

THURSDAY



Joyless joyride

Kidnapped at age 95

—Accent, Page 1C



UA vs. ASU

It's been all Arizona recently

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Ariz. kids' welfare has declined since '80, survey finds

By Mary K. Reinhart

The Arizona Daily Star

PHOENIX — Arizona children are worse off than they were a decade ago, with more than one in five living in poverty, according to a statewide survey released yesterday.

Pima County saw dramatic increases since 1980 in the numbers of children on welfare, child-abuse re-

ports, births to teen-agers and juvenile arrests.

But the county also saw some improvement, with a growing number of women receiving prenatal care and fewer high school students dropping out.

Overall, the KIDS COUNT Factbook showed that nearly all indicators of child welfare in Arizona —

have declined steadily since 1980.

"These numbers put a human face on the chilling facts about child well-being in our state," said Carol Kamin, director of the Children's Action Alliance. "Children have become the front-line casualties in a war where their voices are never heard."

Kamins said the alarming figures are a call to action for policy-

makers in Arizona to invest in programs for children, despite fiscal constraints that might cause some to claim the state can't afford it.

"We believe the far more compelling question is, 'How can we afford not to?'" Kamin said.

An estimated 210,900 Arizona children — or 21.5 percent — are poor and 32,900 of them live in Pima County, the study says. The numbers

are based on the 1990 federal poverty annual income guideline of \$12,780 for a family of four.

Those figures are reflected in increases in state welfare programs. By 1990, one in 12 children lived in families receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or AFDC, one in six received food stamps, and one in five was enrolled in the state's indigent health care program.

Pima County's figures were about average. There was a 68 percent increase since 1980 in the number of children living in AFDC families (one in 12 children), a 33 percent increase in food stamp recipients (one in six), and a 44 percent enrollment increase in the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (one

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Bill restricting bank mergers clears panel

By Walt Nett

The Arizona Daily Star

PHOENIX — A state Senate committee yesterday narrowly approved a bill that would limit the Bank of America-Security Pacific Bank merger in Arizona.

On a 5-4 party-line vote, the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee approved a bill expanding state restraint-of-trade laws to make illegal any bank merger that results in the acquiring bank's holding 30 percent or more of all commercial bank deposits in the state.

The bill, introduced as a strike-amendment by the committee's chairman, Phoenix Democrat Manuel "Lalo" Pata Jr., would exempt "necessary" mergers — which would involve a bank in danger of failing or in receivership.

The legislation mirrors a bill that was approved unanimously Feb. 7 by the House Commerce and Labor Committee of the Washington state Legislature.

Both state measures are known as "bright line" bills — laws that create absolute antitrust standards, rather than allowing regulators to consider market share changes created by a merger against the market as a whole.

The Arizona bill still must be heard by the full Senate. No date has been set for bringing the measure to the floor.

Pata allowed testimony from only three people during the 70-minute hearing — a drawn-out affair in which discussion frequently drifted from antitrust issues to job and

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Nearly flawless

American figure skater Kristi Yamaguchi and her coach Christy Kjaergaard-Ness react to the scores of the nine judges, all of whom placed Yamaguchi first in the original program. Her performance was nearly flawless, unlike those of her rivals Midori Itō of Japan and Tonya Harding of the United States. The final four-minute program will be held tomorrow. Story, Page 1D.

Inflation sinks to 0.1% rate

Housing starts surge for 2nd upbeat note

Completed from wire reports

WASHINGTON (AP) — Consumer prices rose a scant 0.1 percent in January, the government said yesterday, a rate that would translate to less than 1 percent over a year.

In a second upbeat note, the Commerce Department reported that a building surge in the Midwest pushed U.S. housing starts in January to their highest pace since May 1990.

The Labor Department credited falling energy costs and a drop in food prices for the good showing in its Consumer Price Index. But even

★ Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan cites signs of modest recovery, low inflation rate. Page 3B.

excluding the volatile food and energy sectors, prices were up only a moderate 0.3 percent.

"This confirms that inflation pressures are abating," said economist Bruce Steinberg of Merrill Lynch. "I think that will continue to be the picture for all of this year and probably for a chunk of next year as well."

Consumer prices in 1991 rose 3.1 percent, the least in five years. The January increase, if it held steady for 12 months, would result in an annual rate of inflation of just 0.9 percent.

Although economists are not forecasting a performance that good, they do expect inflation to be tame for the whole year.

Inflation generally wanes during periods of economic decline. And it usually does not pick up until recoveries are well under way.

The January price advance, which matched a similarly tiny 0.1 percent rise last July, followed a revised December gain of 0.3 percent. The December increase had originally been reported as 0.3 percent.

The small 0.1 percent January rise in prices reflected the fact that energy costs fell for the first time since last July, by 1.5 percent.

