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Cobb & State

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Marietta artist Stanford Ashcraft prepares to hang the final pieces of his new series entitled 'Idyll Game' inside the 2 Rules Fine Art Gallery in downtown Marietta. Ashcraft uses oils and acrylic paints applied with differently shaped razor blades to add a unique, storybook quality to his paintings. The exhibit opens with a reception today from 5 to 9 p.m. and will run through Aug. 24 at the gallery at 85 Church St.

STATE OF THE ART

Local man paints series with razor blades

By Rachel Miller
rmiller@mdjonline.com

MARIETTA — A new art exhibit opening in time for tonight's Art Walk will link the game of chess with the emotions associated with power and defeat. "Idyll Game" is Stanford Ashcraft's latest collection and will be presented at tonight's opening from 5 to 9 p.m. at 2 Rules Fine Art gallery at 85 Church St. off the Square.

All of the works are painted using only razor blades. Each work takes 20 to 40 hours to complete, depending on the size and detail, Ashcraft said.

Gallery founder Lois Rule said at least 21 paintings will be displayed, ranging in price from \$300 to \$1,000.

Cutting edge
Ashcraft said his desire to start creating abstract pieces 10 years ago caused him to hunt for a tool that could be used to apply various textures.

Ashcraft said he had razors from his work at a print shop. The straight edges, of various sizes and types, are used to add layer upon layer of oils and acrylic to the canvas.

Ashcraft said the process allows for a truer color than brushes, which mix paint hues together.

Ashcraft said he has never cut himself or the canvas, and that his technique has evolved. "It is getting faster and freer," he said.



Above: Chess pieces are featured throughout Ashcraft's new series, 'Idyll Game,' displayed at the 2 Rules Fine Art Gallery in downtown Marietta. **Below:** Ashcraft's use of color applied with razor blades offers a unique look.

A dream
Along the walls of the 2 Rules Fine Art gallery, each canvas is covered with deep blues, vibrant purples, dark greens and hints of pink. The serene nature of each image lulls the viewer into a calm dream-like state. Ashcraft's works include many

architectural components, like medieval archways and stone walls, and almost every scene has an outside setting with small pops of color, such as flowers and butterflies. Every painting frames a person or two that are the characters of that particular story. Rule said it is like the viewer is drawn into the complex world Ashcraft creates.

Rule said her gallery had a previous show by Ashcraft in October 2011 and that patrons commented on the use of color and the magical quality of his work.

Local gallery
Promotions by the gallery said Ashcraft's latest show is a mix of surrealist influences and classic storybooks. **See Paints, Page 3B**



Common Core math textbook issue continues to stir discussion

Concern about whether the Cobb school board should use Common Core textbooks or choose another option continues to stir discussion. Following is some of the feedback after this column ran comments from a "Concerned Educator in Cobb" emphasizing the need for an up-to-date mathematics textbook versus Chairman Randy Scamihorn's focus on greater use of online resources. (Among other things, the educator suggested the school board go back to the classroom and give the lesson for the day.)

Cobb School Advocate: Amen, well written by a classroom teacher who truly cares about education Cobb's students! OK, Glover street, stand up for your stakeholders and let the ex-Tea Party folks hoot elsewhere!

A Concerned Former Educator in Cobb: (1) Unlike social studies, mathematics is a pretty stable field. The same mathematical principles and systems have been used for quite some time, so there's nothing in a brand-new textbook that

can't be found in the old textbooks already owned by the system. An "up-to-date" text is pretty much irrelevant to math. And having seen the changes in textbooks over the many years I taught. Each round of new textbooks brought more graphics, more colors, bigger type, and less information than the textbook before. After witnessing first hand the continual "dumbing down" of textbooks, I suspect students will benefit from sticking with older textbooks rather

than going to newer books. (2) I've heard some teachers assert that the old textbooks are falling apart and can't be used. If that's the case, then the teachers haven't done their jobs well: at the end of each semester, teachers are supposed to take up textbooks, evaluate the condition of those books, and charge students for any damages incurred. Those funds can be used to re-bind and/or repair textbooks. And again, speaking from experience, I am certain that the vast majority of those textbooks are still quite useable, even though they may not be as bright, shiny, and col-

