


TODAY'S WEATHER

HIGH 33
LOW 24



TUESDAY'S WEATHER

HIGH 40
LOW 31



FORECAST PAGE 2

COMING ATTRACTIONS



AUTO

When the love affair with SUVs started shifting sales away from the Saab brand of Sweden, the company went back to the drawing board.

INSIDE



SPORTS

OWU women drop Saturday matchup with Wittenberg. Page 9

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“

To go against the dominant thinking of your friends, of most of the people you see every day, is perhaps the most difficult act of heroism you can have.

— Theodore H. White, American political writer (1915-1986)

”



Carter's Corner Road will be closed between Ohio 521 and Twigg-Hupp Road through Friday. For more information call 740-833-2400.



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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2006

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Mammoth display

Gazette Matt Emmons

Sara Canterbury, co-owner of Baskets Unique, doesn't seem to be distracted by the huge cutouts of Manny and Diego looking down at her from their window space on East Winter Street. The creatures are featured in the film "Ice Age 2," which will be released on March 31.



DIGGING IN: Attack of the Ash Borer

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

By DANIEL BROWNSTEIN
Staff Writer

It's a bug that flew under the radar for much of the past 25 years, slowly infesting ash trees and choking them to death.

The emerald ash borer, a metallic green beetle from Asia, quietly spread, likely from wooden packing materials on a ship in Detroit, hitched to firewood and nursery trees.

Long after the bug's arrival, ash trees deteriorate, allowing the pest to travel farther away from the epicenter. State and federal workers try to stay on the trail, but the resources to do so are declining, making it more of an uphill battle.

The goal has shifted from total elimination to detect and buy time. It's quite a tall order for scientists who gradually are learning about its domestic consequences and behaviors, partially by looking at its native lands.

In the meantime, slowing the

Please see DIGGING, Page 3

Blakeslee's enjoyed a life of biking and building



Gazette Amy Allan

Jean Blakeslee, an Ohio Wesleyan University graduate, worked with the Delaware City Schools for several years and now devotes her time to Habitat for Humanity.

By CONNIE E. CURRY
Special to the Gazette

Jean Humphreys didn't intend to make Delaware her home when she came here from Maryland in 1944 to attend Ohio Wesleyan University. Her goal was to earn her bachelor's degree in education. And she did, graduating in 1947.

While attending Ohio Wesleyan, she became involved with the YMCA. During free time from her studies, she walked from the campus area to

what was the Children's Home, located on North Sandusky Street. Many of the children at the home were orphans, while others were there because their families could not support them. Jean volunteered, giving attention and care to 50-60 children who resided there.

George Blakeslee, another OWU student from the east coast, also was volunteering at the Children's Home while studying to become a teacher. He had a bike, and one day offered Jean a ride back to her dorm.

That bike ride was the start of a relationship that led to Jean Humphreys becoming Jean Blakeslee. They were married for 52 years, during which time they raised five sons and were blessed with 13 grandchildren.

"We bought each other new bikes for wedding gifts and rode our bikes to Connecticut for our honeymoon. We stayed at tourist's homes that accommodated travelers years ago. It took us 21 days to reach our destination," Jean said.

Jean and George spent their first summer of marriage in Connecticut. In the fall of 1947, Delaware became their home, and both Jean and George worked for and retired from the Delaware City Schools.

While teaching fourth grade at Smith School and Conger Elementary and raising her family, Jean decided to go back to school herself. She earned her master's degree in 1970 from Ohio Wesleyan and became the in-service training coordinator for the city schools until her retirement in 1979.

Back on the bike

Two years before her retirement, in 1977, Jean and George decided to again make the long-distance bike trip to Connecticut. It had been 30 years since their first bike trip, and the tourist homes were a thing of the past. Jean and George packed and prepared differently, taking with them a two-man tent and sleeping bags. Being 30 years older and traveling with more gear didn't slow them down; in fact, they made the trip in 18 days. They spent several nights in state parks, and occasionally were welcomed to sleep at family homes along the way.

Please see JEAN, Page 3

CITY SCHOOLS

State instability raises stakes for levy voters

Without it, school funding will dry up in 2008

By DEVON IMMELT
Staff Writer

The Delaware City School district is gaining momentum academically, but a "quadruple whammy" of state funding uncertainty, legislative changes, so-called phantom revenue, and the city's residential growth makes approval of a levy this May critical, school board members told city leaders Saturday morning.

