

# Herald & Review

Serving Central Illinois Since 1873

Friday  
November 19, 1999  
Decatur, Illinois

## Quick Take

1999  
UNITED WAY  
CAMPAIGN

Victory!  
Central Illinois / A3

## Peer group



Champaign-Urbana's Sinfonia da Camera is reuniting Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" with the score by Edvard Grieg that has overshadowed it for more than a century.

Lifestyle / D1

## Open house

Students show visitors how they get a jump-start on college and a career at the Decatur Area Vocational Center open house.

Central Illinois / A3

## Big play man

Meridian fullback Jason Trotter has developed into a game-breaker.

Sports / B1

## Lottery

Here are the winning numbers Thursday in the Illinois State Lottery.

- Pick Three-Midday: 4-4-7
- Pick Three-Evening: 4-0-7
- Pick Four-Midday: 6-0-6-4
- Pick Four-Evening: 0-0-7-9
- Little Lotto: 07-09-12-13-15
- Lotto jackpot: \$2.5 million
- Big Game jackpot: \$10 million

## Weather

■ Today: Rain possible. High 56.  
■ Tonight: Cloudy. Low 36.

Details / B8

## Inside

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countdowns

**43**  
Celebrate 2000

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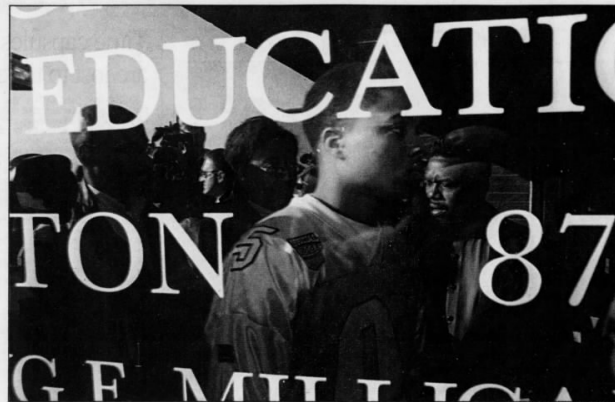
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Our 126th year  
Issue 323 • Four sections



## A step toward school

DECATUR EXPULSIONS



FIRST STEP: Roosevelt Fuller, one of the expelled students, enters the Macdonald Regional Office of Education on Thursday to begin the process of enrolling in an alternative education program. The six students are expected to begin classes on Monday.

## Expelled teens begin enrollment in alternative education

By BRAD MUDD, TOM COLLINS, RON INGRAM, SUSAN REDDY & KEN DICKSON  
H&R Staff Writers

DECATUR — The Rev. Jesse Jackson left Decatur Thursday, but only after taking six students at the center of the expulsion controversy to begin enrolling them in alternative high schools.

Jackson smiled as he brought the students to the Macdonald Regional Office of Education shortly after 9 a.m. Thursday to start the process that should lead to the teen-agers being in alternative education classrooms by Monday morning.

As he did so, Jackson ignored a group of white supremacists who had come to Decatur to confront him.

Later in the day, in Macon County Circuit Court, Circuit Judge Jerry Patton continued a

### Suggestions

Black lawmakers offer their alternatives to "zero tolerance."

### Foundation

Author Sharon Daloz Parks says a firm foundation is vital to a child's development.

### Stories / A4

hearing for a requested temporary restraining order against Jackson, his supporters and the expelled students. The hearing will resume at 10 a.m. Tuesday.

Before agreeing to the continuance, Everett Nicholas, attorney for the Decatur School District, wanted a promise from the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition that there will be no public demonstration.

Continued on A4



Trotter  
Chairman

## Lawmaker denounces school board as 'criminals'

By ANTHONY MASI  
H&R Springfield Bureau Chief

SPRINGFIELD — The Legislative Black Caucus entered the fray Thursday over the case of the expelled Decatur students. One state representative said school board members were "criminals."

Other Black Caucus members charged that the Decatur school

board violated the students' rights by denying them due process before expelling them.

The legislators were vague about the sources of information they relied on for this and other charges. When pressed for specifics, one senator mocked the question and most of the 16 legislators did not answer and walked out of the news conference. As

sources they cited news reports, the students' lawyer, the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow/PUSH Coalition and a radio interview with one expelled student's mother.

State Rep. Monique D. Davis, D-Chicago, noted that the Decatur

CAUCUS

Continued on A4

## Nine killed as bonfire logs collapse

COLLEGE STATION, Texas (AP) — A towering, 48-foot pyramid of logs erected for Texas A&M's traditional football bonfire tumbled and then came roaring down early Thursday, crushing at least 11 students to death and injuring 28 others.