orful as a brand new book. **Guido Sarducci:** Maybe the problem is that we are too worried about the kids passing some test and not concerned enough about them learning math. The last time I looked, we were not teaching multiplication tables, long division or very much about fractions, etc. Maybe we have teachers who need a book to teach math because they don't comprehend it themselves. Come on folks, math has not changed. If we are teaching kids in the 8th grade, what we used to teach them in the 9th grade, then use 9th grade books. Throwing money at the

problem of inadequate math comprehension is not the answer. **Anonymous:** Parsimonious Cobb parents give their kids the education they deserve. But that's okay. The world needs ditch diggers, too. **Resource:** The teacher gets it. Scamihorn doesn't. School starts in less than 45 days. Scamihorn's delay means that children and teachers will not have math resources when school begins. Shameful. **To the board!** Listen to the concerned educator! dmckee9613@aol.com



Don McKee
COLUMBIST

Kennesaw leader to meet first lady for 'Let's Move!'

By Megan Thornton
mthornton@mdjonline.com

KENNESAW — Next week, Kennesaw City Councilwoman Cris Welsh will join 100 other city leaders from throughout the country to meet with first lady Michelle Obama at the White House to celebrate cities that have succeeded in addressing the fitness and health needs of their residents. Welsh will spend Tuesday and Wednesday in Washington, D.C., meeting with the first lady and participating in a focus group with 20 other city leaders.

The focus group will be led by Kathleen Schellus, secretary for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and is aimed at discussing how cities can better implement the National League of Cities "Let's Move! Cities, Towns and Counties" campaign to combat childhood obesity, a major component of the first lady's "Let's Move!" comprehensive nationwide health initiative launched in 2010.

Welsh said she was notified of the invitation via email a couple of weeks ago and was told last week she could invite another city

leader to accompany her. She chose Jeff Drobney, Kennesaw's assistant city manager, because she said he's the "biggest champion on city staff" for the cause. The council approved Welsh's request for attendance at its Monday meeting and voted to pay for her two-night hotel stay for \$398.

After filling out paperwork for White House security clearance and cancelling a family trip to Mexico, Welsh said the prospect of talking with the first lady about Kennesaw wellness initiatives is still a bit unreal.

"I can't wait," she said. "This is such a great opportunity for our city to be recognized for all the hard work we do." Welsh actively volunteers with Fit City Kennesaw, a city-wide initiative launched in 2012 to address the increasing rate of obesity and concerns over the health of Kennesaw residents. The goal of the program is to help children, teens and adults become more active through organized physical activities and other health-related programs, including free workout classes and trail runs.

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Cris Welsh



Michelle Obama

See Move!, Page 3B

Prosecutors: Atlanta rapper's death was murder-for-hire plot

By Kate Brumback
Associated Press Writer

ATLANTA — An Atlanta rapper was shot dead in a car outside a hospital where his fiancée was due to give birth in what prosecutors say was an elaborate murder-for-hire plot involving gang members, a former Russian mobster and a basketball star.

Melvin Vernell III — known as Lil Phat — was killed after he stole 10 pounds of marijuana, prosecutors said. They've indicted five people in the plot, including another rapper they say belongs to an Alabama-based gang, a former Russian mafia member turned informant and a college basketball standout from California.

Vernell, 19, stole the drugs from Decensae

Xavier White, a San Francisco State University point guard also known as Griz, and Gary Bradford, a rapper who goes by El Donato Red, prosecutors said. Angry and seeking revenge, the pair hired Deandre Washington and Maurice DeWayne Conner to kill Vernell for \$10,000, prosecutors said.

Washington and Conner were able to find Vernell at the hospital on the outskirts of Atlanta using GPS coordinates given to them by

White and Bradford, who had gotten the information from Mani Chulpaev, who runs a business leasing expensive luxury cars and had rented out the car Vernell was driving the day he died, prosecutors said.