The school district is seeking voter approval of a 12.9-mill emergency levy, which would replace the district's two current operating levies — a 4-mill levy set to expire this fiscal year and an 8.9-mill levy that expires in 2007.

Approval of the levy would cost a homeowner in the district \$191.24 a year per every \$100,000 worth of property valuation.

During a joint meeting between the school board and city council, District Superintendent Mary Anne Ashworth advised council that the district is deficit spending now, and without approval of the levy, is projected to run out of operating funds during fiscal year 2008.

"We have work to do, there is no question about that," Ashworth said.

The funding dilemma is the result of both local and state issues. On the local level, the city's residential growth has outpaced its commercial growth, bringing more students to the district than taxes to pay for them.

It takes property taxes from nearly nine new \$150,000 houses to offset the cost of one new student, District Treasurer Christina Blue said.

As a result, the relative income from the city's commercial tax base is shrinking, she said.

At the state level, Blue said pending tax reforms intended to make Ohio more attractive to businesses are causing state reimbursement from tangible personal property taxes to school districts to be phased out from 2010 to 2017. The eventual loss in tax revenue for the district is projected at \$3,443,883

Please see LEVY, Page 5

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Cheney accidentally shoots fellow hunter; man in stable condition

By LYNN BREZOSKY
Associated Press Writer



Cheney

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas — A 78-year-old hunting companion of Vice President Dick Cheney was recovering in stable condition today after Cheney accidentally shot him during a weekend quail hunting trip, a hospital official said.

Harry Whittington spent "a great night. He slept throughout the night," said Yvonne Wheeler, spokeswoman at Christus Spohn Hospital Memorial. She listed his condition as "very stable," but said she did not know if Whittington would be discharged today.

Whittington, an Austin attorney, was

flown to the hospital after Cheney accidentally shot him late Saturday afternoon at the Armstrong Ranch.

The vice president visited Whittington and his wife before returning to Washington on Sunday. Cheney "was pleased to see that he's doing fine and in good spirits," said Cheney spokeswoman Lea Anne McBride.

Whittington sent word through a hospital official that he would have no comment on the incident out of respect for Cheney.

Katharine Armstrong, the ranch's owner, told The Associated Press that the accident occurred after Cheney, Whittington and another hunter got out of a car to shoot at a covey of quail.

She said Whittington went to retrieve a bird he shot. Cheney and the third hunter, whom she would not identify, walked to another spot and discovered a second covey of quail.

Whittington "came up from behind the vice president and the other hunter and didn't signal them or indicate to them or announce himself," said Armstrong, who was in the car.

"The vice president didn't see him," she said. "The covey flushed and the vice president picked out a bird and was

following it and shot. And by god, Harry was in the line of fire and got peppered pretty good."

Armstrong said the shotgun pellets broke the skin.

"It knocked him silly. But he was fine. He was talking. His eyes were open. It didn't get in his eyes or anything like that," she said.

Each of the hunters was wearing a bright orange vest at the time, Armstrong said.

The accident was not reported publicly by the vice president's office for nearly 24 hours, and then only after it was reported by the *Corpus Christi Caller-Times* on its Web site Sunday.

McBride said the vice president's

office did not tell reporters about the accident Saturday because they were deferring to Armstrong to handle the announcement of what happened on her property.

Armstrong said everyone at the ranch was so "focused" on Whittington's health Saturday that it wasn't until Sunday she called the *Caller-Times* to report the accident. Her ranch is about 60 miles southwest of Corpus Christi.

Sally Whittington told *The Dallas Morning News* her father was being observed because of swelling from some of the welts on his neck. His face "looks like chicken pox, kind of," she said.

JEAN

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Their passion for biking never waned; they rode all over Delaware County, often taking weekend rides to Delaware State Park. It became a family affair, and their sons all became avid bike riders.

In 1971, sons John and Richard left town on bikes for Seattle, Wash. The trip covered more than 2,000 miles and they accomplished their goal in slightly less than three weeks, traveling about 100 miles per day.

Jean's five sons graduated in 1966, 1968, 1969, 1970 and 1971 from Delaware City Schools. Today, John, 52 resides in Delaware; George, 57 lives in Massachusetts; Fred, 56 resides in Westerville; Jim, 55 lives in Blacklick; and Richard, 53 lives in Alabama.

