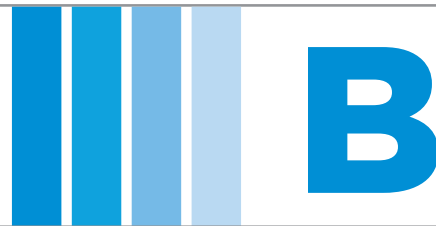


METRO & STATE



The Miami Herald



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IN MY OPINION
ANA MENENDEZ
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Fantasy Island is anything but for its workers

“Live as the Vanderbilts did, only better.” That’s the motto of Fisher Island, the reality-free zone off the coast of Miami Beach whose marketing describes it as a “residential community of unrivaled luxury and splendor.”

Fisher Island floats in a world of its own. Rich, inaccessible and exclusive, it has just become the perfect fantasy island of opportunity for union organizers.

SEIU, the union that helped secure healthcare and higher wages for University of Miami janitors last year, has taken up the cause of the workers who keep Fisher Island splendid.

A week ago, the union helped organize a protest near the ferry terminal off the MacArthur Causeway. And Friday, SEIU filed charges with the National Labor Relations Board on behalf of a worker who says he was fired for his union support.

OUT OF A JOB

The worker, Jose Rojas had been a busser at the Café Porto Cervo since 2000, he told me Friday. He made \$6 an hour plus tips, and though he could pay the \$63 bi-weekly insurance, many of his colleagues could not afford to include their children on the plan.

So he took part in the protest outside the terminal May 4.

“I knew it was going to be a problem,” he said. “But I thought if I had the chance to get better benefits, I had the right to try.” When he got to work later that afternoon, a supervisor began to make disparaging remarks, he says.

“He told me I looked like a delinquent and that ‘unions are for blacks,’” Rojas said. “I told him, you can disagree with unions, but there’s no need to say that.”

Wednesday, Rojas says he was fired for “disrespecting” his superior.

Café management declined comment Friday. Café Porto Cervo, like most of Fisher Island, is off limits to the uninitiated. The Fisher Island website says the café was “inspired by a superb restaurant in Costa Smeralda, Sardinia.” A friend tried to make reservations for us Friday night, only to be told it was for members only.

Friday afternoon, I drove to the terminal, hoping to get onto the island to interview Fisher Island Club general manager John Iannotti. I waited in my car while a ferry docked and workers graciously sprayed the disembarking Mercedes and BMWs with water. My car could have benefited from a similar baptism. Alas, I was turned around before I could board the ferry, told that Iannotti was too busy to see me.

His secretary forwarded a statement: “Even though a charge has been filed, we feel it has no merit and we will vigorously defend it. No further comment.”

POWERFUL METAPHOR

Fisher Island, with its cartoonish wealth, may seem too easy a target. But it’s a powerful metaphor for a society where the rich grow more comfortable, the poor sink further and the elected do nothing. For proof, see the property tax hysteria, where legislators sought to appease voters by hiking the sales tax — the one tax that disproportionately affects the poor.

SEIU has made unprecedented gains across the south by emphasizing the ballooning disparity between rich and poor. Union organizers have succeeded not by duping “unsophisticated” workers, but because those workers know they are being duped by a system that promises opportunity and delivers only deeper inequality.

“This is the richest country in the world,” said Rabbi Rebecca Lillian at a gathering Friday. “Why do we even have a category called the working poor?”

Unions may not be the solution everyone wants. But its leaders are addressing issues that few others have the courage to touch.

THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE SCHOOL



ON THE RUNWAY: Danniella Llano, 4, gets a high-five from a fan in the crowd as she walked down the runway along with Mari Rey, a Learning Experience teacher’s assistant.

PHOTOS BY PETER ANDREW BOSCH / MIAMI HERALD STAFF

PASSION FOR FASHION

PARENTS, TEACHERS, FRIENDS CHEER AS KIDS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES LIGHT UP THE STAGE

BY ELINOR J. BRECHER
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A child is born, and within minutes it’s clear that something’s wrong.

