



Top Stories

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Featured story

Annie Awards for animation Sunday; Wikinews will be there

The International Animated Film Association will hand out animation's highest honors, the Annie Awards in Glendale, California this Sunday. Cars, Happy Feet, and Monster House, Open Season and Over The Hedge are vying for the top prize - best animated feature.

Wikipedia Current Events

•A fire in a detention centre for illegal immigrants in Yeosu, South Korea kills at nine foreign nationals and injures 17.

•Rakhat Aliyev, son-in-law of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev and First Vice Foreign Minister, is demoted to

Wikipedia Current Events

ambassador to Austria for the second time amid accusations he stole money from Nurbank bank and alleged involvement in the kidnapping and murdering of two Nurbank officials.

•A top aide to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has been suspended from her job for six months while a corruption inquiry is conducted, officials say.

Teacher arrested after using drugs in front of 4th grade class

Joan M. Donatelli, 59, a substitute teacher was arrested after 2 female students, a 10 year-old and a 9 year-old, in her 4th grade class at Lew-Port school in Lewiston, New York witnessed her using cocaine at her desk on February 1, 2007.

According to Lewiston police Sgt. Frank J. Previte, at least 2 students saw Donatelli use the end of at least 2 pen caps to "repeatedly" scoop cocaine out of the green colored bag and inhale the drug into her nose, while she was teaching the class. The 2 students were sitting no less than 5 feet from the teacher's desk at the time of the incident.

The children who reported the incident are being called "credible."

"First of all their candor, their account of everything in stating what they saw. They were very specific about the color of the bag, the color of the pencaps that were used, which all again, we were able

to back up," added Previte.

Previte also stated that Donatelli admitted to using the drug only after police searched the classroom and found trace amounts of cocaine on her desk. Donatelli then got rid of the evidence and drugs by throwing the items out in a trash bin inside a bathroom.

"She stated that she had a problem, that she has an addiction, something she's been struggling with," stated Previte.

The superintendent of Lewiston-Porter Central Schools, Don Rappold, sent a letter home to parents of the students saying:

"On Thursday, February 1, 2007, it was reported that a substitute teacher in your child's classroom may have a substance abuse problem. This letter is to inform you that the Lewiston-Porter School District responded to the report by advising the police. The matter is now under investigation, and the District is fully cooperating with the authorities. Pending the outcome of the investigation, the substitute teacher has been prohibited from being on our campus."

Donatelli is being charged with at least 2 counts of endangering the welfare of children and seventh-degree, criminal possession of an illegal substance. She is expected to appear in the Lewiston Town Court on February 21, 2007. More counts of endangering the welfare of children may be added, but only after police can confirm that other

students in the class witnessed the incident.

Senator Obama announces presidential candidacy

Junior Illinois Senator Barack Obama officially announced his presidential candidacy, today, in Springfield, Illinois. Obama's speech was given from the same spot that Abraham Lincoln gave his "House divided" speech over 125 years ago and from the place where he began his elected career 10 years ago.

Obama is the second major Democrat to announce his candidacy, after New York Senator Hillary Clinton. If elected Obama would be the US's first African American President.

Obama placed topics such as healthcare reform, ending poverty, re-building labor unions, energy independence, repairing the US's global image, and the Iraq War in the context of generational change. Obama's spoke against retaining troops in Iraq, saying that "all of this cannot come to pass until we bring an end to this war in Iraq . . . America, it's time to start bringing our troops home. It's time to admit that no amount of American lives can resolve the political disagreement that lies at the heart of someone else's civil war."

The announcement kicks off a weekend of rallies and events that will take Obama from Springfield to Iowa and then on to Chicago before he wraps up Monday in New Hampshire.

Obama broke onto the national scene with his popular speech at the Democratic National Convention. Born in Hawaii, Obama graduated from Columbia University before receiving his JD from Harvard Law School. In 1996

Obama was elected to the Illinois Senate, before rising to his current position in the US Senate in 2004.