George passed away suddenly in January 1999, prior to taking a planned bike trip to Nashville, Tenn. and Nachez, Miss. That summer, Jean still made the trip, and four of her sons and their wives joined her. Two of Jean's daughters-in-law followed behind with the "sag wagon," the car carrying the riders' supplies.

Learning and building

From 1980-1990, Jean continued her education, taking Spanish and art classes at OWU. Her love of art continues today; in her spare time she likes to work with oil paint, stone, woodcarving and bronze casting to create beautiful, unique art objects.

In 2003, Jean became involved with Habitat for Humanity, a non-profit organization that has built more than 125,000 homes throughout the United States since 1976. Delaware organized a chapter in 1989; since then, 24 houses have been built and the 25th is under construction, thanks to the hard-working Habitat volunteers.

"Sweat Equity" is a familiar term to the families who are privileged to be chosen for the new Habitat homes. They agree to work approximately 200 hours as they participate in the completion of their new residence.

"This is my big interest now," Jean said as she proudly showed group pictures from her trip to Mexico and Bolivia to help build homes. Standing proudly with big smiles are the group members and former President Jimmy Carter, who led the project in Mexico in October 2004 to raise awareness of the critical needs for affordable housing.

Jean and Jackie Kuhns of Delaware joined the executive director for the Delaware Habitat

for Humanity and the 3,000 volunteers from around the nation who provided physical labor in Pueblo and Veracruz, Mexico. Jean helped build septic systems that were dug with shovels.

"I didn't do much digging. My job was wheeling dirt away and occasionally I did a chicken dance atop the dirt pile," she said with a chuckle.

In the summer of 2003, Jean set off to Bolivia with 19 others to build additional homes. They were part of the first American group to travel to Bolivia to help with this rewarding, labor-intensive task. Kuhns joined them on this trip, as well.

"The heat was awful," Kuhns said. "Many, not knowing Jean, assumed she wouldn't be able to hold up in the heat and do the work. She amazed them and ended up being a lead block cutter. She is great with tools and so energetic. Volunteers don't need to have a specialty in construction work. Anyone with a willing heart like Jean can volunteer and be productive."

"We built two homes in two weeks while in Bolivia. My job consisted of hauling materials in from a road to the area where we were building, and I cut a lot of block," Jean said.

While there, the crew stayed at a primitive hotel. They slept on cots, two to a room, and were issued one blanket per cot. Unusually cold weather meant the crew suffered through a few chilly nights. Residents of the neighborhood gathered additional blankets to share with the crew.

They had two bathrooms to share among the 20 of them. The process of getting enough hot water for a shower was a slow one.

Jean enjoyed Mexico so much, in December 2004 she returned to Cuernavaca, Mexico to improve her Spanish. She enrolled in an immersion course, which enables students to live with families in various countries to learn their language and experience their culture for three weeks.

Jean's son, Richard, also signed up for the course. Jean and Richard requested to stay with different families while studying Spanish.

"It would have been too easy to communicate in English if we had lived together. The families we lived with did not speak English, which was a great incentive to improve our Spanish," Jean said.

Jean and Richard were required to attend Spanish classes six hours a day and celebrated

Christmas and New Year's Day with their Mexican families.

Missions accomplished

Jean has a multitude of accomplishments, interests and hobbies. At 79, she has yet to slow down. A tall, slender, agile woman, blessed with a youthful look and a high energy level, Jean's interests and hobbies continue to grow.

Humble when people rave about her ambitious nature, she claims her biggest and best accomplishment is raising five wonderful children. She proudly points to five beautiful oil paintings of her sons hanging above her fireplace that she painted when they all were toddlers.

Over the years, she has painted a wide variety of vivid oil paintings, many of which are neatly framed and hung throughout her home.

Wooden dolls in handmade clothing of many shapes and sizes are neatly displayed. Each doll, hand-carved by Jean, has beautifully defined facial features with joints that make the limbs mobile. She continues to carve dolls, making different sizes with a variety of fresh new faces, always hoping to improve each new creation.

Jean also is a ham radio operator and a member of the Delaware Amateur Radio Association. She is on a safety committee for the association, and helps to monitor local parades every year. Ham radio operators stand at each corner of the streets to communicate and to help parades run smoothly and safely.