See Plot, Page 3B

Obituaries

DEATH NOTICES

ALEXANDER, Betty Jean 78. Acworth, died Thursday. Funeral service: 4 p.m., Saturday at Davis-Strumpf Chapel, Austell.

OBITUARIES

MERRITT, Stella Louise



Stella Louise Merritt, 64, passed away in Tulsa, Okla. early Sunday morning June 30 at the Cancer Treatment Center after a lengthy battle with a rare form of ovarian cancer. Stella was born December 26, 1948, and was a life-long resident of Cobb County. She was a graduate of Sprayberry High School and the University of Georgia. Stella is preceded in death by her father and mother, Wade Hampton and Lottie Merritt; brothers, Danny Merritt and David Merritt; and sister, Linda Merritt. Stella is survived by her son, Bradford Merritt; brother, Tommie Merritt (Rebecca) Merritt of Jasper, Ga., and Jerry (Faye) Merritt of Mayville, Ky.; sister, Margaret Ann Keheley of Marietta, Ga.; dear friend, Don Crawford as well as numerous nieces, nephews and cousins. Funeral services will be at 4 p.m. on Saturday, July 6, 2013, at Harmony Grove Baptist Church. Burial will follow at Harmony Grove Baptist Church. Visitation will be on Friday at Northside Chapel in Roswell, Ga. from 4 to 9 p.m. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Autism Speaks, 1 East 33rd Street, 4th Floor, New York, NY 10016 or donate@autismspeaks.org.

Express condolences at mdjonline.com

SCHATZ, Andreas Frank Andreas Frank Schatz, age 47, of Marietta, passed away. Survivors include his wife, Marsha Schatz; father, Frank and Ulrike Schatz; mother, Gisela and Alan Cupples; children, Katarina Schatz and Erik Schatz. Memorial services will be held Saturday, July 6 at 12 p.m. at Ingram Funeral Home with the Rev. Ted Miller officiating. The family will receive friends on Saturday at 11 a.m. Born in Darmstadt, Germany. Andy was known for his love and passion for coaching youth sports. He had a huge heart for every player he coached in both soccer and volleyball. His love for his children, Kat and Erik was all that superseded his love for his players. He will be dearly missed by all whose lives he touched. Ingram Funeral Home and Crematory in Cumming is in charge of arrangements. Condolences may be made at www.ingramfuneralhome.com. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Ingram Funeral Home to offset funeral expenses.

INGRAM FUNERAL HOME & CREMATORY

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Paints

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Rule said she founded 2 Rules Fine Art in 2011 with the goal of offering "art you need to know about."

Rule said this means shows presented at the gallery should be innovative in technique, presentation or design.

"We especially like to

include artists that create fine art through commercial processes such as printmaking, screen printing, photography, graphic design, metalwork, ceramics, glass blowing and wood turning," Rule said.

Ashcraft, who has lived in Marietta for the past 14 years, said Georgia offers a rich culture, and displaying his art near the Square draws a unique mix of suburban and downtown crowds.

Move!

Continued from Page 1B

While in D.C., Welsh said she hopes to emphasize to "Let's Move!" leaders the online tools and metrics put in place have helped her explain to others more about the goal of Fit City Kennesaw. For example, the city was awarded medals earlier this year for reaching different health and wellness goals through the program.

"It helps me and makes it so I can talk with people about these different areas we're working on," she said.

She also hopes to share her experiences with Kennesaw's Kilometer Kids program, a 12-week program sponsored by the Atlanta

Track Club that provides running coaches for local children twice a week at Swift-Cantrell Park.

The program has about 148 runners, who will end the run by running in the Run for Wounded Heroes on Aug. 4, part of the Kennesaw Grand Prix 5K Series. The program costs \$25, which pays for the race registration.

"When I originally ran for office, I wanted to get people involved in fitness," she said. "A huge part of that mission has been led by our 27 volunteer coaches who love doing it and always show up."

For more information on the Fit City Kennesaw and Kilometer Kids programs, visit www.fitcitykennesaw.org or www.kilometerkids.org.