Putin blasts US foreign policy

Russian President Vladimir Putin heavily criticized the United States in a speech at the 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy Saturday for what he called its "almost uncontained" use of force in the world.

Putin also criticized US plans for missile defense systems and NATO's expansion.

Putin said: "[nations] are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force in international relations."

The Russian President said that only the UN, and not the EU or NATO, can sanction the legitimate use of force. "One state, the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way."

Putin stated that the "excessive use of force" showed a lack of capacity for "complex solutions".

"This is very dangerous. Nobody feels secure anymore because nobody can hide behind international law," he said, speaking through a translator. "This is nourishing an arms race with the desire of countries to get nuclear weapons," he told the 250 officials, including more than 40 defense and foreign ministers.

Speaking about the US missile defense system, possibly to be deployed in Poland and the Czech Republic, he stated that Washington's reasons for the system weren't plausible. Even such problem states like North Korea would not be able to build any missile in a foreseeable time

necessitating such a defensive measure. "One state, the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way." —Russian President, Vladimir Putin

Vladimir Putin also stated his doubts about the United States' willingness to really go ahead with disarmament. He said that Russia was strictly adhering to the agreement to destroy thousands of strategic nuclear weapons until the end of 2012. He also said, he hoped the partner was acting in an equally transparent manner and would not keep a few hundred warheads for "bad times".

The Munich Conference on Security Policy, founded in 1962, is an international forum composed of more than 250 leading politicians, diplomats, military officials, members of the business community, academics and public figures from more than 40 countries. It has become an annual opportunity for world leaders to discuss the most pressing issues of the day.

Belgrade hospital refuses to return baby to mother

The Belgrade Neonatology Institute has refused to hand over a child to her mother, after she was unable to pay her medical bills.

Macedonian Senija Roganovic, who has no health insurance of any kind and cannot come up with the money for the bill, gave birth to the baby two months ago at and owes US\$8,290.91 in hospital bills.

20-year old Roganovic has been sedated for the past two months and has lost 30 pounds of weight, possibly due to anxiety over what might happen to her child. During this period the hospital only let her see the baby once and she was not allowed to breast-feed her son.

On the 7th of February, Roganovic told her story to a journalist from the daily paper Kurir. After media reports the following day, the hospital finally let the baby go yesterday.

Drug addicts used in police training

A training program in which officers observe volunteers who may be high on drugs, and is used in 30 U.S. states, has the Edmonton Police Service and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in a public relations nightmare.

Acting police chief Mike Bradshaw says "the training is meant to help police officers identify how people behave when they are on drugs."

Bradshaw is also quoted saying police did not provide the men and women - some of them prostitutes - with any drugs during a training session in December.

Cpl. Wayne Oakes of the RCMP clarified the issue of who gave the volunteers the drugs, claiming the police officers were not even present when the drugs were administered, the volunteers used their own drugs.

Bradshaw says the police asked the Metis society to provided the nine volunteers, however not all of them were aboriginal. They may or may not have been high during the session.

The volunteers were anonymous and were not promised anything in return for their participation.

An internal investigation has been launched into the program because of one complaint -- not from any of the volunteers -- although police said that's a standard procedure.

Recovery plan for New Orleans to be ratified

In a community congress in January, residents of the devastated city of New Orleans offered their support for a sweeping plan to rebuild the city, its districts and its neighborhoods. The "Unified New Orleans Plan" is a multi-faceted document that incorporates a number of different recovery planning efforts, including federal infrastructure plans and specific small-scale blueprints developed by individual neighborhoods.

Residents overwhelmingly approved the comprehensive recovery and rebuilding plan, which is expected to be reviewed and ratified by the city in February. The plan offers incentives for raising houses.

Concerns have been raised over whether some of the hard lessons taught by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have been learnt. The Washington Post reports that some residents are beginning to rebuild their homes in the same vulnerable floodplains that in Fall 2005 were under 10 to 20 feet of water.

