

German auto suppliers looking at Upstate / 17A



Peace Center shows offer FUN FOR KIDS

Strokes set region on fire



Pleasant

Mostly sunny and breezy. High: 61°
Weather, 8B

The Greenville News



Greenville, South Carolina

FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 2004 ■ FINAL EDITION

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Witness says journal held plan for killing

Judge sends case of man charged in grocery store slaying to grand jury

By Andy Paras

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An investigator testified Thursday that Charles Christopher Williams kept a journal describing in detail a plan to hold his ex-girlfriend

hostage at an Eastside grocery store and then allow her to decide how she wanted to die: by strangulation or bullet.

The journal included a hand-drawn map of the store, the victim's work schedule and an inventory

of the clothing he planned to wear Sept. 3 when he entered the East North Street Bi-Lo and shot to death Maranda Leigh Williams, according to Greenville County Sheriff's Investigator Paul Silvaggio.

Silvaggio appeared in

court during a preliminary hearing. Williams, who is not related to the victim, is charged with murder, kidnapping and possession of a firearm during the commission of a violent crime in the death of the 24-year-old mother while she worked in

GreenvilleOnline.com

■ For previous coverage of this story, go to GreenvilleOnline.com.

the deli department, according to arrest warrants.

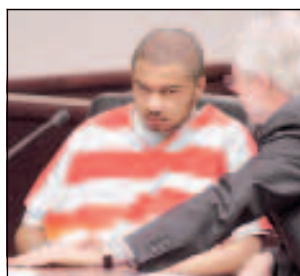
He faces the death penalty if found guilty.

During the preliminary hearing Thursday, Chief

Magistrate Diane Cagle ruled there was enough probable cause for the case to be sent to a grand jury. The case is scheduled for trial in February 2005.

One local attorney with death penalty experience said there could eventually be a showdown over wheth-

See **KILLING** on page 7A



OWEN RILEY JR. / Staff

Legal advice: Attorney John Mauldin talks to his client, Charles Christopher Williams, during a preliminary hearing on murder charges Thursday in Greenville.

Hotel sprinkler bill stalls

Senators worry about costs for Charleston inns

By Tim Smith

CAPITAL BUREAU
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COLUMBIA — Senators considering a bill to protect hotel guests by requiring sprinkler systems have asked that the bill be rewritten after two Charleston senators raised concerns about its impact on historic Charleston lodgings.

Sen. Verne Smith of Greer proposed the bill following the Jan. 25 fire at a Greenville Comfort Inn that killed six and injured 12.

The five-story hotel, built in the 1980s, was not equipped with sprinklers and not required to due to its age. Wade Hampton Fire Chief Gary Downey said sprinklers would have saved at least some of the guests.

Dorothy Scroskey of Lanning, Mich., who lost a daughter and a grandson in the Comfort Inn fire, said she doesn't understand lawmakers' concerns.

"It makes me truly angry that they would say what it would cost," she said. "There's no price that can be put on my daughter's or my grandson's life. I can't believe they would even think of saying no to something like this."

"I wouldn't care if it was one room," she added. "If you are going to have people staying there, then you should have sprinkler systems. I truly believe in my heart my daughter and grandson would be alive today if they had sprinkler systems."

Under Smith's legislation, all hotels would have to be equipped with sprinklers by July 1, 2007. Because of concerns about the bill's impact on motel and hotel owners, a compromise was proposed this week requires only hotels taller than three stories to have sprinklers.

But that proposal died Wednesday when several members of a four-member subcommittee of the Senate Labor, Commerce and In-

See **BILL** on page 3A

'Our teachers are burned out'



KEN OSBURN / Staff

Meet the superintendent: Quin and Donna Mathis came with their children, from left, Hannah, 11, Garrett, 6, and Olivia, 8, to a town meeting at Mauldin High School with school Superintendent Bill Harner.

Parents question school chief

School start times, budget cuts among topics at Mauldin meeting

By Paul Alongi

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Superintendent Bill Harner fielded questions about school start times, state budget cuts and SAT prep courses during a town meeting at Mauldin High

School on Thursday night.