Plot

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Defense attorneys flatly deny that version of events. At the June 13 bond hearing for four of the five men accused in Vernell's death, prosecutor Sheila Ross and defense attorneys painted dramatically different portraits of the men accused in the case.

Chulpayev, 38, was convicted in the late 1990s on charges related to his involvement in a Russian organized crime and then became an FBI informant, his original lawyer in the current case, George Plumides, said.

Plumides said ABC News in May that Chulpayev's FBI handler asked for and received from Chulpayev gifts of cash, jewelry, tickets to sporting events, hotel rooms and the use of luxury cars.

The FBI's Atlanta field office has said the agency took immediate action to address those accusations and that the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General had initiated an investigation.

Plumides, who withdrew from the case after Chulpayev's June 13 bond hearing after prosecutors objected to a perceived conflict, said the FBI agent tried to keep local police investigating Vernell's death away from Chulpayev. But that actually complicated things for him because Chulpayev was eager to talk to police to clear his name in the matter and offered multiple times to take a lie detector test, Plumides said.

Chulpayev rented out his luxury cars and had GPS trackers on them so he can repress the car quickly if the person failed to make a payment, Plumides said. Getting such expensive cars requires capital, and White had invested in Chulpayev's business, which is how White had the tracking information — not because Chulpayev gave it to him to kill Vernell, Plumides said.

Vernell had leased six cars from Chulpayev over an 18-month period, Plumides said. "Why would you kill the goose that laid the golden egg?" Plumides asked during the bond hearing.



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Cities celebrate independence

By Colleen Long Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — The Statue of Liberty reopened on the Fourth of July, eight months after Superstorm Sandy shattered the national symbol of freedom, as Americans around the country celebrated with fireworks and parades and President Obama urged citizens to live up to the words of the Declaration of Independence.

Hundreds lined up Thursday to be among the first to board boats destined for Lady Liberty, including New Yorker Heather Leykam and her family.

"This to us, Liberty Island, is really about a rebirth," said Leykam, whose mother's home was destroyed during the storm. "It is a sense of renewal for the city and the country. We wouldn't have missed it for the world."

Nationwide, Boston prepared to host its first large gathering since the marathon bombing that killed three and injured hundreds, and Philadelphia, Washington and New Orleans geared up for large holiday concerts. A Civil War re-enactment commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg drew as many as 40,000 people to Pennsylvania. In Arizona, sober tributes were planned for 19 firefighters who died this week battling a blaze near Yarnell.

Interior Secretary Sally Jewell, speaking at the reopening of the Statue of Liberty, choked up as she told the crowd she was wearing a purple ribbon in memory of the fallen firefighters.

"Nineteen firefighters lost their lives in the line of duty, and as a nation stands together," she said through tears.

The island was decorated with star-spangled bunting, but portions remain blocked off with large construction equipment, and the main ferry dock was boarded up.

Man eats 69 hot dogs to win July 4 contest

By Nick Divoito Associated Press Writer

NEW YORK — Joey Chestnut downed 69 franks and devoured his own record in the men's Fourth of July hot dog eating contest while Sonya Thomas defended her title in the women's competition.

The San Jose, Calif., man known as 'Jaws' ate one more wiener than his previous record to capture the mustard-yellow champion's belt. He said afterward that he was motivated by the prestige, not the \$10,000 prize money.

"I do this for nothing," he said.

Thomas, a 100-pound dynamo known as the "Black Widow" of competitive eating, wolfed down nearly 37 wieners to narrowly eke out her own victory.

Chestnut, 29, is a seven-time winner who set the old record — 68 hot dogs and buns in 10 minutes — in 2009 and tied it last year.



The Associated Press Joey Chestnut wins the Nathan's Famous Fourth of July International Hot Dog Eating contest at Coney Island on Thursday.

Thomas, 45, powered through 45 dogs to take the women's championship last year and also won in 2011, the first year women competed separately.

Chestnut, who weighs 210 pounds, had said his pace was uneven in the past, but "this year I'm trying to eat a little more gracefully, conserve my energy."

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