Jean also helps with bike races and the annual triathlon that takes place at Alum Creek.

And if that isn't enough to keep her active, she walks about a mile to work at Manos, Martin Pergram and Dietz, where she is a file clerk.

"It's a lovely job. They are wonderful and flexible, allowing me to travel. They just stack up the files for my return," Jean said.

So what is Jean Blakeslee's next adventure? Whatever she does or wherever she goes, she'll leave something positive when she returns.

"She's the most amazing woman with such a zest for life," said Kuhns.

"China ... I hope to visit China someday," Jean said. "Oh, and I would love to have a new band saw."

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DIGGING

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

borer means taking out trees, stamping out peripheral hotspots until the fire extinguisher is invented.

Stakes are high, namely Ohio's five billion ash trees, a figure including all the susceptible species, and the billions of dollars in state commerce.

There certainly are more factors when that view is expanded.

Facing a minimal amount of federal funding, Indiana stopped doing the only proven eradication method, clearing every ash — healthy or not — within a half-mile of each find. Lower Michigan is engulfed, and Ohio temporarily wrote off Toledo, where the beetle has a stronghold, in lieu of putting out sparks.

Every ash tree the emerald ash borer touches receives a death sentence, one way or another.

Since last summer, people in Delaware have found that out the hard way.

One of the county's defining features, a scenic river corridor, is changed. Muddy tracks replace what should be snowy forest floors. Dense woods now have treeless paths and pockets.

I've written about the emerald ash borer since early 2004, when it was discovered near Easton Town Center, which is undoubtedly a success story for the Ohio Department of Agriculture and an example of eradication's ideal scenario. Early detection combined with a known source and sufficient funding resulted in containing and ultimately eliminating the beetle with minimum, if any, lasting damage.

The Olentangy River's unique topography, a ticking clock and an unseasonably warm winter have made the local effort anything but normal.

For preceding series of stories, I tried to take a step back from focusing on the pixels to look at a larger picture — one that deserves more attention than it gets.

This is a defining year for

the future of North America's ash population, a telling sign of where the environment falls on our list of priorities.

It is time to not blink

Last year, Congress appropriated less than one-third of President Bush's budget for the borer, which was paltry compared to the \$50 million Ohio Gov. Bob Taft believes it will take to adequately address just this state's zones.

The president's 2007 proposal looks similar. Calls for trimming spending in light of brewing international conflicts, Hurricane Katrina and record debt could again put domestic needs such as invasive pests on the back-burner.

With all three states putting out more detection trees than ever before, the true extent of the problem will take shape. Scientists will learn more.

Despite all of the activity, voices telling the beetle's story remain sparse, the most worrisome of which are those of our elected officials.

Nature isn't sexy, and lately, it's on the cutting room floor.

Sharon Lucik, of the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, struggles to get it in the first half of the paper, even in Michigan.

"The coverage isn't top-of-mind like it was a few years ago," she told me while I was in the process of interviewing researchers, government workers, foresters, politicians (trying to get through to their spokespersons is more accurate) and local residents. "It's not holding the same prominence that it once did."

Here's to hoping that the emerald ash borer and other environmental concerns do make the front page this year.

I'll settle for some success stories on page A-6. dbrownstein@delgazette.com

Saddam forced to attend latest session of trial

By HAMZA HENDAWI
Associated Press Writer

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Saddam Hussein was forced to attend his trial today, looking haggard and wearing a robe rather than his usual crisp suit as he shouted "Down with Bush." His top co-defendant struggled with guards bringing him in and sat on the floor, his back to the judge, for much of the session.

After the stormy start, prosecutors put on the stand two members of Saddam's regime for the first time and produced documents trying to link the former Iraqi leader directly to torture and executions that allegedly took place in a 1982 crackdown in the Shiite town of Dujail.

The two witnesses — Ahmed Hussein Khudayer al-Samarrai, the head of Saddam's presidential office, and Hassan al-Obeidi, an intelligence officer — complained they were being forced to testify.

Al-Samarrai, who held his post from 1984-1991 and then again from 1995 until the fall of the regime in April 2003, insisted he knew nothing about the events in Dujail.

"I am not fit to be a witness in this case," al-Samarrai told the court, bringing a smile from Saddam.

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Former Back Pain Sufferer, and Former Skeptic Tells All

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