Two people who had been seen trapped in the rubble Thursday afternoon were confirmed dead later during the night. At least four of the injured were in critical condition.

A wave of grief settled over the campus of 45,000, some 90 miles northwest of Houston. Thousands turned out for a memorial service Thursday night, including former President George Bush, whose presidential library is at Texas A&M.

"For the Texas Aggie family and the world, this has been a day of unspeakable grief and sorrow," A&M president Ray Bowen said. "We're all trying to cope with this tremendous loss of life and the pain and suffering."

Rescuers earlier in the day used sensitive sound-detection equipment to listen for moaning or tapping from the enormous pile of collapsed logs, and heard scratching noises that led them to believe there were victims trapped.

Top levels of the structure, which is tiered like a wedding cake, fell off to one side. Workers removing the base level Thursday afternoon were certain there were no bodies in that section, Humphreys said.

Later, school officials said they had accounted for everyone involved in building the bonfire structure.

But the painstaking work was expected to continue into the night as rescuers tried to reach the two people seen in the debris.

"We take it one log at a time," said Ken Bennett, director of a state rescue unit. "They're wired three together in stacks, so we have to cut the wire and move them one at a time. So it's a lengthy process."

Shocked students gathered at the scene, holding hands and praying while the rescue went on. Workers tapped on logs and ordered spectators to be still so they could hear if anyone was still alive.

Texas A&M sophomore Diana Estrada said she was about 200 yards away from the stack when it fell.

"It just tumbled over, and the wires snapped and the lights started sparking and going on and off," she said. "We ran over there as fast as we could, and we could see legs sticking out and hear people screaming."

Officials had no explanation for the collapse and said engineers would examine the site.

Sixty to 70 students were on top of the logs trying to build the stack when it suddenly gave way, university officials said.

"I was dazed. I was kind of

BONFIRE

Continued on A8

## Biotech critics issue call for labels on gene-altered foods

Scientists, experts support industry at FDA hearing.

By PAUL BRINKMANN  
H&R Staff Writer

CHICAGO — Critics of genetically modified food attacked the government's lack of mandatory review for the new science and pleaded for a labeling law on gene-altered food ingredients during a public hearing Thursday.

Scientists, biotech industry representatives and a few consumers expressed faith in genetic manipulation and in the Food and Drug Administration's review process, but public concern was obvious during the hearing at the Metcalf Federal Building in Chicago.

The hearing was the first of three nationwide by the FDA amid growing controversy over biotechnology, the practice of

inserting a gene from one organism into another to derive various benefits. The agency spent most of the day listening to two panels of experts. Later in the afternoon, it heard from about 80 people who were given two-minute periods to speak.

The issue was brought home to Central Illinois agribusiness concerns this summer when Archer Daniels Midland Co. requested farmers separate their genetically altered crops from others. ADM said concerns from overseas consumers prompted the move.

The result has been confusion by many area farmers, who are unsure whether to continue using the genetically altered seed varieties, despite the benefits.

Many critics of the technology said they appreciate the biotech

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## Autumn dry spell could haunt farmers

By RON INGRAM  
H&R Staff Writer  
and The Associated Press

DECATUR — Outdoor enthusiasts are loving it, but Central Illinois farmers are uneasy over the same phenomenon: lots of sunshine and little rain. From the southern tip of the state, which has seen one-third of an inch of rainfall this month, to the north, which has had only a trace, Illinois is experiencing one of the driest autumns on record.

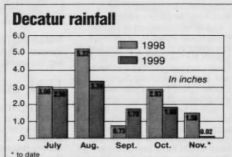
These conditions have prevailed since June, when the Decatur area received above average precipitation of 7.63 inches, said James Angel, state climatologist with the Illinois State Water Survey in Champaign.

Since then, rainfall amounts have been below normal, with the autumn months being especially dry, Angel said. Decatur's rainfall total for September was 1.78 inches, compared with the long-term average of 3.4 inches. October's total was 1.8 inches, compared with 2.79 inches normally.

November's rainfall for Decatur has been 0.02 inches, compared with the normal of 2.87 inches for the entire month, Angel said.

The reason for the lack of moisture is uncertain, Angel said.

"High pressure has been a lot more of a dominant factor in the weather in the last few months,"



\* to date

Source: Illinois State Water Survey

he said. "We've had more sunshine and clear days than normal in Central Illinois as a result."

November is typically one of the cloudiest months, but not this year. Central Illinois has seen very few cloudy days, Angel said.

The same low pressure system that is keeping cold air sitting in Canada instead of moving through Illinois is keeping the moisture away as

DRY

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