In the 65th such meeting in his nearly four years at the helm of Greenville County Schools, Harner told about 90 people the district is reeling from state cuts. Classrooms are packed and elementary

school teachers sometimes don't have time to use the bathroom, he said.

"Our teachers are burned out," he said.

Nancy Zende, a teacher and parent, said she missed one of her favorite TV shows and skipped dinner to get her time with the superintendent. She offered him a Robotics Club pin and asked: "Where are we with start times?"

TOWN MEETINGS

Greenville Schools Superintendent Bill Harner has meetings scheduled at:
■ 7 p.m. April 15 at Travelers Rest High School
■ 7 p.m. May 4 at Carolina Academy

Harner put the pin on his belt loop and told the

See **SCHOOL** on page 5A

Kerry seeks unity



ELISE AMENDOLA / The Associated Press

In Washington: Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., left, and Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., enter the St. Regis Hotel on Thursday. Kerry, on a mission to unite the party, refused to apologize for calling Republicans "the most crooked, you know, lying group I've ever seen." Story, Page 16A.

Feds close Duke accounting probe

Federal officials say underreported earnings aren't a criminal offense

By Ron Barnett

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Duke Power Co., which an independent auditor said underreported its earnings by more than \$123 million over three years, committed no crime in its accounting practices, according to a letter from federal authorities released by the company Thursday.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of North Carolina wouldn't

comment on the yearlong probe of Duke's accounting reports from 1998 to 2000 but confirmed it sent a letter to the Charlotte-based electric utility Wednesday.

The letter, released by Duke and signed by U.S. Attorney Robert J. Conrad, said the case was closed.

"We have concluded that there is not probable cause to believe that Duke Power's regulatory filings were in violation of any federal criminal law," it said.

GreenvilleOnline.com

■ Read the original audit report and Duke's response at GreenvilleOnline.com.

Duke agreed to a \$25 million settlement with regulators in the two Carolinas. That was passed on to customers — about \$4 during a year for the average home.

"We are pleased that this review is complete and that this issue is now behind us," president Ruth Shaw said.

The biggest chunk of money, about \$87 million, was a nuclear reactor insurance reserve fund, from which Duke reaped benefits

during the stock market rise of the 1990s, said company spokesman Tom Williams.

Duke placed that money in shareholder accounts, arguing the company shouldered the risk. An outside auditor said it should have been in a ratepayer account.

Duke also mistakenly classified millions of dollars in executive compensation, power plant study costs and costs for shutting down its electric appliance business, Williams said.

"We did not acknowledge any wrongdoing," he said, but "some unintentional errors" were corrected.

Terrorists claim responsibility in name of al-Qaida

INSIDE

■ U.S. officials may help Spain investigate attack. Page 2A

By Mar Roman

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MADRID, Spain — A series of bombs hidden in backpacks exploded in quick succession Thursday, blowing apart four commuter trains and killing at least 192 people and wounding more than 1,400.

Spain at first blamed Basque separatists, but a shadowy group claimed responsibility in the name of al-Qaida.

Panicked rush-hour commuters trampled each other, abandoning their bags and shoes, after two of the bombs went off in one train in the Atocha station in the heart of Madrid. Train cars were turned into twisted wrecks, and platforms were strewn with corpses. Cell phones rang unanswered on the bodies of the dead.

"March 11, 2004, now holds its place in the history of infamy," Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar said.

The bombing came three days ahead of Spain's general election Sunday. A major campaign issue was how to deal with ETA, the Basque militant group that seeks greater autonomy.

The 10 backpack bombs exploded in a 15-minute span, starting about 7:39 a.m., on trains along nine miles of commuter line from Santa Eugenia to the Atocha terminal, a bustling hub for subway, commuter and long-distance trains. Police also found and detonated three other bombs.

Worst hit was a double-decker train at El Pozo station, where two bombs killed 70 people, fire department inspector Juan Redondo said.

Coming Saturday | New hope for Upstate families coping with addiction problems



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