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Inside Today



The Associated Press
Virginia's Todd Billet celebrates after hitting an OT three-pointer Thursday.

Cavaliers earn date with Duke

➔ Details on Page B1

Unemployment rises in Valley

➔ Details on Page A3

Happening Today

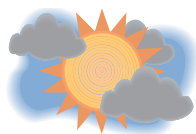
Concert

STUARTS DRAFT — A bluegrass concert will begin at 7 tonight at Stuarts Draft High School. Doors open at 6:30 tonight. Heather Berry and the Berry Pickers and Steve Losh will perform. \$5 advance; \$7 at the door.

Dance

RAPHINE — The Sawmill Band will perform at 7:30 tonight at Clark's Ole Time Music Center. Donations suggested. 997-5366.

Weather



Windy with intervals of clouds and sunshine today. Clear and cold with diminishing winds tonight. Abundant sunshine Saturday. Breezier with more clouds Sunday.

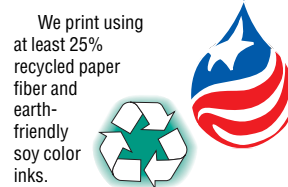
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► **Our commitment:** We correct all errors of fact as soon as we learn of them. Corrections and our policy run daily on Page A2. ➔

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Madrid train bombing implications depend on who's to blame

USA Today

The bombings of commuter trains in Madrid on Thursday prove at least one of two nightmare scenarios:

■ Al-Qaida has pulled off its first big attacks on the West since 9/11.

■ Basque terrorists in Spain, and maybe terrorists everywhere, are learning the tactics of al-Qaida and its affiliates.

Investigators in the next few days will try to determine which is true. Most Spanish government officials believe the bombings are the work of ETA, a radical group fighting for an independent Basque state. Spanish authorities say that in the weeks before Thurs-



The Associated Press

Rescue workers remove victims at the Atocha train station following the blast.

day's attacks, several ETA plots were foiled. Police discovered two backpack bombs in a train station on Christmas Eve. A van was found recently containing explosives similar to those used in the backpack

bombs Thursday. But Thursday's well-coordinated attacks also have the hallmarks of al-Qaida. The bombers tar-

Please see SPAIN, back page this section ➔

Riverheads going to state finals



Mark Miller/The News Leader

Riverheads' cheerleaders Ashley Rohr and Katie McKay react as Riverheads beats Twin Springs during Thursday's state semifinals.

See STORIES & PHOTOS, Page B1 ➔

Waynesboro says goodbye to family of four



Vincent Lertz/The News Leader

Brittany Kirkman puts flowers on the casket of her best friend, Brittany Armstrong, with the help of funeral director Pam Reynolds.

Interstate wreck victims remembered by mourners

By Bonnie Naumann/staff
bnaumann@newsleader.com

Local Loss

WAYNESBORO — The chapel was full.

Family, friends and Waynesboro residents stood against the back wall and along the aisles. Some loitered in the lobby. Others took seats in side rooms of Reynolds Funeral Service. Through speakers they heard the minister's sermon.

"My heart breaks for you folks," said the Rev. Larry Nolf. "If I could take the pain away I would."

Eddie Armstrong, 32
Melissa Armstrong, 26
Brittany, 10
Dean, 6

Four caskets sat side by side. One each for Eddie, Melissa, Brittany and Dean Armstrong. The family died Sunday in a car accident on Interstate 81 while returning from a trip to Tennessee. Eddie, 32, and Melissa, 26, were married in 2002. Brittany and Dean were Eddie's children from

a previous marriage.

Flower arrangements, more than two dozen, crowded the chapel steps. They arched in a rainbow of blooms around the caskets.

"We might not understand this now," Nolf said. "In heaven, we will no longer wonder why things happen when they do."

One arrangement had a ribbon on it. In gold letters it read, "Children." "I am sorry Brittany died. I wish with all my might this didn't happen," wrote 10-year-old Mered-

ith Figgatt. Family friend Joy Nobles read Meredith's message, and paused to sniff before reading another girl's. "Last week we were walking together and she said if she died she would go to heaven."

A young girl's shoulders heaved. She sobbed and collapsed in her mother's lap. "Ssh, ssh," she said, "It'll be OK."

Brittany was 10. Dean was 6.

"Me and Brittany always did crazy stuff together," said best friend Brittany Kirkman. She sniffed, eye-

brows pink. She stood shaky before a pink arrangement and white balloons. "We planned to be best friends forever. If we had children, they would be best friends, too."

Two short white caskets sat side by side. One heaped with pink and white flowers. The smallest, with blue and yellow.

Young boys sat on their father's laps. The men held them tightly.

Susan Armstrong, Brittany's and Dean's mother, attended the service, but did not speak.

"At any family gathering we had, they were the stars of it," said Nancy Stott, the children's grandmother. Her daughter Susan was so proud of them, Stott said. "They were our angels."

"...When a little child departs, we who are left behind, must realize God loves children," the service's program read. "Angels are hard to find."

In family photos, Brittany and Dean gleamed.

Please see SERVICES, back page this section ➔

Tax increases remain at heart of budget impasse

Fundamental difference stymies

The Associated Press

RICHMOND — A fundamental philosophical difference over taxes is at the heart of legislators' failure to make any meaningful progress toward a budget compromise in nearly a week of testy, off-and-on

negotiations. The Senate insists on pumping an additional \$4 billion over two years into its \$61.5 billion budget to meet long-neglected state obligations in public education, transportation and other services. The mix features sales and income tax increases.

The House of Delegates steadfastly opposes general tax increases, preferring

to balance its \$58 billion budget with revenue from economic growth, an assortment of fee increases and repealing various sales tax exemptions.

"The divide is so great and the chasm so enormous that they cannot find room for compromise," said University of Virginia political analyst Larry Sabato. "This is very un-Virginian. Even

during the entire two-party competitive era that began in 1969, the parties have always worked together, the House and Senate have worked together."

The lone exception was 2001, when a deadlock over the pace of car tax relief prompted lawmakers to adjourn without making mid-term adjustments to the two-year budget.

Americans using less water

USA Today

Efforts to conserve water — from low-flush toilets to more efficient power plants and crop irrigation — are working so well that Americans use less of it than they did 30 years ago, a report issued Thursday by the federal government says.

The flat trend in con-



sumption came even as the United States' population grew and electricity production, the largest user of water, increased.

The study from the U.S. Geological Survey says consumption is largely unchanged since 1985 and is 25 percent less than the 1970s, when it peaked.

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