

Army pulls out all stops to spur recruiting

WASHINGTON (AP) — Need a down-payment for your home?

Seed money to start a business? The Army wants to help — if you're willing to join up. Despite spending nearly \$1 billion last year on recruiting bonuses and ads, Army leaders say an even bolder approach is needed to fill wartime ranks.

Under a new proposal, men and women who enlist could pick from a "buffet" of incentives, including up to \$45,000 tax-free that they accrue during their career to help buy a home or build a business. Other options would include money for college and to pay off student loans.

An Associated Press review of the increasingly aggressive recruiting offerings found the Army is not only dangling more sign-up rewards — it's loosening rules on age and weight limits, education and drug and

criminal records. It's all part of an Army effort to fill its ranks even as the percentage of young people who say they plan to join the military has hit a historic low — 16 percent by the Pentagon's own surveying — in the fifth year of the Iraq war.

In June, the Army failed to meet its recruitment target for the second month in a row, although it apparently met its goal to recruit 9,750 troops in July and is on target for 80,000 for the year that ends Sept. 30.

As part of a push to make its 2007 goals, the Army is boosting the size of its 8,000-member recruiting force with 1,000 to 2,000 assistants — including some former recruiters.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates wants to increase the size of the active-duty Army by 65,000 to a total of 547,000 within five years. In part, that's to ease the war-

time strain on the Army, which is the largest branch of the military.

"Recruiting next year and beyond will remain challenging and will... require additional innovative approaches," said Lt. Gen. Michael Rochelle, the Pentagon's deputy chief of staff for personnel. He asked lawmakers last week on Capitol Hill for money to pay for the new program.

Rochelle described the latest offering as an updated version of the Army's college fund, a popular program started in 1982 to help soldiers pay for college.

The Army would like to start a pilot program targeting 500 people who might not otherwise be considering joining. In the pilot, the takers who complete a 4-year enlistment would be eligible for up to \$30,000 in incentives — including money for a home loan or business. Eventually, the Army wants

to offer up to \$45,000.

Beyond the Iraq war, the military says other factors have affected its ability to recruit. More high school graduates are going to college, and the economy is strong, providing lots of civilian jobs. At the same time, only three of 10 people between 17 and 24 fully meet the military's standards.

Less obvious factors have also decreased the recruitment pool. They include higher obesity rates, more people diagnosed with mental health conditions such as attention-deficit disorder, more criminal citations due to the increase of the drinking age from 18 to 21.

"The numbers of people who meet our enlistment standards is astonishingly low," said Michael Dominguez, principal deputy undersecretary of defense.

Among the changes that have helped attract more recruits:

—Increasing to \$20,000 the bonus for troops who join by Sept. 30 and leave for boot camp within a month.

—Raising the enlistment age to 42.

—Allowing recruits to come in with non-offensive tattoos on their hands and neck.

—Offering a \$2,000 bonus to Army soldiers who refer a new recruit.

—Enlisting recruits who don't meet weight standards and must trim down their first year.

—Advertising that targets

potential recruits' parents.

—Increasing the number of recruits with general education diplomas rather than regular high school diplomas.

—Creating a more pleasant boot camp environment.

—Sending "gung-ho" soldiers fresh from boot camp or war zones back to their hometowns to visit old friends and schoolmates to promote the Army.

—Increasing to more than 15 percent the number of Army and Army Reserve (See Recruiting, Page 10)

Racist columnist must obtain help

NEW YORK (AP) - A former columnist and self-described Asian supremacist who applauded the Virginia Tech slayings has been sentenced to a year of mental health treatment for waving a hammer in his neighbor's face and threatening to kill her and her family.

Kenneth Eng, 24, of Bayside, N.Y., pleaded guilty last week to attempted assault and harassment charges stemming from the incident last April in his neighbor's yard.

Eng was fired in February from the San Francisco-based weekly newspaper *AsianWeek* for writing a column titled "Why I Hate Blacks."

During a newspaper interview months later, he gloried in the killings of 32 students

and faculty members at Virginia.

Queen's County Judge Dorothy Chin-Brandt ordered Eng to attend a 12-month outpatient mental health program. He could spend as many as four years in prison if he does not comply with the program's requirements.

Eng was arrested May 9 for threatening to kill and swinging a hammer at his neighbor, Marissa Addison, 29, and her mother, Jane Rosovich, who were standing with their two dogs on their lawn.

Eng's attorney, Joel Dranove, said Friday that the plea was "the correct result of all the hard work by the prosecutors, New York State Department of Mental Hygiene and the doctors."

Obama's wife: Drop Blackness issue

CHICAGO (AP) - The wife of Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama on Sunday admonished those who question her biracial husband's credentials as a Black man, calling the issue "nonsense."

"We're still playing around with the question: Is he Black enough?" Michelle Obama told a campaign event on Chicago's South Side. "Stop that nonsense."

