avila park, one of the country's iconic images.

The first story showed how parks in Colombia are caught in a destructive vise growing out of the war on drugs. Coca and opium poppy farmers are damaging the parks — cutting down forests to grow the crops, then polluting rivers with the chemicals used to process coca leaves into coca base. But there's fear that the herbicide sprayed on the fields by a U.S.-financed program may do even worse damage to the parks.

A later story will focus on Ecuador's famed Galapagos Islands.

for it."

The government contends that it is also trying to protect the national parks across the country by supporting projects similar to the one in Galipán, in the hopes that the local residents will claim ownership of their national parks.

What's not clear, however, is whether that will stop the new arrivals.

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