

NEWS BRIEFS

MOUNT CHARLESTON LODGE PARTNERS 3rd ANNUAL BLOOD DRIVE

Mount Charleston Lodge has partnered with United Blood Services to present the third annual February Blood Drive promotion, which runs through Feb. 28. During this promotion, all donors will receive a \$50 gift certificate good towards Mount Charleston weekday cabin rates. The certificate is valid through July 31 (limit one per family). Organizers expect to give out 2,600 certificates. Mount Charleston is located at the top of the mountain on Highway 157. Those interested in times and locations or to schedule an appointment can call 233-9620. Donors must be at least 17 years old and weigh 110 pounds. It is recommended that they eat well and drink plenty of fluids prior to donating.

SAN FRANCISCO MAYOR HOPES TO START POLICY CENTER

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) - San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown hopes to establish a \$50 million public policy center in his name at the University of California, Berkeley. Brown has joined a group of academics, friends and political supporters to develop what has been tentatively dubbed the Willie Lewis Brown Junior Center for Politics and Public Service. "I want to share everything I know," Brown told the San Francisco Chronicle. Brown is a consummate - and controversial - political operator who also served for 15 years as state Assembly speaker. Bruce Cain, director of the university's Institute of Governmental Studies, confirmed that Berkeley is talking with Brown about the proposed institute. The center would focus on helping students and mid-career professionals study state and local government and hone practical skills they'd need to enact public policy.

ONE OF THE TWO BLACK-OWNED DAILY NEWSPAPERS HAS BEEN SOLD

The "Chicago Defender," one of the two Black-owned daily newspapers in the nation, finally has been sold, ending five years of family conflict and legal negotiations. According to the terms of the sale, Sengstacke Enterprises, owner of the Defender, will sell the paper to Real Time Inc., owned by family-member Thomas Picou. "We have the strategic vision," Picou told reporters. "We fully expect each of these properties to grow, over time, and by our dedicated efforts toward implementing 21st-century management practices." Picou spent more than 30 years at the family-owned Sengstacke Enterprises, which publishes a chain of papers, including the weekly "Michigan Chronicle," "New Pittsburgh Courier" and the Memphis "Tri-State Defender." The papers have a combined weekly circulation of 522,000. The Defender has a readership of about 30,000, but its peak circulation during the 1930s was 300,000. The Defender was founded by Robert S. Abbott and had an initial circulation of 300 copies on May 5, 1905. W.E.B. Du Bois and writer-poet Langston Hughes both worked at Defender early in their careers.

LAWUIT TARGETS MAKER, SELLER OF SNIPER SUSPECTS' GUN

The Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence has filed a lawsuit on behalf of the victims' families against the gun dealer and manufacturer that sold and produced the assault rifle used in the Washington, D.C.-area sniper shootings last fall. The suit, filed in Washington State Superior Court, charges Bulls' Eyes Shooter Supply, in Tacoma, Wash., with negligence for illegally selling a high-powered Bushmaster assault rifle to sniper suspect John Allen Muhammad. Muhammad was legally prohibited from buying this type of firearm. "The assault rifle, which served the snipers' deadly purposes so well, did not fall from the sky into their hands," Dennis Henigan of the Brady Center's Legal Action, project told reporters. "The snipers were aided and abetted by the reckless conduct of a gun shop that mysteriously 'lost' scores of deadly weapons and the manufacturer that supplied high-firepower combat guns to that dealer with no questions asked." The suit claims the firearm mysteriously "disappeared" from the store less than three months after Bull's Eye received it and traveled across the nation to be used in the attacks. The suit further claims that the business keeps shoddy records and fails to report missing guns to federal authorities.

Court avoids juvenile death row case

WASHINGTON (AP) - Four Supreme Court justice want to ban the execution of very young killers, but they apparently cannot persuade their colleagues to reopen the debate.

The high court did not comment in turning down an appeal Monday from an Oklahoma death row inmate who was 17 when he helped burn a young couple alive in the trunk of their car.

Death penalty opponents had hoped the court would use the case to broaden an ongoing review of how the punishment is carried out and who belongs on death row.

The four-member liberal wing of the court knows the time is not right to revisit the question of whether 16- and 17-year-olds are as culpable as adult killers, and know they could be outvoted if the nine-member court took on the issue now, lawyers said.

"We're not there yet," said Steven Hawkins, executive director of the National Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty. For now, he said, "There is not a fifth vote for change."

In October, the four issued an unusual statement calling it "shameful" to execute juvenile killers.

"The practice of executing such offenders is a relic of the past and is inconsistent

"The practice of executing such offenders is a relic of the past and is inconsistent with evolving standards of decency in a civilized society." — Justice John Paul Stevens

with evolving standards of decency in a civilized society," Justice John Paul Stevens wrote then. He was joined by Justices David H. Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer.

The rhetoric echoed the court's ruling last year that it is unconstitutional to execute the mentally retarded. In both instances, the constitutional question turns on the defendants' ability to understand their situation, and their level of culpability.