Food prices dropped by 0.4 percent, their first decline since last August. The decline was led by a sharp 7.1 percent fall in the cost of fresh fruits and vegetables, and a 12.4 per-

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Asthma alert

Study indicates overuse of some inhalers is risky

By Jane Erikson

The Arizona Daily Star

Automatics who overuse a widely prescribed type of inhaler are greatly increasing their risk of death, but the drugs are safe and effective when used properly, according to a new study.

Researchers stopped short of saying inhalers that contain any of several drugs called beta-agonists are directly responsible for the increased number of deaths they found in automatics who used them.

Those deaths — 2.6 times more frequent than in automatics not using beta-agonists — may have resulted from asthma itself, the researchers said.

But their report in today's issue of the New England Journal of Medicine warns that any automatic who

uses more than one beta-agonist inhaler a month is probably out of control and needs medical attention. Beta-agonist inhalers are widely prescribed as a first-line treatment for asthma. They are sold in the United States under such trade names as Proventil, Ventolin, Alupent, Brethiner and Maxair.

In a companion editorial in the Journal, Dr. Benjamin Burrows and Michael Lebowitz, the director and the associate director of the Respiratory Sciences Center at the University of Arizona, write that "there should be no fear associated with (the inhalers) continued use as needed to treat or prevent acute (asthma) attacks."

An estimated 10 million Americans suffer from asthma. See ASTHMA, Page 9A

Cut in tax withholding rates could increase state deficit

By Mary K. Reinhart

The Arizona Daily Star

PHOENIX — The state budget deficit — already pegged at \$58 million — could grow by up to \$39 million thanks to President Bush's income-tax withholding plan, state officials say.

Bush's proposal to adjust income-tax withholding tables to boost Americans' take-home pay takes effect March 1. Because Arizona's withholding rates are a percentage of federal rates, the change threatens to take a \$39 million to \$39 million bite out of this year's budget.

"It complicates our trying to come up with a balanced budget," said Sen. Jaime Gutierrez, D-Tucson.

chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "One option is legislation to raise the (state) withholding rates, but that may prove to be somewhat unpopular."

The federal change does not affect the amount of taxes owed to the state or federal government, but because it reduces state tax revenues this year.

Taxpayers will get more out of each paycheck beginning next month, but will repay that amount by either paying more taxes or receiving a smaller refund. So although the state would collect less tax revenue this fiscal year, it would

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WEATHER



What a beauty. Sunny and clear. Northwest winds 10 to 15 mph. Highs from 71 to 76, lows from 41 to 46. Yesterday's high was 72, and the low 40. Arizona's temperature extremes yesterday were 76 in Yuma and 11 in Flagstaff. Details on Page 8A.

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After New Hampshire

The race is on. New Hampshire's vote promises through both national parties, as President Bush vows to meet Pat Buchanan's challenge in every state and Democrats search for campaign breakthroughs. Page 5A.

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House GOP uses Symington hearing in partisan tit for tat

By Kim Kellher

The Arizona Daily Star

WASHINGTON — House Republicans have used today's hearing on allegations against Gov. Pile Symington to successfully demand an investigation into a failed fourth involving Senate Democrats.

The governor's associates said he remains being used as a political "patsy" by Congress, but welcomes the opportunity to rebut allegations of self-dealing as a thrift director and developer.

Symington will appear before a House Banking subcommittee this morning to defend his actions as a former director of failed Southwest Savings and Loan of Phoenix.

The Resolution Trust Corp. the federal agency in charge of the savings and loan cleanup,

has named Symington and 12 other former Southwest directors and principals in a \$219 million lawsuit.

The RTC contends that the directors made risky and speculative real estate loans that violated federal banking regulation, including a \$30 million investment in Symington's Camelback Highlands, a hotel-office-retail complex in Phoenix.

Southwest's failure in February 1989 is estimated to cost taxpayers \$941 million.

Rep. Carroll Hubbard, D-Ky., chairman of the Banking subcommittee on government oversight and investigations, called for the congressional hearing on Southwest in September, citing "extremely serious allegations involving a very high-ranking public official."

But Rep. Bill McCollum of Florida, ranking

Republican on the subcommittee, said yesterday that it would be unfair to investigate a sitting Republican governor without also examining allegations against prominent Democrats.

"That's not an appearance (Hubbard) wants," said McCollum. "I think he's felt a little caught."

McCollum said he will reveal today in his opening statement before the subcommittee that Hubbard has agreed to hold a hearing on ConTrust Savings, of Miami, Fla.

ConTrust's former chairman, David Paul, was a leading Democratic fund-raiser who lobbied Congress against savings and loan regulations in the 1980s and made hundreds of thousands in campaign contributions. His thrift's failure in February 1990 cost taxpayers \$1.2 billion.

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