Michelle Obama, who was raised on the South Side, was speaking at a predominantly Black "Women for Obama" rally, which cheered her comment about the U.S. senator from Illinois.

She added that raising the specter of whether her husband — whose mother was White and whose father was Kenyan

— was sufficiently Black sent a confusing message to kids.

"We are messing with the heads of our children," she said.

At the gathering, Michelle Obama also thanked the South Side community for supporting her family over the years.

"This community of people has raised us. ...has helped create our moral fabric," she said. "We couldn't do it without the South Side."

She also told the several hundred people at the elaborately decorated Grand Ballroom that she hoped her husband serves as a role model in how he helps raise their two young daughters.

"If you can't run your own house, you certainly can't run the White House," she said.

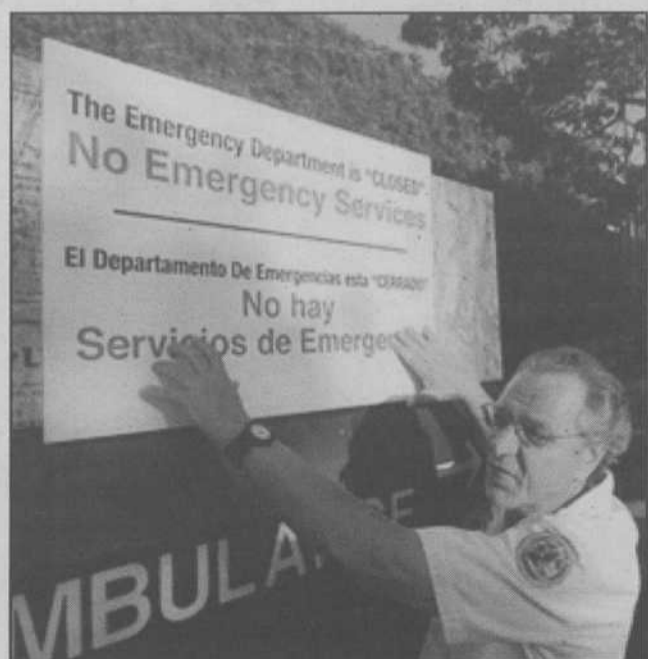
Hospital

(Continued from Page 3) Harbor's problems have been corrected.

The federal action means the hospital is no longer eligible for reimbursement for the costs of caring for Medicare patients. The county has warned that loss of the funding — about half the hospital's budget — would force King-Harbor to close.

King-Harbor, which has about 1,600 employees, handled about 50,000 emergency room patients last year. A contingency plan is already in place to shift patients to other hospitals, and officials have said they would try to find a private operator to take over the facility and reopen it, perhaps in a year.

"This is good news because it brings closure to this never-ending saga," county Supervisor Michael Antonovich said in a statement. "It allows the county



A maintenance worker posts a sign at the entrance of Martin Luther King Jr.-Harbor Hospital's emergency room in Los Angeles Friday after it was announced the emergency room will close. The hospital is in a poor section of Los Angeles.

to move forward in bringing quality medical care to an area where the status quo chose to keep a bag over their head."

The hospital was built after the 1965 Watts riots to bring health care to poor, minority communities in south Los Angeles. In recent

years, poor patient care has been blamed for several deaths.

A woman died in May after writhing untreated on the floor of the emergency room lobby for 45 minutes. In February, a brain tumor patient languished in the emergency room for four days before his family drove him to another hospital for emergency surgery.

The hospital failed a federal inspection in September 2006 but managed to remain open under a reorganization that shifted services to Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and reduced inpatient beds from 250 to 48.

The second inspection last month found that the hospital still had failed to comply with federal standards in eight of 23 areas, ranging from nursing services to patients' rights, according to a letter to King's administrator, Antoinette Epps.

Bus

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"I said 'Well, no,'" she recalled. "That was a seat I had paid for."

Kirkaldy said she willingly paid a \$100 fine for resisting arrest because she did kick the officer who tried to remove her from the bus.

"Sometimes, you are so enraged, you don't have time to be afraid," she remarked in 2000.

She lived out of the spotlight for decades after the case, earning a university degree in 1985 at age 68, and lived most of her life in New York state.

She said she did not mind the relatively little notice her achievements brought.

"If there's a job to be done, you do it and get it over with and go on to the next thing," she told *The Washington Post* in 2000.

Her daughter, Brenda Bacquie, told the newspaper: "She always taught us that if you know you're right, it doesn't matter what anyone else thinks. It's a moral thing. ...She doesn't see herself as a hero."

<p>Mattress Set, Full Size, Brand New, still in pkg. Sell for \$80. 510-4374</p>	<p>A MATTRESS Set: \$90. Queen Size Set, orthopedic Plush. New, unused still in Plastic. 227-9128</p>
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