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Decatur struggles to mend rift



UNITED FRONT Many local residents joined the Rev. Jesse Jackson on his march to protest the expulsion of six Decatur high school students.

In the wake of expulsion controversy, community leaders and residents unsure of what's in store for city.

By TONY REID
Staff Writer

DECATUR — As the dust settles in the battle over the expulsion of a group of students from Decatur schools, a question hangs in the air:

Now what, Decatur? The crisis was thrown into the national spotlight by the Rev. Jesse Jackson's dramatic intervention. And many say the controversy has caused — or simply revealed — a deep fracture in the community.

But the question of how to fix it, of how to safeguard the future, is a debate that likely

will reach far into the new millennium. In the expulsion controversy, there are two distinct camps.

Standing on one side are those who support the Decatur school board in its decision to expel the students. They say having safe schools is the central issue, and racism has nothing to do with it. The group is made up mostly of whites.

On the other side is a group made up mostly of African-Americans, who point to a predominantly white school board handing out heavy punishments to African-American

RIFT Continued on A5

Quick Take

Illinois scores 3rd straight win

Frank Williams scored 20 points and Lucas Johnson added 14 Saturday night as No. 22 Illinois rolled to an 81-48 victory over Kansas State for its third straight win.

Stars shine early

Today at 2 p.m. WNBA stars Lisa Leslie, Chamique Holdclaw, Dawn Staley and other members of the USA Basketball Women's Senior National Team will take on the 17th-ranked Fighting Illini in an exhibition game.

Sports / E1

The stockings were hung ...

While yuletide decorating fads come and go, the stocking has long been a traditional staple when it comes to decking the halls.

Home / E1

Costly convenience?

More Americans are turning to payday loans to meet their short-term cash needs, but some critics warn that too many are quickly ending up in debt.

Business / D1

Lottery

Here are the winning numbers selected Saturday:

- Pick Three-Midday: 1-5-2
- Pick Three-Evening: 1-4-1
- Pick Four-Midday: 9-6-4-6
- Pick Four-Evening: 5-6-2-0
- Lotto: 01-02-05-16-46-52
- Lotto jackpot: \$7 million
- Big Game jackpot: \$19 million

Weather

■ Today: Showers. High 45.
■ Tonight: Light showers. Low 32.

Details / B6

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TOASTING THE NEW YEAR



STOCKING UP: Brad Wright, assistant manager at Famous Liquor in Decatur, has stocked up on Dom Perignon, Moët & Chandon and White Star champagnes for the 2000 New Year's celebration. The Dom Perignon sells for \$129.99 a bottle.

Millennium zeal bubbles over into wine sales

Anticipating a high demand, liquor stores stock up on champagne, but warn parties to buy early

By SUSAN REID
Staff Writer

DECATUR — Revelers who are particular about the bubbly tickling their taste on New Year's Eve should buy now.

"I think there will be a good majority of people drinking champagne this year who normally don't drink or do anything, just due to the millennium," said Troy Spencer, store manager at Cardinal Liquor in Mount Zion. "People should plan ahead for it because things are in such short supply for us. Once we run out of it, it's gone."

Expensive French varieties produced in limited quantities

A little wine wisdom

Here are some facts about champagne and sparkling wines:

- In 1997, Illinois residents consumed 1.1 million gallons of champagne and sparkling wine, second only to California, whose residents consumed 7.4 million gallons.
- A cork can exit a champagne bottle at 62 mph.
- It is believed there are 41 million bubbles in one bottle.
- Cincinnati was the first

producer of sparkling wine in America in 1847, followed by California in 1855 and New York in 1863.

■ It's been said Marilyn Monroe favored a champagne bath.

■ Champagne can be stored for a short period of time, but it's meant to be consumed when purchased.

■ The classic champagne style is Brut, which is also the driest. Extra-dry is less dry than Brut. Sec is sweet, and Demi Sec is even sweeter.

Sources: Domiane Chandon Restaurant and the Wine Institute

year. The United States is expected to receive 20 percent more than the 17 million bottles shipped in 1998.

Shipments of U.S. sparkling wines, most of which are produced in California, were up 30 percent through the end of September compared to the same time last year, according to the Wine Institute. That number will continue to climb since 38 percent of sales are made in the last nine weeks of the year.

Despite the increase in demand, price has stayed about the same as last year, retailers and distributors say. They hope to make many people's first experience with champagne pleasant as they buy more before the next millennium.

"Everyone from supplier to

CHAMPAGNE Continued on A5

Army urges discharge of gay reservist

Investigation begins after lieutenant reveals his sexual orientation while on the job.

PHOENIX (AP) — A military investigator is recommending the Army discharge a reserve lieutenant who revealed his sexual orientation while on the job as a state law-maker.

Army officials began investigating Lt. Steve May after he discussed his homosexuality during a legislative hearing in February. May was a civilian at the time, but was recalled to active duty a few weeks later.

"It appears the immediate commander has not an option but to recommend initiation of a separation action to higher headquarters," the investigator, Maj. Eileen Norton, wrote in her report. The report is part of May's confidential personnel file, which he released to The Associated Press.

Nevertheless, Norton recommended May's commanders consider his performance — he was rated an exceptional officer with an unblemished career — when deciding whether to recommend retaining or dismissing him.

In a sworn statement for the investigation, Capt. Stephen Sherbondy supported his officer, saying: "May's performance as an officer under my command has been nothing less than outstanding since he joined the unit."

Under Department of Defense regulations, homosexuals are not allowed to serve in the armed forces. The military's "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" policy is designed only to prevent it from seeking out such information.

May's commanding general will decide whether to call a separation hearing board of three senior officers. If the board votes to discharge May, the decision would have to be approved by the secretary of the Army. That process could take several months.

In the meantime, May, 35, is being considered for promotion to captain.

"I'm physically fit, mentally fit, an outstanding officer and they're kicking me out," May said.

Yo quiero Taco Bell?

Chihuahua survives wild ride that ends in the restaurant's parking lot

CORVALLIS, Ore. (AP) — After his Jeep was rear-ended in the parking lot of a Taco Bell, Tinker Melonk stepped out to have a word with the driver of the offending Chrysler.

In the driver's seat was a Chihuahua named Mr. Chips, one paw on the wheel. The dog had just had a wild ride, with the car careening across five lanes of traffic from a nearby McDonald's.

"I said to myself, if this dog's mouth moves, I'm getting out of here," said Melonk, a Baptist pastor.

Taco Bell, after all, has commercials fea-

turing a pointy-eared, pint-sized, Spanish-speaking Chihuahua named Dinky. Its signature phrase, "Yo quiero Taco Bell," means "I want Taco Bell."

All Connie Sims wanted was her dog back. The strange ride started Thursday when the 77-year-old Corvallis woman stopped at the McDonald's to buy her pooch some McNuggets.

When she stepped part way out of her car to pay for her order, her foot slipped off the brake. The Chrysler, with Mr. Chips in the front seat, took off without her.

Mr. Chips

Chrysler, with Mr. Chips in the front seat, took off without her.

POPS GOES THE HOLIDAY



HERALD & REVIEW/PHIL JACKSON
Central Illinois / B1

EVERYBODY SING:

Erin Kurecki, 3, urges a crowd of almost 2,000 to sing along as musical director Michael Luxner conducts the Millin-Decatur Symphony Orchestra during the Holiday Symphony Pops Concert at the Kirkland Fine Arts Center Saturday.

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