The doctors and nurses whisper, eyes downcast. Maybe it’s Down syndrome. Maybe it’s some unknown genetic abnormality.

Someone — your own mother? — might tell you to send this defective child away and spare yourself a lifetime of anguish. But you don’t, because you believe in this child, and you find a school where the mission is maxing out a child’s potential to live independently.

Then one day four — or 14 or 24 — years later, amid flashing lights and pulsating disco music, this child who might never have walked or talked is boogying down a 78-foot runway in Ralph Lauren, blowing kisses to nearly 800 cheering, clapping, crying parents, friends and relatives.

It happened Saturday. For the 14th year, The Learning Experience School held its big annual fundraiser: a luncheon/silent auction/fashion show starring 76 students, toddlers to young adults, with developmental disabilities.

The goal for the West Miami school and its Coral Gables branch: to raise \$100,000 for programs and scholarships, and to cover some

*TURN TO FASHION, 2B



COOL IN WHITE: Jonathan Trujillo, 22, strikes a James Bond pose while being fitted for a tuxedo Friday at the school. The school’s big fundraising show is in its 14th year.

CRIME

A bizarre run-in for bank robbery suspect

■ New court documents reveal a Portuguese man’s odd attempt to enter the United States only days before his arrest in a Miami Beach bank robbery.

BY DAVID OVALLE
dovalle@MiamiHerald.com

The Portuguese man arrested in a bizarre Miami Beach bank robbery in March was denied entry into the country at a New Jersey airport five days before the attempted heist because a fake social security card was found in his luggage, new court



ALMEIDA

Miami International Airport.

Then, on the morning of March 27, Almeida walked into Miami Beach’s First Commercial Bank carrying a black suitcase.

Thousands of miles away, Almeida’s reported accomplice,

documents show.

Although Paulo Almeida was forced to return to Portugal, he managed just days later to get past customs officers at

Allan Sharif, angrily phoned the bank teller and demanded that \$20,000 be given to his partner.

The strange saga has raised questions about why U.S. Homeland Security officials would allow Almeida, 45, into the United States days after refusing him entry at Newark International Airport.

Authorities with Miami’s U.S. Customs and Border Protection, a division of DHS, declined to talk about the Almeida case.

But Janet Rapaport, a CBP

*TURN TO BANK ROBBERY, 2B

EMERGENCIES

1-stop storm help on Web

■ A new website for local and national emergency advisories will be introduced at this week’s hurricane conference in Fort Lauderdale.

BY MARTIN MERZER
mmerzer@MiamiHerald.com

Two of the nation’s most prominent hurricane forecasters are launching a new crusade to help Americans deal with storms and other disasters — and they hope to enlist recruits during this week’s major hurricane conference in Fort Lauderdale.

“This may be the most important thing I’ve ever done,” said Max Mayfield, former director of the National Hurricane Center in West Miami-Dade County.

He and television forecaster Bryan Norcross are developing an Internet clearinghouse for preparedness and post-disaster advisories issued by government emergency managers in South Florida and around the nation.

Those messages include pre-storm tips and evacuation orders, post-storm updates about rescue operations and relief distribution sites, and crucial information

*TURN TO WEBSITE, 5B



MAYFIELD



NORCROSS

LEGISLATURE 2007

Why Dade thrived in the session

■ State lawmakers from Miami-Dade say the county made out big because delegation members filled the top ranks of the Legislature.

BY YUDY PINEIRO
ypineiro@MiamiHerald.com

TALLAHASSEE — Luckily for the Miami-Dade delegation, House Speaker Marco Rubio is one of their own — a big reason why the county made out so well this law-making session.

Under Rubio’s leadership and that of other Miami-Dade lawmakers in top ranks such as House Democratic Leader Dan Gelber of Miami Beach, lawmakers are bringing home at least \$150 million in local projects. That’s significantly more than years past.

It also helped that the delegation, sometimes bitterly fractured, stuck together for the most part.

“Whatever our differences, the bottom line is we did better in the budget this year, under Marco

*TURN TO MIAMI-DADE, 2B

■ FLEXING MUSCLES: LAWMAKERS APPROVE PROPOSALS THAT TRIM BACK SOME CITIES’ POWER, 6B.



