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The Times-Picayune

EAST JEFFERSON

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NOLA.COM/NEWS CONTINUOUS BREAKING NEWS

SECTION B
Friday
May 4, 2012

Alert citizens foil burglary

Metairie man held for break-in

By Michelle Hunter
East Jefferson bureau

Alert witnesses foiled a would-be burglar who broke into a Metairie house Wednesday afternoon, a Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office arrest report said.

Ross Shields Jr. Arrested for burglary, he is being held on $22,000 bond

The break-in occurred just after 12:00 p.m. at a home in the 400 block of North Sibley Street. Witnesses called 911 after they spotted a man using a two-by-four to break into a house, the report said. The man managed to pry open a window using the piece of lumber, then crawled inside.

When deputies arrived, the witnesses told them the burglar had not yet emerged from the house, so they knocked on the front door.

The burglar did not answer.

Meanwhile, authorities contacted the home's owner, who

See BURGLARY, B-2

Grand Isle man beaten in motel

Robbers wielded tire iron, police say

By Andrea Shaw
West Bank bureau

An owner of a Grand Isle motel was badly beaten by two men with a tire iron during a robbery early Thursday, according to his business partner and authorities.

Steven Chevalier, who co-owns the Tropical Motel with Tony Grivet, suffered serious wounds to his back, Grivet said.

The beating happened around 1 a.m. as Chevalier went inside the business, Grivet said. One suspect was hiding behind a refrigerator. The second entered through a door. Grivet said. They struck Chevalier with a tire iron repeatedly on his back and wrestled him to the floor, Grivet said. The suspects fled, Grivet said, leaving behind a mask and a pair of binoculars.

Chevalier needed stitches to close wounds in his back and might have chipped vertebrae, Grivet said.

"Most brutal thing that's happened down there that I can tell," said Grivet, who bought the motel after Hurricane Katrina.

Chevalier could not be

See MOTEL, B-2

Coconut Beach to relocate

Kenner council approves agreement

By Mary Sparacello
Kenner bureau

An enthusiastic Kenner City Council Thursday unanimously approved an agreement to bring Coconut Beach sand volleyball to Kenner's Laketown. "I want to welcome you to the neighborhood," said Councilman John DeHaven, the interim council member who represents the Laketown area.

The private Coconut Beach outfit would build at least 22 sand courts, lighting and a concession area on municipal land just south of the Pontchartrain Center. The complex would be ready by June 2, when a charity tournament for Children's Hospital is scheduled to begin.

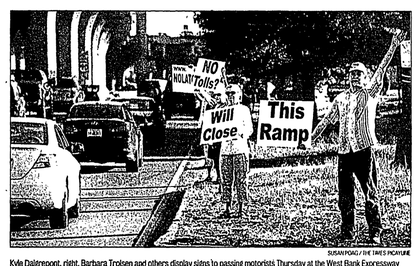
Coconut Beach had been located in West End in New Orleans since the 1980s. But a nearby hurricane protection project by the Army Corps of Engineers is swallowing Coconut Beach's property, prompting co-owners Bruce White and Mike Drury to look elsewhere.

"New Orleans' loss is Kenner's gain," said Council President Jeannie Black.

Drury said that everyone in Kenner government has been helpful to Coconut Beach. "Much different than what we've seen in other areas," he said.

The council's legislation authorizes Mayor Mike Yenni to enter into an agreement with Coconut Beach. Yenni said he's working to attract more businesses to Kenner and to both Laketown and

See KENNER, B-2



SUSAN POAG / THE TIMES-PICAYUNE

Kyle Dalgrepont, right, Barbara Trolsen and others display signs to passing motorists Thursday at the West Bank Expressway Donner on-ramp. 'Operation On-Ramp' sought to warn motorists that three approaches to the bridge could be shut down to accommodate the massive rush of traffic expected to be created once the toll plaza is no longer needed. Tolls are scheduled to lapse at the end of the year.

Rally aims to drum up support for bridge tolls

Group fears that services will fall by the wayside

By Allen Powell II
West Bank bureau

At the height of rush hour Thursday morning, supporters of Crescent City Connection tolls took their cause directly to commuters, who they say have the most to lose if the tolls are allowed to lapse at the end of the year.

The rally, dubbed "Operation On-Ramp," aimed to warn motorists that three approaches to the bridge could be shut down to accommodate the massive rush of traffic expected to be created once the toll plaza is no longer needed. They argue state transportation officials would close the ramps to slow the 12 lanes of traffic that would be condensed into four.

"I think it's really important that these people realize if ... you don't want tolls but you think the only issue is whether you're going to pay 40 cents or not, I think you have to realize we're not going to get the services that we had," said Fay Faron, who sat on a state task force that studied the lease and Crescent City Connection agency operations. "And one of the biggest things is going to be traffic."