Despite the threat, a surprising amount of the new development in New Orleans is being built without raised foundations.

Mayor C. Ray Nagin has been a proponent of allowing people to return to their old neighborhoods, even if they are particularly vulnerable. But as rebuilding continues, planning officials recognize that encouraging people to return to susceptible floodplains could pose another big problem down the road.

The Bush administration wants to dedicate 3.1 billion dollars to the repairs of flood defences.

According to a study by the Rand Corporation in three years the city

will have a population of only 275,000 compared to 465,000 inhabitants before Hurricane Katrina.

The disaster also brings the unique opportunity for modernization. Ecological activist organizations have been writing green guidelines for New Orleans schools that the Louisiana Recovery Authority wants to incorporate into its plan. In American history, the challenge to rebuild vast swaths of a city is comparable to the great Chicago Fire of 1871 and the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Both projects were much further along in their recovery 18 months after the tragedy than New Orleans is today.

Alarm sounded over US honey bee die-off

Honey-bee decline has accelerated in North America beyond the steady attrition of the past 25 years according to scientists and farmers. A relatively new term - "Colony Collapse Disorder" is being used to describe this poorly understood phenomenon.

Colony Collapse Disorder (or CCD) is a syndrome evidenced by massive die-off affecting an entire insect population. The cause of the syndrome is not yet well understood. CCD may be caused by mites or associated diseases or unknown pathogens. CCD is possibly linked to pesticide use though several studies have found no common environmental factors between unrelated outbreaks studied. According to Dennis vanEngelsdorp, a bee specialist with the Pennsylvania State Department of Agriculture, "We are pretty sure, but not certain, that it is a contagious disease."

Honey-bees are responsible for approximately one third of the

United States crop pollination including such species as: peaches, soybeans, apples, pears, pumpkins, cucumbers, cherries, raspberries, blackberries and strawberries.

From 1971 to 2006 approximately one half of the U.S. honey-bee colonies have vanished, but the rate of attrition reached new proportions in the year 2006, which were alarming to many farmers and honey-bee scientists.

At least eleven different states as well as portions of Canada are known to have been affected by colony collapse disorder. The disorder has been identified in a geographically diverse group of states including Georgia, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and California. In some states the loss of honey-bee colonies is estimated as high as 75 percent of the population.

The phenomenon is particularly important for crops such as almond growing in California, where honey-bees are the predominant pollinator and the crop value is \$US 1.5 billion. Total U.S. crops that are wholly dependent on the honey-bee are known to exceed \$US 15 billion.

In a related development on January 17, 2007, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has drastically tightened use rules on some of the chief pesticides used on apples, blueberries, grapes, peaches, pears and other fruits pollenized by honey-bees. Citing general environmental protection and farmworker safety, the EPA recently announced the tightening of use or phaseout of the highly toxic pesticides phosmet and Azinphos methyl. Under these rule changes the use of these organophosphate pesticide would be allowed continued use for five years but have somewhat reduced

dosage limits. Azinphos methyl is a dangerous neurotoxin derived from nerve agents used during World War II.

Today in History

1808 - Anthracite coal was first experimentally burned as a residential heating fuel by Jesse Fell in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.
 1919 - Friedrich Ebert became the first Reichspräsident of the Weimar Republic.

1929 - The first Lateran treaty was signed, establishing Vatican City as an independent sovereign enclave within Italy.

1971 - Eighty-seven countries signed the Seabed Arms Control Treaty, outlawing weapons of mass destruction on the ocean floor in international waters.

1979 - Iranian Revolution: Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini seized power in Iran, and eventually became the Supreme Leader of the Islamic republic.

February 11 is National Foundation Day in Japan

Quote of the Day

Even if we accept, as the basic tenet of true democracy, that one moron is equal to one genius, is it necessary to go a further step and hold that two morons are better than one genius?

~ Leó Szilárd

Word of the Day

docile; adj

1. Ready to accept instruction or direction.
2. Yielding to control or supervision, direction, or management; tractable.

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