RUBIO

EMERGENCIES

One-stop storm help coming to Web

*WEBSITE, FROM 1B

about terror attacks or other non-weather disasters.

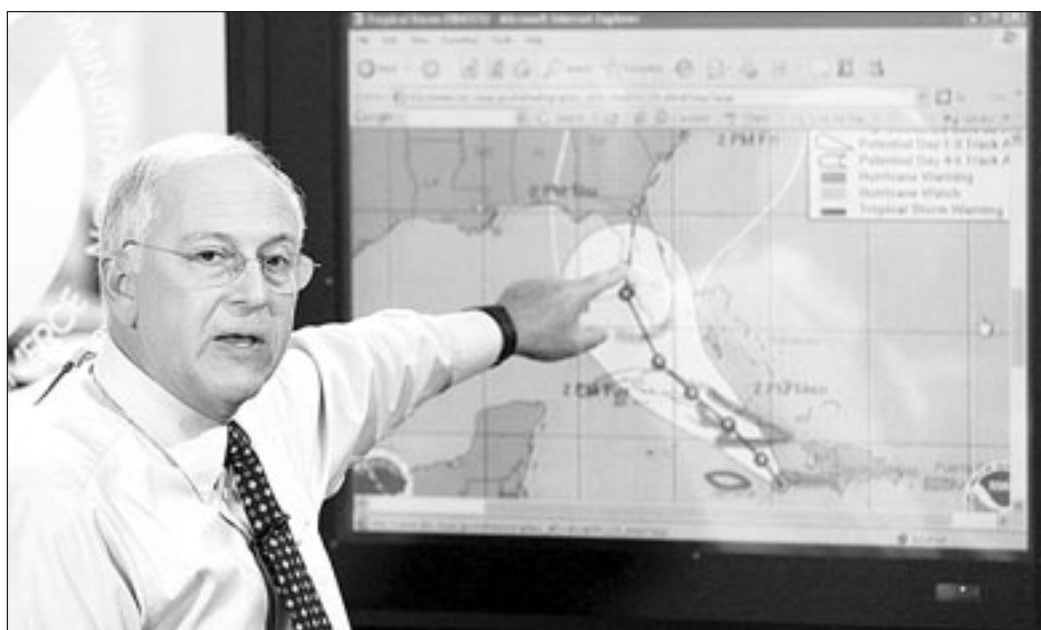
"This will be like a national disaster network," Mayfield said.

The system is called America's Emergency Network and a prototype will be demonstrated for the first time at the Governor's Hurricane Conference...

More than 4,000 emergency managers, forecasters, vendors and state and local officials are signed up to attend the weeklong conference...

Norcross, WFOR-CBS 4's hurricane specialist, said free access to the new website will be provided to emergency managers, the public and the media...

"What we are creating is a presence for emergency management to let them push



C.M. GUERRERO / EL NUEVO HERALD FILE, 2006

NEW ROLE: Max Mayfield, seen here as director of the National Hurricane Center last year, is helping create a new website for local and national emergency advisories.

their information to people locally and to major communication centers so accurate and complete information reaches the public," said Norcross...

Too much of that emergency information is squandered and never reaches the public, he said. It often is issued at sparsely attended news conferences...

nate media coverage.

In addition, many cities are establishing their own disaster centers, even though emergency management tends to be controlled in Florida by state and county officials.

"No newspaper or TV sta-

tion can possibly send reporters to cover all the emergency operation centers," said Mayfield, who retired from the hurricane center in January...

He, Norcross and several partners are dividing their website into subsections so each participating state, county and municipal agency has a designated but central place to post time-critical information...

Residents and the news media will be able to navigate to those sites and find all relevant information — live or archived — waiting for them.

Assuming, that is, they have electricity and Internet access.

Emergency operations centers have backup power, so posting the information before and after a disaster shouldn't be a problem. But many residents might not be able to access that information after a power-cutting disaster.