The court's 6-3 ruling excluding the retarded from the death penalty relied heavily on the premise that public attitudes had changed on the subject in the 13 years since the court had last upheld such executions.

In 1989, two states that used capital punishment outlawed the practice for retarded defendants. In 2002, 18 states prohibited it.

The shift was apparently enough to win the votes of swing voters Sandra Day O'Connor and Anthony M.

Kennedy, who joined Stevens and the other three.

Death penalty opponents say they need the same kind of momentum among state legislatures on the question of young killers, and said the high court will get involved when more states outlaw the death penalty for those under 18.

Of the 38 states that allow the death penalty, 16 prohibit it for those who were under 18 when they committed their crimes. The federal government also bans capital punishment for juveniles prosecuted in federal court.

"This means we press on," said Stephen K. Harper of the Juvenile Death Penalty Initiative, a coalition of death penalty opponents and the American Bar Association that is working to change state laws. "We have to make a stronger argument with respect to changes in state legislatures ... so we can make a more convincing case to the Supreme Court."

Bills to eliminate the death

penalty for those who were juveniles when they committed their crimes are already before legislators in Wyoming, Pennsylvania and Mississippi, with several more states expected to review the issue this year or next, lawyers said.

Dianne Clements of the victims' rights group Justice For All said capital punishment opponents may be overly optimistic.

"A majority of the Supreme Court ... is saying they still believe that capital murderers who commit their crimes when they are (under 18) are culpable," she said.

State juries tend to impose the death penalty for young killers only in the most horrific cases, she said.

The current case of Washington-area sniper suspect Lee Boyd Malvo, 17, may dampen any momentum to treat young killers more lightly, she added.

Whatever the high court's next move, it may come too late for Scott Allen Hain, the Oklahoma inmate in Monday's case.

Hain is near the end of his appeals, and he could be put to death soon unless the court steps in.

"He's just going to miss out," said George Kendall of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

Black farmers set to sell food to Cuba

WASHINGTON (AP) - The National Black Farmers Association is working on a deal to sell Cuba \$20 million in food ranging from chicken to wheat this spring.

John Boyd, head of the group, said more than 10,000 black farmers would benefit from the agreement with Fidel Castro.

"This could be really good for the black farmers because it's a steady flowing business where we, the NBFA, would be able to get a contract directly with the farmers themselves and get them a fair price for their crops," Boyd said Wednesday.

He met with Castro in November to begin arrangements to sell corn, soybeans, rice, wheat and chicken.

Officials with the Agriculture Department and the U.S. Trade Representative said they were not involved in the sale.

Cuba has made several agreements with U.S. farm groups to buy agricultural exports since the United States lifted an embargo on

food sales in 2000. But the arrangement with black farmers would mark the first time Castro forged a sale with a particular ethnic group, said John Kavulich, president of the U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council.

"Clearly there is a political component to the decision by the Cuban government with respect to the National Black Farmers Association," Kavulich said, referring to problems that black farmers have experienced in the United States.

Boyd said Castro is aware of the U.S. government's history of mistreating black farmers.

Black farmers sued the USDA in a class action lawsuit, alleging the agency routinely denied them loans because of their race. As part of a 1997 accord, the department agreed to allow farmers to seek a \$50,000 settlement in cases where the government discriminated. It has paid more than \$634 million in settlements, but the farmers say the discrimination has

continued.

Boyd said he and other black farmers need new trade opportunities to survive, especially since they are declining in numbers.

"I'm not saying I support their political views," Boyd said of Cuba. "The federal government refuses to help us, and we're going to have to turn to some of these other countries for help."

Some U.S. grain and livestock companies want to help the farmers sell and ship their

goods, said Kavulich, whose council tracks exports to Cuba.

Boyd confirmed that but did not release the names because agreements are pending.

Cuba is becoming an increasingly important trading partner for the U.S. farm and food industries. Exports to Cuba increased from \$4.5 million in 2001, to \$155 million in 2002. Kavulich said they might reach \$230 million this year.

FREE DRINK WITH BBQ
AMERICAN BARBECUE
1212 D Street • 638-2010

WOOD SMOKED & BARBECUE
\$5 and \$10 Orders

Beef Brisket • Beef Ribs • Pork Ribs • Roast Beef
• Chicken • Turkey • Links • Lamb •

Choice of Sauces: Smoked; BBQ; Hot, Mild or Sweet; Horseradish
Includes your choice of two sides — baked beans, cold slaw, macaroni, potato salad
FREE 12 oz. COLD DRINK WITH PURCHASE

Wood Smoked Meats
Taking orders for
Smoked Turkey,
Beef Brisket, Beef,
Pork Roast
and Lamb
\$45

Jumbo Tamale
1 Big Jumbo Tamale
Plenty of Beef
Hot or Mild
\$2
6 Jumbos \$10 12 Jumbos \$20

TAKING YOUR ORDER NOW