Connie Burks, one of Operation On-Ramp's organizers, said toll supporters hope the rally will bring attention to services that would be lost if the Legislature allows the collection of tolls to cease on Dec. 31 as scheduled. On Tuesday, a bill that would have dedicated $5 million annually from license tag fees for some of those operations was shot down in a House committee, which toll backers and some elected officials took as an ominous message about the state's commitment to maintaining the span.

Burks said besides the possible closure of entrance ramps, the bridge's police force also is in jeopardy, facing a reduction in services or complete elimination.

Officials have said the tolls generate $21 million a year. The cost is $1 for motorists paying cash and 40 cents for those with a toll tag.

Critics of extending the tolls say years of surpluses that were supposed to finance numerous road projects never materialized as the money was squandered. They also point to three Mississippi River ferries, which are free to pedestrians and siphon a sizable amount of the agency's budget.

Local elected officials say they want assurances that a number of services now paid for by the tolls will be maintained adequately.

But toll backers argue that grass cutting, cleaning and bridge inspection also will decrease in frequency. And without reliable financing for lights, the bridge would go dark, they say.

"What they don't know is that we are going to be losing a tremendous amount if we don't pay the tolls," Burks said. "We stand to lose a great deal."

Burks said organizers think the more information people have, the more likely they are to support renewing the tolls because without them, the Crescent City Connection would be treated like "any other bridge in the state," and that's not a good thing.

"We do not want to be treated like all the other bridges," Burks said.

Business strategist to head Jeff Chamber

Murphy worked as volunteer for years

By Bob Ross
East Jefferson bureau

Todd Murphy, a business development strategist and longtime member of the Jefferson Chamber, has been named president of the nonprofit organization. He most recently worked in the chamber's financial section.

Murphy, 46, has 13 years of banking experience and also has operated a mortgage brokerage firm and worked as a public relations consultant.

Todd Murphy 'His dynamic, can-do spirit will stimulate ... growth'

"I think this is a perfect fit for me and the chamber," Murphy said. "I was in a volunteer capacity for many, many years with the chamber. I really understand the chamber's mission, and as a life-long resident of Jefferson, I understand the parish as well."

Parish President John Young applauded the appointment in a press release: "Todd is an outstanding choice to lead our chamber. He understands the many amenities of this parish, and his dynamic, can-do spirit will stimulate business growth in Jefferson. He is a terrific ambassador for our business community."

Murphy also received praise from Michael Hecht, president and CEO of Greater New Orleans, Inc. in the same release.

"Todd's appointment will strengthen our regional economic development efforts," Hecht said. "He has the skills and savvy to focus Jefferson on strategies that will lead to new business development while strengthening their current businesses. He is a smart, strong choice."

Murphy said one of his goals is to take on projects that help the parish become more successful.

"I think we're really going to work on some public policy issues that will make the chamber relevant to the parish's success. I really want to emphasize not only the business initiatives but the quality of life issues as well."

The chamber was created in 1997 and has more than 600 members.

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N.O. man arrested by task force

He's accused of shooting at officer

From staff reports

Authorities have apprehended a 32-year-old New Orleans man who — according to the Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office — shot at a JPSO patrol officer in April.

A U.S. Marshal's Service task force arrested Robert D. Taylor at his residence in the 1900 block of Eagle Street on Tuesday, the Sheriff's Office announced Thursday.

Taylor was wanted for attempted first-degree murder of a peace officer, the illegal discharge of a firearm during a crime of violence and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, said Col. John Fortunato, a spokesman for the Sheriff's Office.

On April 18, patrol officer Erroll Harris "was involved in an exchange of gunfire" with a suspect who jumped from his burning vehicle in the 2600 block of Manhattan Boulevard in Harvey, Fortunato said. Neither the suspect, who escaped, nor the officer was injured, according to the Sheriff's Office.

Information obtained from the vehicle helped Detective

See ARRESTED, B-2

West Bank man shot to death

Friends say he was riding bike to work

By Allen Powell II
West Bank bureau

For the second time this week, a West Bank man was gunned down on his way to work.

Deputies found Ross Jackson, 47, shot to death in the 1600 block of Estelete Street in Harvey on Thursday around 4 a.m., said Col. John Fortunato, a Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office spokesman.

Friends said Jackson was riding his bicycle to work when he was killed.

Investigators recovered several .45-caliber shell casings at the scene. Jackson's body was in a vacant lot across the street from one church and less than 100 yards from another.

Jackson had just left his girlfriend's house on Pallet Street, said Gilda Williams, the woman's aunt. Most mornings, he would catch a ride with his girlfriend to the West Bank Expressway to meet his co-workers, but on Thursday, his girlfriend's car had a flat tire so he took his bicycle, Williams said Jackson was a well-liked man who had no enemies in the neighborhood.

"He was a lovely person; I don't know why somebody would want to hurt him," she said.

See SHOT, B-2

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