Norcross and Mayfield acknowledge that, though they note that many news operations and residents also have backup generators. In addition, people in distant locations may be able to relay the information to relatives and friends inside the affected area.

Initial response from the emergency management community has been favorable, they said, and they hope the site will begin operating during the six-month hurricane season that begins June 1.

Norcross said South Florida's experience after Hurricane Wilma made it clear that a better system was required.

"After Wilma, we didn't know at the station what was going on in North Miami, for instance, because the cell-phones were out and the information wasn't posted in a place we could find it," Norcross said.

"After the fact, I heard that they had plans and procedures to distribute supplies," he said, "but we couldn't tell people that because we didn't know it."

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In Memoriam



A LOST - REDEEMED

This poem is dedicated to the legacy of MAXINE M. SCONIERS

10/05/38 - 4/25/06

Inspired by: CHRIST OUR REDEEMER

Written by: Thonda Ollis-Bellamy

It's been three hundred sixty-five days since you left me. To worship in Our LORD'S presence and glory.

While it's been so difficult to watch you go The Savior's Comfort and Peace, I now intimately know.

Although your smile and laugh, I so miss To mourn like the world, I'd be remiss.

For one day soon, our REDEEMER will call And at His feet, I too, will fall.

And as I rise to behold the beauty of His face, I am certain, that also, by His grace.

I will fill with joy to see - none other, Than my sister in Christ, once my earthly mother.

At that precise moment, we both shall rejoice At God's grace which paved our Eternal Choice.

The choice that leads to the forgiveness of sin And allows for loved ones to be reconciled once again.

The choice that leads to the ceasing of tears For His perfect love shall destroy all fears.

The last enemy of death, is, at His WORD, defeated Eternally, we bless GOD for CHRIST OUR REDEEMER.



AMY "TURNER" TUNICK

01/13/59 - 05/13/06

To Our Dearest Angel

It broke our hearts to lose you But you didn't go alone Part of us went with you And though we cannot see you You're always at our side To live in the hearts of those we love Is never to die You are alive in our hearts

With Love from Mom, Dad, Mark Ralph, Mima, Rachel & Uncle Eddie Ellen & Will Barney sends licks & hugs Kiwi is now with you, Pumpkin, Lady Brandi Henry & Lucky Which has to make you feel good We miss you more than you can imagine

Your legacy lives on with your book "Feeling Good - Even Through Cancer" which will benefit University of Miami Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center

The public is invited to the Book Release Fund Raiser Sunday, May 20th 11 AM to 1 PM at Chase at Gulfstream Park Racing & Casino U.S. 1 & Hallandale Bch. Blvd. For Information call: 954-316-8621

In Memoriam



ANITA & KEVIN RAFKY

Your family and friends miss you both very much.

Husband and father David; son and brother Brian; brother and uncle Jeff; cousin Janet; Uncle Sammy; daughter-in-law Jennifer; friends and co-workers.



DAVID R. MCKENZIE

Dec. 19, 1978 - Nov. 3, 2002

Carrying you for 9 months, watching you grow into a wonderful, handsome man was everything that a mother could ever dream of; until that day the Lord decided to take you into his arms and shelter you from this awful world. It's been 4 years now, and it's difficult to cope, especially on this day but I know that you are with me spiritually. Thank you for the roses!

I Love you always! Mom



FRANCES MILLER CLARK SANDERS

Sept. 15, 1922 - Mar. 12, 2006

Your years of dedication, devotion and love, will live forever in our hearts.

Mr. George L. Saunders and children



GABRIEL GIL VELEZ

"5/13/84 - 5/27/06" "HAPPY BIRTHDAY"

Vanessa, Carissa, Lucy and Elmer

GENEVIEVE ABRAHAM

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY! Thinking of you today and always!!

Love, George, Marion, Judi, Norma Jean & Tom

In Memoriam



GERMAINE LYS

Dear Mother, We will Always Love You.

Pierre, Reynolds, Genevieve and Florence

In Loving Memory on Mother's Day Josephine Bogie Thomas

April 25, 1921/Mt. Sterling, KY - May 13, 1999/Pittsburgh, PA



Sandra Thomas, age 8, with her mother, Josephine Bogie Thomas.

Eight long years ago today, I lost you to a little known but common genetic disease - hereditary hemochromatosis/iron overload disease (www.americanhs.org) yet you still feel so close to me each and every day. There is no one who could replace your smile, your laugh, your kindness and empathy or your special and compassionate understanding of the world and its spiritual beauty. You taught me so many things-how to love, how to care, how to help those around me, whether man or creature, who might be in need. You have been and will always be my shining inspiration to live the best life that I can and to try to follow in your gentle footsteps, to appreciate the simple things in life, to revere the innocent, and to pay attention to nature's exquisite everyday details. I wish I could spend Mother's Day with you, to share lunch while gazing out at a beautiful lake, give you flowers, and tell you just one more time how much so many people loved you. In time, Daddy will be joining you, and then, I, too. And, we will all be together once again, riding down the highway towards California, laughing at inside jokes, watching the snow fall in the mountains, and not needing a road map this time to find our way. No, this time, we will know that our destination will be the sublime joy of being together with our loved ones once again and knowing that we will be protected for eternity by God's love. Your daughter, Sandra

For more information on hereditary hemochromatosis and how you can prevent it, please contact Sandra Thomas, President/Founder of the American Hemochromatosis Society (AHS) at: 1-888-655-IRON (4766) or 407-829-4488 or visit: www.healthcheckusa.com for family genetic screening for hereditary hemochromatosis.

Express Condolences.

See the obituary section at

MiamiHerald.com

In Memoriam

IN MEMORY OF DIANE ABRAMS

2/9/53 - 5/13/05



I once read a poem that said the art of losing isn't hard to master, but nothing in life so far has been harder than trying to master losing you.

There isn't a day that goes by that David, Jackie, and I aren't caught in a flux of emotions. Sometimes we find ourselves laughing, other times crying, but the majority of the time just reminiscing. Losing you left us compelled to find a little bit of you in each one of us and the outcome is amazing.

Jackie is as compassionate, tender, and loving as you. David has your exact laugh and your fun carefree ways, and I express your very smile as well as your domesticated lifestyle. Overall, we know you would be proud of our accomplishments and the progress we have made over the last two years. Although you aren't here to hold our hand through each step of the way, I think it is safe to say that we have a guardian angel and a guiding light on the other side that we wouldn't trust anymore than you. Happy Mother's Day! We Miss you and Love You Deeply, Danielle, Jackie and David

LUCILLE ADELINE MUNCILLO PEZZELLO

1902 - 1985

A woman of valor who can find Her price is far above rubies My heart safely trusts in her Strength and honour are her clothing She openeth her mouth with wisdom And on her tongue is the law of kindness I rise up and call her blessed And her own works shall praise her before God

I love you, Mom

Your one and only daughter LORRAIN T. GOLDMAN



MIRTA M. TARRAZA

September 19, 1936 - April 22, 2004

Happy Mother's Day We miss you Love always, Elisa, Jorge, Family & Friends

MRS. WILLIE MAE MANNING

12/23/1923 - 01/29/2007

Mom, It's been 4 months since you been gone, first mother's day not having you we love you and will miss you forever.

Your Kids, Grands, Great-grands, Great Great-Grands

remember the love the laughter the special moments shared.

In Memoriam



REMEMBERING YOU ON MOTHER'S DAY LYDIA BARRIOS

Sept. 19, 1938 - June 18, 2000

Mami, another Mother's Day without you. There are no words to describe the love I had for you. I miss you in my everyday life. You were the best mother anyone could ever have and I cherish your memory with each passing day. God blessed me with you as my mother.

With All My Love Your Son Nick



ROBERTA GIBSON SYMONETTE

It's been 5 year and seven months since God called you. We think of you always, but especially today. You will never be forgotten. Your memory is a keepsake which we will never part.

God has you in his keeping, we have you in our hearts.

Daughter Paulette Derico

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Like a star in the evening sky their spirit shall shine through eternity.